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Oral history interview with Julius Davidson, 1964

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Transcript

Interview

HP: HARLAN PHILLIPS
JD: JULIUS DAVIDSON

HP: Well, you were indicating to me some recent event that stimulated your thinking about those earlier days.

JD: I was talking about my, ah, continued interest in the WPA Arts Project, its history and its implications. Naturally, in connection with current developments, the head of the Arts Center and so forth, I couldn't help but think of it in that connection. In the early 40's, I think more specifically early in 1942, while I was working in OPA -- I transferred late in 1941 to OPA from WPA -- I got a call from somebody, I believe, in the Federal Arts Project. It could have been [Holger]Cahill, or it could have been somebody connected with the Art Project proper. And they told me that the Rockefeller people had made a grant to the Council of Learned Societies to write a history of the Federal Arts Project, and they wanted to know whether I would be interested in assisting with this history. I said, "Of course I would." I didn't know what the arrangements were. Well, that project lagged for a long time. Its first supervisor was a fellow by the name of Mike Dougherty, who, so far as I know, is still with the American Council of Learned Societies, located most of its life in Washington, but recently transferred to New York. He has always been a permanent member of their staff. But they made him the supervisor of this project. He probably used project funds. They most have got an overhead of some kind for administering this project. I had a number of discussions with Mike. I remember he took me up to the Cosmos Club, and we talked about the thing at great length. But I think little or no progress was made. Sometime after, Professor Landon, who I think taught history at one time at Ohio State University, was made the Project Supervisor. And he was on this project, I believe, for a couple of years. He made more progress in many ways, but actually nothing concrete developed as a result of it. Ah, he's a thoroughly nice fellow. He's certainly kept [hep] to the job and I imagine sooner or later he would've done something concrete. But, ah, so far as I know, nothing concrete happened. Maybe he had notes, I don't know. At any rate, he went into either the Army or military government. He went into something connected with the war effort. And, ah, Will McDonald, who taught Ancient History at Ohio State University, became the supervisor. Had you heard about this project at all?

HP: No, not at all.

JD: He became the supervisor of this project. Now Will McDonald plugged this project for all it was worth. He was located here in Washington. They gave him offices in the National Archives. He contacted me and made me a consultant, and for a period of a couple of years I worked on that project -- oh, perhaps an average of 2 days a month. I used my annual leave that I earned in the government and worked on the project. I was then working on price control. I mean there was nothing more incongruous than working on price control during my regular working day and working on this project off time. And I did some work weekends. I'd take my notes home, write it up and submit some manuscript to him. Now he made excellent progress. He employed one or two people who had been connected with the Arts Project. Specifically, he employed Ben Botkin, the folklorist, to work on the Writer's Project. He got a hold of a man by the name of Philler -- I forget what his first name was -- to work on the Art Project proper. I don't know if it's good terminology. The term "art" is used in a specific sense and in a generic sense. Now who wrote the Theater Project and the Music Project I don't know. He employed a full-time secretary and file clerk, and a number of consultants came in from time to time. And I used to rummage over my files. My files from WPA had been transferred bodily into the Archives and marked "Davidson File" just like that, and there was all kinds of statistical and fiscal information in there. I used them, I think, to good purpose. And Philler, by the way, teaches, I think, either History, or American Civilization, or something like that, at Antioch. He can be located. McDonald finished his History of the Federal Arts Project. I read several chapters. It was well-written and brilliantly conceived, got the spirit of the whole thing. It was sent by the Council of Learned Societies to MacMillan to be published. MacMillan took the manuscript and sent it around to the former directors of the individual arts projects, including I think, Sokoloy; Alsberg, the Writers Project; and to Hally Flannigan and to Holger Cahill. I don't know what the position was of the other directors. Holger Cahill raised the roof. He said it was full of errors, and he didn't want it published. Well, you had no chance to talk to Cahill. Cahill was a friend of the Rockefeller family, and particularly of Nelson Rockefeller. Cahill had collected the folk art for Williamsburg, Colonial Williamsburg, and he knew the Rockefeller family well. As a matter of fact, he knew Nelson Rockefeller so well that at the close of the federal phase of the WPA Arts Project, he extracted $5,000 from Nelson Rockefeller to begin the work on the publication of the Index of American Design. I'll come to that later. Remind me to tell about that; what happened to the $5,000. Well, at any rate, I think he must have appealed . . . . The story is that he appealed to Nelson Rockefeller. Nelson Rockefeller contacted the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation stopped the publication of the History. And that's where it is today. Now, whether it was full of errors, or not full of errors, I'm not in a position to judge. I think that the History should be published. I think that the people who object to the History should write publications. They have every right to do it. Hally Flannigan did it in her "Arena." Now that's a . . . it's biased. It's a biased history. I read "Arena" many years ago.

Biased history, well done, and exciting. I imagine you've read it.

HP: Mmhmm.

JD: You've . . . . Have you contacted Hally Flannigan, by the way?

HP: No, she's quite ill.

JD: She is very . . . Parkinson's disease, I understand. Very, very bad shape. Will McDonald is a very good friend of mine, and I'm very biased in his favor. As recently as two months ago, I met at lunch with the Register of Copyrights, who's a good friend of mine and who has an interest in the arts generally and, because of his occupation as a Register of Copyrights, has a professional interest in the arts. I don't know how the subject came up. I told him what had happened to this book. He said by all means that it should be published. And I started thinking about it. Well, to backtrack a little bit, about a year ago, I got a letter from Mike Dougherty whom I described as the first supervisor of this particular project. Mike said that Ben Botkin had asked them to raise the question with me as to whether that History couldn't be published by the Government Printing Office. Well, I answered them immediately -- it could not be published by the Government Printing Office. By law, the Government Printing Office can publish only government publications, publications done on government time by government employees. It cannot publish things outside. The very fact that this was an outside publication is to the advantage of the publication. A government agency will not . . . . I've been engaged at various times because up to now I have been in projects, working on projects which arose because of emergency conditions, or war conditions, or some other reason, and at a hectic operating period, and then died when the emergency was over. And in every one of these cases, I was engaged in writing a history. See? But I have very little confidence in a government history as such. A government history cannot be objective from the very nature of the case. It can only be done by the outside. I say that advisably. I can't write an objective history on government time. See? I don't . . . if its worth talking about. Well, at any rate, this, ah, this is apropos, this has some bearing on my recollection of the Project, of the Arts Projects, but it shows my current interest in it. See? And when you called, I said I was all ready, more than ready and anxious to give you the benefit of whatever recollection I have. But don't forget that this is now, it is a little over 23 years since I've had any connection with it. But, believe it or not -- and this is something peculiar too -- at least once a year I will get a call from the General Services Administration. The General Services Administration actually inherited the remains of WPA. See? The WPA died -- I think it died after I left it in '41; died sometime at the end of fiscal '42, I think it was, around June of '42, maybe a few months later. When it did, most of the people went over to a program called the Community Facilities Program, and the Community Facilities Program over went the Federal Works Agency. And the Federal Works Agency . . . . That's right, Community Facility was part of it. The Federal Works Agency became one of the major nuclei of the General Services Administration. And some of the ex-WPA people found positions there, and these people called me up. They kept questioning, what happened to this, and what happened to that, and so forth. I think that the, ah, what brought up, as to that . . . . Now I remember what brought up my discussion with the Register of Copyrights about the, ah . . . . Is this entirely too rambling?

HP: No no. No no.

JD: This is the way they usually go?

HP: Right.

JD: What brought up this, ah, my discussion with him of the history of the WPA Arts Projects was a question of copyright. In the early days of the Federal Writer's Project, like any other publication, as I explained before, it was necessarily published by the Government Printing Office. Now everything published in the Government Printing Office is in eminent domain, public domain and is therefore not copyrightable. The directors, the people that . . . the managers, supervisors, top staff of WPA in general and certainly of the Arts Projects, did not like the kind of job that was done by GPO. I can give you a little better illustration. Of course my books -- I had to give all my books to my son when we moved from the house to an apartment, and I just have a couple left.[Break in recording while he gets a book] Here is the first major guide published on the Writers' Project. We used to refer to that facetiously as the doorstop.

HP: Well, the record ought to show that this is Washington, City and Capital.

JD: That's right, Washington City and Capital.

HP: And published by the Government Printing Office.

JD: Government Printing Office. You see, it is too cumbersome, too heavy.

HP: A small tome of 1200 pages.

JD: It is a heavy, written -- in other words, there is something wrong with the physical format of that.

HP: Yes.

JD: See? Here, for example -- I don't know how many pages this is. I just took this thing at random. Here's the Philadelphia Guide which is over 700 pages and published by, let's see, Telegraph Press. Well, whoever it is. Other well-known publishers have gone into these guides.

HP: Yes.

JD: Now, Washington City and Capital is not copyrighted.

HP: It is not.

JD: This is copyrighted -- Philadelphia and the other state guides, we copyrighted. So you ask yourself the question. This is done by government employees and the Washington City and Capital is done by government employees, and why is one copyrighted and the other not? Well, what happened was this. They got . . . . In the case of the copyrighted works, they formed groups to sponsor these publications. This happened to be sponsored by the William Penn Association of Philadelphia, I believe. The Association took out the copyright. Now anybody who knows the elemental rules of copyright knows that this is a facade. I don't think that anybody has ever contested these copyrights. But if I were interested in stealing this thing here and publishing it, I doubt that the copyright would be worth the paper it's written on. See? Now the people in the Copyright office know that pretty well. See? But at any rate, I remember taking it up with the legal counsel of WPA, a fellow by the name of Bill Lindon, awfully nice guy, not a dynamic lawyer, but very solid and very nice, very sensible, understanding. He says getting a copyright is a matter of policy. He says it would be quite a legal question as to whether a copyright would hold in a case like this, but there's no harm in trying. And this is the way he did it, see? Now, another aspect of this thing here, and this bears out the physical aspect, I was a party to that, too. In connection with a great many of these here, there were provisions on payment of royalties. Some of these guides are collectable items today. They're beautifully written. Try to read one sometime. Compare it with ordinary commercial guides published. Very well done, exceptionally well done, it seems to me. They don't have the dullness of most guides. A great many are written in essay form and well done, fairly objective compared to the ordinary guide. And they sold well -- a lot of these are collector's items, and most of them are out of print.

HP: Right.

JD: Provision was made for payment of royalties, and I think I was party to these arrangements. We had to have a, ah, sort of tripartite arrangement where we made an agreement with the so-called sponsors and the sponsors, in turn, made an agreement with the publisher. And these agreements provided that during the lifetime of WPA the royalties would accrue to WPA. After the demise of WPA, they would accrue to the Government of the United States and go into miscellaneous receipts. There's been nobody there to pursue this thing. I imagine there could be thousands of dollars or more in royalties to the government, but there is nobody there. I mean it isn't worthwhile. People spend time, money, on it. If it's done in the course of regular work, fine. You have to follow up files and so forth but it's just an interesting sidelight on these arrangements.

HP: It sure is. Well, under the, under the law there was no provision made for publication under the Writers' Project? It wasn't even thought of?

JD: Probably not, now that I remember. Don't forget, I did not . . . I did not get into the Arts Projects at the very beginning.

HP: Oh, didn't you?

JD: No, not at the very beginning. I joined the WPA -- that was my first job with the government -- in the middle of March of 1936. At that time WPA had been in existence . . . .

HP: I'll use this ash tray.

JD: OK, good, that's what I was looking for. WPA had been in existence, I think, since the previous July 1. WPA as such started in the fiscal year '36 which began July 1, 1935. My first job was that of an examiner, finance examiner, and I was stationed in Chicago. I went around. I was given certain states to cover, and I covered these states. I covered, as I recall, Iowa, Wisconsin. Later on I was moved to Indianapolis and covered a good part of Ohio. Then there was some sort of reorganization of this examiner's function, and I was called into Washington. I was given some temporary assignments for a couple of months, and I was called in one day and asked whether I wouldn't want to take this job of being Finance Officer for the Arts Projects. At that time they were called the Federal Projects 1 through 6. The Arts Projects themselves were Federal Projects 1. 2 to 6 were projects that lasted only a short time, one of which was rather important. Well, several were rather important and significant.

One in many ways went into, you might say, went into the art fields. It had to do with -- I think it was called the Historic American Merchant Marines Survey, I don't know -- it was some number from 2 to 6. That was . . . . and that was sponsored by the Dept. of Interior, I think. Another one which was very important in the arts field too, was the Historic American Building Survey. Now the reason for the Historic American Merchant Marine Survey was that Franklin Roosevelt was interested in ship models.

HP: Right.

JD: He was just crazy about ship models, and he wanted that done, and they did a perfectly good job. I remember the man who was in charge of it was a man who liked boats himself and he lived on the boat right in the, right in the, whatchacallit, not the Tidal Basin, but the channel end.

HP: Yes.

JD: Now the other one, of the Historical American Building Survey, these drawings now reside in the Library of Congress, and it's one of the most useful collections they have. It's a first rate collection. Then the Survey of Federal Archives, see, was also an important project. The man that headed that there was an Archives employee by the name of Haymer. Phil Haymer. I ran into Phil Haymer just the day before yesterday. He's a good friend of mine, and he for many years headed the National . . . didn't head it but he was the executive secretary, National Historical Publications Commission, which was closely related to the Archives. He has since retired. When he became 70, retirement was mandatory, but he still has an interest in this work. And, ah, the parallel project was part of Federal Projects No. 1, that was an Historical Records Survey. Now the Historical Records Survey was headed by Luther Evans, who later became the Librarian of the Library of Congress. Luther Evans is the reason I'm in the Library of Congress. After the demise of OPA, I went up to see him, not about a job in the Library, but I wanted to ask him about possibilities of getting introductions to the United Nations. He was interested in UNESCO at the time. I think he was a member of the UNESCO Commission or one of the representatives, I think, or alternate to UNESCO. I forget what the governing body was, not the directives . . . something having to do with United States Representation in UNESCO. Before I had a chance, he wanted to know if I knew of a budget office for the Library. I told him I didn't, but then I reminded myself that Evans often acted that way and asked him whether by chance he didn't mean me. He said that was precisely what he meant. Wanted to know if he was trying to feel me out, see if I was interested. And this is how I landed in the Library of Congress. Now Evans is available to you. He's in New York, well, you come from Detroit, that's right. He is now the Director of Legal and International collections at Columbia. And, ah, he would know something about the early history of the Writers Project because the Historical Record Survey was an outgrowth of the Writers Project. Before I came to the Arts Projects, ah, the separation had already been made. Now that brings me down, back again, down to about August of 1936 when I became interested in the Federal Arts Project by virtue of being made a finance officer for it. And I remained a finance officer until the demise of the Arts Projects in the summer of 1939. Demise being occasioned, of course, by an Act of Congress, a rider to the appropriation which killed all federal, federally-sponsored projects and also killed the Theatre Project as such.

HP: Expressly?

JD: Expressly killed the theatre project. And, ah, I was then transferred to some other work, but I had something to do with "loose ends" and there were a number of loose ends there, such as pursuing these agreements of the, with the, agreement of the, on the Writers Project publications. A great many of these Writers Project things had not been completed by the time of the demise of the Federal Projects. Now I don't know too much about the operation of the Federal Arts Projects after the demise of the Federal Projects as such, but it is my general impression that the dynamic spirit was already gone. People who were involved in it will probably deny this. They might think that it's not so, that they did a useful job, but the fact remains that you didn't hear of them after September or so of 1939. The Music Project continued on in the form of locally sponsored, state and locally-sponsored projects. The same is true of the Writers Project and the Art Project. The Historical Record Survey actually thrived under it, but that was not an Art Project. The Theatre Project was dead. Now they were not supposed to collect money but . . . on the music project. The Music Project, however, continued performances and the sponsor collected money, and the sponsor turned this money over to, over to the WPA for use to, ah, for expenses that couldn't be financed out of appropriated funds. I had something to do with that. But, my connection with this thing was for 3 hectic years.

HP: What did you find in the . . . ? What did you fall heir to when you went with the Federal Arts Project in '36? Populate the office for me. Who was there? What's the pace of events? What kind of atmosphere was there? Ah, what about the generation of idea and excitement -- this kind of thing?

JD: The idea is . . . I'm trying to recall. It was entirely different. I had, as I say, I've been an examiner, ah, for WPA in states that were not particularly significant for the Federal Arts Projects. I traveled around and I don't know whether I had any exposure to it at all at the time. When I came into it, I came into an entirely new atmosphere. People were excited, they were interested, they were terribly busy. They were dedicated. But from

my point of view, see, in that point of view, I got sort of schizophrenic. I was interested in what they were doing, unlike say, for instance, most people who come there from my particular occupational field, which was that of financial control at that time. My mission was just financial control, control of the, not only the purse-strings, but of the propriety of the expenditures and similar things. I also noticed that the whole procedure was characterized by irregularities. You couldn't fit these artistic characters into the bureaucratic mold. Now on top of that, you had a peculiar relationship between the administrator of WPA, Harry Hopkins, and the directors of the Federal Arts Projects. These Arts Projects were the fair-haired boys of Harry Hopkins. He told them so and he really meant it. Hally Flannigan, as you probably know, was a classmate of Harry Hopkins. And so was Florence Kerr a classmate at Grinnel. When they conceived the idea of a theatre project, Hally Flannigan is the one he picked immediately. How he got the others, I don't know. People who were there in the early stages would be in a better position to tell you how they got Nicolai Sokoloy, Helgar Cahill and Henry Alsburg. I don't know. But I assume that they were personal appointments. There were all kinds of meetings. There were no precedents. Of course there were no precedents for WPA in general.

HP: No.

JD: But there certainly were no precedents for anything like the Federal Arts Projects. You had to play it by ear. See? And he told them . . . Harry Hopkins said to them, "You do whatever is necessary to get this off the ground and run a successful program!" "Whatever is necessary" meant that if they had to go run to L.A. to start a theatre project from the unemployed movie actors, they just went over there and came back, presented the bill and wanted to collect. "These are my expenses," you see. It was that sort of thing, do whatever is necessary. You don't wait for any authorization, or anything like that. You collect. They knew nothing about the travel rules. There were . . . always had been standard government travel regulations. Travel on the government, and these rules are very strict; and at that time they were much stricter than they are today. Yes, they had a kind of penny-pinching Controller General who administered the rules, a fellow by the name of -- what's his name: Not Campbell, McCarle.

HP: McCarle.

JD: Remember McCarle? He was the penny-pincher. He was the one who told you to use pencils until the very end, down to the last edge. See? This was the way they were going to save money. And McCarle came from Nebraska. And, ah, the strangest thing, you see, was that he was a protege of Norris.

HP: George Norris?

JD: George Norris, the Great Liberal, but he became a penny-pincher. And then there were rules about timekeeping. And I'd go and try to implement the rules of timekeeping with a bunch of artists -- painting a mural, or something like that. It's almost impossible. First thing I had to do is be . . . I had a lot . . . I had to translate. My job was translating the Arts Projects to the fiscal people, and the fiscal people to the Arts Projects.

HP: Yes.

JD: This was my job, skating between the two. Since I spoke the fiscal language, and learned the art language, I was able to interpret. I did the best I could to interpret. And if I had any value to these projects, it was my ability to interpret one group of people to the other and also the confidence people had in me. Now the people in the Arts Projects to the directors knew that I was heart and soul with them in their desire to achieve two objects. See? There was a dual object in the Arts Projects. One was to employ the unemployed artists. This was basic -- and the other was to do a good job. Now, of course, these were often in conflict. I was with them in that sort of thing. At the same time I had to see that they didn't get out of hand, but as far as the spirit was concerned, I have never seen a spirit like it, before or since. Incidentally, that was true in general in WPA. Every once in a while I will meet alumni of WPA. And I have . . . . Oh, a man whom I met in the very earliest days when I was an examiner. This man was director of finance for the Michigan program, a fellow by the name of Frank Waters. I lost sight of Frank Waters for may 28, 29 years, and suddenly I find him in an organization that is here called Group Health Association. Group Health incidentally was the outfit that fought the American Medical Association for anti-trust practices. This was in the 30's, and they beat them at it and they were heavily fined. This is simply co-op. This is not socialized medicine, this is co-operative medicine. Frank Waters is now Executive Director of the Group Health Association. I had a long talk with him, oh-h-h, maybe 6, 8 months ago, and here is a man who is a finance man also, same as I was, and we both agreed that never, before or since, has there ever been that spirit of dedication that you found in WPA. Never! Now I worked in the War Agency, worked in OPA. I was on loan to OPS, 1951 to '53, also an emergency and since I had some claim to being a specialist in a certain part of price-control, they asked for me and the Librarian was good enough to let me go for as long as I was needed. There wasn't the dedication in any of those emergencies as there was in WPA. Now it could be . . . there could be various reasons for it. I could see when I first came to WPA that WPA consisted mostly of newcomers into the government. The newcomers were there to do the substantive work, but the machinery of government as such, this business of hiring persons, this business of keeping records, this business of procuring supplies and so forth,

was in the hands of the old civil servant. There were no . . . you could not get Civil Service working for WPA. Congress put riders on the appropriation to prevent anyone from gaining Civil Service status for working on WPA. The conflict between Congress and WPA rose really very early. It rose long before any problems with the Arts Projects. They just didn't like WPA. They didn't understand it. They didn't like it, but they . . . I'd say they didn't understand it. The bureaucratic mind doesn't understand that sort of thing. And, as I say, if there was any usefulness of myself . . . . A great many of these old timers were in the fiscal operation, the personnel operations, the supply operations, so forth; they couldn't they just couldn't understand it. See? But they were a different breed of animals. These were not the dedicated people. These were the people who were marking time till their retirement. They were not dedicated. The newcomers were dedicated. Don't forget also that at the time, there were now many people unemployed? 15 million people, 20 million people, unemployed out of a work force of maybe 50, 60 million. WPA had the choice of people, and the choice was made not through Civil Service procedure which actually gives a premium, see, to mediocracy in employment. I say that advisably, I have Civil Service status when I need it, happen to be in the Legislative Branch where it is not needed, but I did gain Civil Service status in the Executive Branch. I don't know how to avoid the Civil Service system. But it does give a premium to mediocracy and what substitute there is for it I don't know. But WPA certainly found it, and I would say also that Harry Hopkins was one of the . . . perhaps the best administrator I had ever met.

HP: Really?

JD: Yep. You wouldn't think so from the newspapers at that time.

HP: No.

JD: You wouldn't. They were picking on floors, see. There was a lot of opposition. Don't forget, this was new. This was novel. The mass of people were at WPA. Business men weren't. Stupidly so, because I think it's outfits like that that saved the present system. In my opinion, that's correct. The seeds of revolution were there, if they'd kept up as it had started. If nothing were done for these people, there would have been all the chance in the world for some sort of revolution, major or minor, I don't know how, see. But the rank and file business people were not aboard. Some of them understood it a lot better. Today they understand a lot better than they did then, see. The press didn't apparently understand it, but I can tell you that there was, in my opinion, there was less waste on the average WPA project -- I'm not talking here for the administrative staff, the project staff -- than there is today in the Pentagon, where they have civil servants. They were well-administered.

HP: Yeah. Ah, what approach did Hopkins take to give, you know, direction to his administration? He's not known -- well, I shouldn't say that -- but the notion of his being a good, tough administrator is not known.

JD: I believe that the man was a dedicated man. I think that the fact that he had this goal of putting people to work and putting people to useful work was the thing that made him a good administrator. He wouldn't countenance duplication. You don't have the duplication overlapping that you have today in many of the federal agaencies. He wouldn't stand for it. He once said that he wouldn't. He didn't want an agency run by social workers. He didn't like . . . . Athough he came from a social work field himself, he was a professional social worker; that's his start in life, he had no use for social workers as such. All the social work done was in feeding people from the relief roles into WPA but that was a state and local function. That was not a WPA function. WPA kept away from that function.

HP: Right.

JD: He didn't want any agency run by social workers. He did not want an agency run by lawyers. A good many were run by lawyers. Bill Lindon, the lawyer, I remember a young man who worked for Bill Lindon telling me the story that Hopkins got a call once form Senator Wagner. So I was a young man and . . . . This was a young man who told me this story of a young man just graduated from Law School, excellent record and so forth. Wondered if he had a position for him. Hopkins said, "I have enough lawyers now." "What do you mean, 'enough?'" "I have 2 lawyers, and that's one too many." Wagner said, "Make it 3," and Hopkins hired this fellah. This is what he thought, I don't know. The story may be pointless, but the man himself told me this story.

HP: But he didn't want social workers, or lawyers.

JD: He didn't want social workers, or lawyers. Now what else he didn't want, I don't know. I heard of some other negatives, but in my opinion he was a first rate administrator. No Aubrey Williams, who most of that period was a Deputy, was basically a do-gooder, and he is a do-gooder today. I think he holds forth somewhere in the South working for tenant farmers and that sort of thing.

HP: He lives in town and is quite ill. I had an appointment with him and his wife wouldn't let me see him.

JD: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

HP: So was I.

JD: He's a charming fellow.

HP: Yeah.

JD: Meant well, I think did a good job, but was not an administrator, the man that had the . . . even had the psychology of the social worker, I'd say.

HP: Yes, he came out of Wisconsin social work, and he was with FERA and CWA, a representative.

JD: I'll tell you a man that might know of some of the early days of the Arts Projects, two men, one I think is not in town, one I think is abroad with AID. These are the men that held down my job before I came in there as finance officer on the Federal Arts Projects. One fellow was Sol Ozer, who I think was field of sociology, studied at Wisconsin. I think he had a doctor's degree in sociology. He's with ADI now. The other man is an economist. Worked many years in the State Department, is now with Brookings. Fellow by the name of Bob Asher, lives a couple of blocks away from here. Now I inherited him in my office; he was there when I came, but he left a couple of weeks after I came and took some other job. I think he finally landed a job as Director of Administration or something like that for NYA under Aubrey Williams, but he knows something about the early history of the Arts Projects. Of course Larry Morris would know it too.

HP: Yes. Did you work closely with Ellen Woodward?

JD: With Ellen Woodward? Actually I worked with Ellen Woodward only through Larry Morris.

HP: I see.

JD: Now to show you the dedications . . . . Here is a woman who came with a very conservative background from the South, See? But was dedicated to her work, including the Arts Projects. You ask me about working with Ellen Woodward? There's a legend which I think is true, that she had a pad dangling from her bed at night, and every time she'd wake up at night and think thoughts, she'd write down these things. If she could hold it until she wrote, until she came to in the morning, she wrote, but more often than that this wouldn't hold. At 2 AM she would call you up. Now this happened to me one day in -- well, I forget what year that was. This is one of the problems you'd have every once in a while. Even Franklin Roosevelt, who was also dedicated to the Projects, the Arts Projects, was under pressure from Congress. There was a lot of criticism, and the criticism came about because the Projects were -- well, this may have been a gag, or stall, an excuse -- too costly. I don't know if I remember the figures, but something sticks out in my mind that the average man/year cost of WPA for Project work -- this was apart from the administrative costs -- was something like fifty two fifty for salaries, six and a half dollars for non-salary items, supplies, and so forth. $59.00 a month, a little over $700.00 a year, and I believe there was a limitation on administrative cost. You couldn't exceed 5% of the Project cost, or something like that. It was written in this rider in the Appropriation Act. The Arts Projects cost at least, cost close to a hundred a month. They were terribly costlyprojects. And I was asked to see how we could reduce the cost. It was under criticism. Roosevelt called up Mrs. Woodward and wanted to rope her over for a meeting. Well, the night before the meeting she called me up about ten o'clock and kept me on the telephone until 1 AM, trying to make me tell her that 2 plus 2 equals 3 instead of 4. I couldn't tell her that. Funny think is that we met, I think, when the question came up again, we met in Hopkins' office over this. This was one of the crises the Arts Projects faced, this man/year cost thing. I kept pretty accurate figures of man/year cost, and Aubrey Williams, I think, was there and he said, "Well," he says, "You can do this, that and the other. I know you boys can get it down." Well, he was an impractical fellow, and he didn't understand figures either. I think Hopkins turned to him and said, "Well, Aubrey, these people can't do it. They can't do it." It was very clear. According to the wage schedule, the wage schedule was so much for a professional occupation, and most of them were professional occupations. I don't know what the scale was, I can't remember. The wage scale alone was, say, a hundred dollars in places like New York and Chicago, and the Arts Projects were concentrated in the higher wage scale cities. Since a great many of them were professional, only a few in the unskilled occupations or semi-skilled occupations, it was just axiomatic that the average cost would be somewhere near a thousand dollars a year for wages alone. No way to avoid it. And, ah, I don't know what Mrs. Woodward tried to get out of it, but she was simply trying to make an impression with Roosevelt on that. Mrs. Woodward and Mrs. Kerr after her, were very close to Mrs. Roosevelt, as you know. They met very often, and Mrs. Roosevelt was undoubtedly a great influence in seeing that these things weren't killed. Roosevelt didn't kill the Projects. It was Congress that killed the Projects.

HP: Yeah, yeah. Well, I find . . . . You know, in terms of her conservative background, Mississippi, the political road, to have to deal with Hally Flannigan, Henry Alsburg, Holger Cahill and Sokoloy, must have been a strain and yet the testimony in Congress that she gave is just as loyal to her changes.

JD: Just as dedicated as anybody.

HP: Marvelous -- and . . . .

JD: Anybody.

HP: No matter how rough it got.

JD: As I say, she was personally nice to me, very nice, very nice to everybody in the Arts Projects. For years we used to exchange Christmas cards and so forth. I've lost track of her. She must be an old woman by this time. I'm sure she's quite old. Did you get a great deal from Florence Kerr?

HP: Yes.

JD: I knew Florence Kerr before she became the Assistant Administrator because she was in Chicago. Her I knew. But I knew her as head of the so-called Womens' Professional Projects, and to me that meant sewing projects and various home economic projects and so forth, projects employing mainly women, home aid projects, etc. But Mrs. Woodward was the one because Florence Kerr didn't come to Washington until, I don't know what year it was. After the demise of the federal period, perhaps.

HP: Late '38 I think.

JD: Late '38, yes, towards the end of the period, because Mrs. Woodward then became a Commissioner of Social Security. They tell me that in Social Security when she sat on the board, she was just as dedicated there as she was in WPA. I knew people who worked there at that time. Various questions came to the board, and she asked more questions than anybody else, and questions that were not meant to merely be impertinent. They were pertinent questions. She wanted to elicit information. I wouldn't say she was as sharp as a lot of people might be, but she made up for it by diligence and devotion.

HP: Heart.

JD: Heart -- she had it.

HP: She did, yes. Well, did the 4 projects then operate through Larry Morris?

JD: The 4 projects administratively operated through him. He headed the thing. He also headed 2 to 6 also.

HP: He did.

JD: In the early days, yes. And the way . . . . My function was that of . . . since these were moneys that were specifically earmarked in a sense, we made special allotments from Washington to the State Administrations specifying the amounts to be spent for each of these 5 units under federal 1; before that under 2 to 6 as well. I had a man/year cost figure, and these were simply limitations. This was a way of saving money, seeing that money was spread over the year instead of spending it all at once for the year. I'd send it every month. There were other reasons for sending it every month. With the Congressional attitude during most of these years, they doled out money a few months at a time. It was during the WPA days that they invented the technique of continuing resolutions. Up to that time it was mandatory that Congress appropriate money by June 30th and over this WPA hassle. I think it was the then head of the Appropriations Committee -- what was the name, Taylor, something like that. He was, I think, Dean of the House in his day. He must have been a man in the 80's. He invented the device that said, "We'll continue the appropriation at the same level as before until Congress decides." They can do that a month at a time, see. And then when they finally came through, they would even do then for another 3 months, something like that, until Congress came back in January. Then they'd start the process all over again.

HP: So that you never knew in a fiscal way where you stood.

JD: You never really knew how you stood, and that's why we were careful just to dole out the money.

HP: Yes.

JD: To make sure. Then, of course, my controls were man/year controls. I'd develop a man/year cost for each state for each year of the projects . I kept statistical information. My own immediate staff wasn't very large. All I had was about a couple of statistical clerks and a secretary or two. That's all -- maybe 4 people besides myself in my part of the Project.

HP: Well, did a fellow like Cahill understand your man/year cost control?

JD: Yes, he understood quite well. He understood quite well.

HP: Was he a receptive fellow?

JD: Yes, he would accept it. Cahill . . . . This is what surprised me. Well, I'm not surprised at his attitude later on in connection with this History which I think is extremely important, this killing of the History. Because he was very interested, see, and he himself should have written his own history. Why he didn't, I don't know. What happened with him is that he spent 3 or 4 years after the demise of the WPA Art Projects writing a novel which went sour. He didn't do well at all.

HP: No.

JD: But he understood it. However, it's amusing. Once . . . I used to sit down with these directors and explain this thing, this control. Of course I had a whole stream of correspondence that the man/year cost was too high. I did whatever I could to keep that man/year cost down because I knew that Congress was hitting that, see? And, ah, it was because I had these figures there that we were able to counter the criticism even of the President. There just was no way to bring it down. But I showed it to Sokoloy, I showed him one of these big tables there, a whole spread sheet with the whole . . . the man/year cost by months and so forth. And he said, "This looks like a score," and he mentioned some modernistic composer. "Just like a score of one of these modern composers." Ha, ha, ha. He didn't understand too much about it.

HP: Yeah, yeah.

JD: Later on during the nonfederal, well, it was really during the transition period, but just right after, I would say right after the close of the federal period, I took a trip out through the states with Earl Moore who succeeded Sokoloy. Earl Moore was the Dean of Music School at the University of Michigan. And he was a fine fellow. Oh, must have been damned near a month, we had several conferences at various points, Chicago, Salt Lake City. Then we went out to the Coast, spent time in San Francisco, Los Angeles, surveying the Projects, the Music Project in particular. And, ah, these were centers of problems and difficulties. There were peculiar transition problems in these places, too. I think what Moore was primarily interested in was to see mainly that the last vestiges of the Theatre Project were killed. But these people out there still went into Musical Comedies and that sort of thing, and they thought that they were fulfilling the objectives of the Act by doing that. Actually it was Theatre, not Music. I saw Earl later, incidentally. He had some relationship to the library. We have a Coolidge Fund which finances string quartet concerts at the Library and at various universities across the country. And, ah, Moore is a member of the Advisors Committee of the Coolidge Fund. We had a Coolidge Festival there about 2 months ago. He was there, had a nice chat with him.

HP: I think he's the . . . .

JD: He's down in Houston now -- the University of Houston.

HP: Yes, well he's the fellow who introduced the educational aspects of the music program which was not Sololoy.

JD: Sokoloy was interested in performance. He was interested in performance, but not in music. But I got to know . . . I went around. As I say, I did an awful lot of traveling as finance officer. I don't think a month passed without a visit to New York. That was a hot spot.

HP: Why was that so difficult?

JD: Oh, difficult because there's a great concentration, I imagine. They let their imaginations run away with them. They spent an awful lot of money there. But some of these people became very well known. I think Orson Welles worked on WPA, and Todoy (?), Houseman, a great many people whose names you see quite often.

HP: Did you deal up there with Audrey McMahon?

JD: I know Audrey McMahon quite well. A very able woman, very, very extremely. I don't know, have you seen her?

HP: Yes, I have talked to her. She still has the drive and spark.

JD: She always did have a drive. I met her husband . . . . Her husband used to teach Art History at New York University. He died some years back. But yes, I was very fond of Audrey. Audrey ran very well. But the Theatre Project is the one that got out of hand in New York. They tried various administrative experiments with the New York situation. New York did not . . . the New York Arts Project didn't get along with the New York City administration. You could easily see why. They had, in the early days . . . . It was, what's his name? "Ironpants" Johnson, wasn't that his name?

HP: "Ironpants" Johnson was the first administrator.

JD: First administrator, yes. He later became active in NRA and so forth.

HP: Yes, but he . . . .

JD: He was not the kind of man that was interested in the arts.

HP: No.

JD: Later on, there was Colonel Somerville, later General Somerville, who headed the City Administration. And there was just a tug of war between him and the Arts Projects. They just didn't get along. It was impossible most of the period. They tried various experiments. They set up . . . I think first they set up a separate -- I forget exactly what they did. They either set up a separate organization . . . . Well, I know at one time when they had a separate theatre administration. Had an administrator of the Theatre Projects as distinct from the director of the Theatre Project. It was a separate administration, then the other Arts Projects had a separate administration, and that other Arts Project, the administrator was Harold Stein. Have you had a chance to talk to Harold?

HP: No. His name has come up.

JD: Harold Stein is a man that might give you something of the early history of the Projects.

HP: Where is he?

JD: At Princeton University. He's a Professor of Public Administration.

HP: A Professor of Public Administration at Princeton. JD" Yes, every once in a while I run across him because I will attend the convention; whenever the conventions of the American Society of Public Administration are held here in Washington, I'll go to them. But, ah, he would know something about it too.

HP: Yeah, well let's . . . .

JD: Now, he ran into all kinds of difficulties. These people were belligerent, actually belligerent, and one day they sat in, they had something of a strike, and they kept Harold Stein in there, several nights, I believe. They locked him in.

HP: Yes.

JD: But I think there was no earthly excuse for that. The Workers Alliance was quite strong among the Arts Projects people. But wherever you have thinking people, you have that type of person. Naturally follows.

HP: Ha, ha. Sure. But Somerville . . . .

JD: This was, as I say, this was my problem, to go there to see that these things weren't killed. At the same time to see that there was some order made out of this chaos.

HP: And New York was a major problem.

JD: Major problem.

HP: Much more so than, say, some of the other areas? The largest concentration . . . .

JD: The largest concentration in the program was terrifically expensive there. And it was very irregular, see, and places like that -- every time I go up there I hear about the stagehands. The stagehands. This was the major problem, apparently. The early days they had a monthly wage. Later on they had a monthly wage which was translated into prevailing wage. They had a prevailing wage rider on the appropriation. Well, that meant that the stagehands, see, were one of the highest paid of these people. The stagehand got a hundred dollars a month, see, and his hourly rate was 4 dollars an hour. See, he worked 25 hours a month, that's all. That was it, see.

HP: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, wasn't it possible to reach Hally Flannigan as a director, or didn't she think in these terms?

JD: I don't think that Hally Flannigan -- you mean as an administrator?

HP: Yes.

JD: No, I don't think she did. I don't think she did. In many ways, the ablest director from the administrative point of view was probably Cahill. Hally Flannigan was thinking of Theatre Arts.

HP: Right.

JD: Sokoloy was a charming man, mind you, but he was thinking of waving that baton, see? That was his forte, and Alsburg was -- well, I don't know, sort of wishy-washy.

HP: Yes.

JD: But Alsburg was sort of a sour man. He was a man that never married, you know. He was a loner, peculiar type. He must still be alive.

HP: Yes.

JD: But he often made the statement to me and other people that, when all the bridges and all of the buildings and all of the roadways built by WPA crumbled into dust, we would still have this guide left. This is probably a valid statement, see.

HP: Yes, and he did have, I think, standards as to the conduct.

JD: Oh, he did, he had very high standards.

HP: Yes, and in a very . . . apart from the Index of American Design, the Writers Project in terms of the guide books, was a real national movement in a sense.

JD: That's right.

HP: As the Index of American Design became.

JD: Became, right. Now I was going to tell you the story of this Nelson Rockefeller's five thousand dollars. Nelson Rockefeller turned over to Cahill personally a check for $5,000. to get the publication of the Index started. Cahill came to me and asked me what to do with this $5,000.00. By this time, the Federal Project had expired. We had no Federal Project. Then it would have to become tied in with some state project. Well, I worked some deal out with the Director of Finance with the District of Columbia Administration to take this check, $5,000. and wait for further word from us as to what to do. This thing dragged on for, I don't know. This check must have come to us sometime around 1939, maybe 1940. Well, nothing happened there in 1939, nothing happened in 1941. Nothing happened in '41 - - - right? In '42 I was then in OPA. Somehow or other someone got my name, I had read a day or so before a newspaper story that the auditor of the District of Columbia had died. The next day they opened his desk at the office and, of all things, they find this $5,000. check there. This was in 1942 -- what are they going to do with the $5,000 check? So I called up Cahill. Well, Cahill was no longer interested, apparently. He was about to leave, I believe. The story I got is that he turned the check back to Nelson Rockefeller who was embarrassed, who preferred not to get it back because it sort of bollixed up his tax returns and a few other things. He had to add it to his income for that year. He had given it as a deduction, a contribution to the United States. But you see, Cahill dragged his feet, and the reason why he dragged his feet is that Cahill again. He was very sensible. He construed himself -- see, he was -- I'm trying to be objective, I was very fond of him. We worked very well together, extremely well. I had no trouble getting him to issue the proper orders to his people to get in line, and, in my opinion, getting in line in these cases didn't in any way harm the Project. Probably did them good rather than harm. But he had this peculiar interest, construed himself to be the patron saint of that Project. There were many people who claimed to have been responsible for the Index, but in Holger Cahill's, mind, he was the only one. Eddie -- I don't know where he got the name of Eddie, but they called him Eddie Cahill. He construed himself to be patron saint, and he alone was responsible. Somehow or other he wanted to get that into the publication and, apparently, there was some bar to it. He couldn't do it. I know that a fellow by the name of Danny Defenbacker, I don't know. Where is he now?

HP: Danny Defenbacker is out on the West Coast.

JD: On the West Coast. Well, Danny Defenbacker landed in Minneapolis. Ah, I mention Minneapolis because the wife's folks came from there, visit them very often. On one of these visits, I went to see Danny. He was running the Walker Art Gallery and through that connection married one of the Walker girls. He later was divorced, by the way, but he married her. Of course they were a very wealthy family. He claims that he was the one responsible for the Index. I don't know what the story is. There's the Index, by the way. You see it?

HP: Yes. Oh marvelous thing! They're marvelous things!

JD: These are silk screen reproductions.

HP: They're marvelous things! Well, there's another story as to the origins -- Ruth Reeves.

JD: Ruth Reeves was a part of the Artist Project. A fellow by the name of Glasglow, by the name of . . . .

HP: David Glasglow.

JD: Glasglow claims all credit.

HP: I talked with Glasglow. Glasglow came down to Washington when it became necessary to make the Index a national project with limitations and forms and approaches, so as to avoid some kind of duplication, or to get some central clearing house of idea. And, ah, Glasglow who had, I think been connected with the arts magazines, been in the art field somewhere, and came down to Washington to head up this Index.

JD: Well, these are the stories I get. Now this proprietary interest was reflected in many ways. Cahill had it regarding the Art Project. Alsburg certainly had it, and Hally Flannigan also had it. She thought she could do anything with the Theatre Project. We got involved in 1939, in, oh, beginning of 1939, in doing something about this tons and tons of records, playscripts and all that sort of thing that had been compiled on the Theatre Project. Posters, all kinds of things, material in written form, and, ah, Hally Flannigan's Deputy, a fellow by the name of Howard Miller, who I liked very much -- who is also on the West Coast, by the way. J. Howard Miller, I don't know if you came across his name or not. He's on the West Coast and in the real estate business and some years ago when I was out there I looked him up and we had a very nice luncheon talk together.

HP: This is Los Angeles?

JD: Los Angeles, yes. He was in Minneapolis for awhile as personnel director in International Mills, but he was a very able fellow. Quite an able fellow. And he was the mouthpiece for Hally Flannigan. He was a deputy, but he was, you might say, in many ways a Charley McCarthy for Hally Flannigan. He did her doing. She had an idea. They had an idea. They were not concerned with Federal rules and regulations. They wanted to do what they wanted to do. And there were many copies of these materials and they said that they wanted these records. On, Howard Miller had a special interest in the University of Southern California, that was his alma mater. Hally Flannigan had this interest in Vassar. So we were going to have three sets, one on the west coast, one of the east coast and on in Washington, see? And they were going to call the rules, see. They were going to give one set of these materials to Vassar, another set to the University of Southern California, and the third set, they didn't want it to go into the Archives. The third set went to . . . . They wanted it to go to the Library of Congress, not the Archives. Well, this was around the fall of 1939 and, in order to settle the question, they called a meeting of the then Librarian of Congress. Archibald MacLeish had just been appointed and of the Archives, the Archivist sent in, I think, I don't know who the Archivist was then; maybe it was Solon Buck. Maybe it was Conner yet. They sent in for the payment, see. Philip Haymer, a good friend of mine . . . . And, boy, this was quite a meeting, see. Ah, Haymer read the riot act and told them what the Archives Statute provided. MacLeish who, among other things, was a lawyer, said this was just some of the tall 'ology nonsense. All it says over here is that a record is a record. He wanted the collection. I believe that what finally happened was that an archival set went to the Archives, another set which was not considered the archival set, a duplicate set by special dispensation of the Archives, went to the Library of Congress and another set went on loan to Vassar College. Well, this loan tended to be a gift and I was asked one fine day, in connection with another trip when I went to New York . . . . I think this was some time in 1941 I made a trip to Vassar. They had ordered the whole collection which was on loan to be sent back to Washington, and I was there to see that that damned stuff was out of Vassar by a certain time. I was there and saw that it was sent back to Washington. What happened to that set, I don't know, see? But I was responsible for getting a project started in the Library of Congress at that time for exploiting these materials. Every once in a while, you see, I get these problems and these things sort of bark back at me. They want to know . . . . Oh, the head of the Music Project inherited all the folk song . . . folk lore material gathered together also in connection with the Writers Project. And none of this material has been exploited since the day they went there, and that's about 1939, roughly 25 years ago. They're still there in unopened boxes. They asked the Librarian whether we couldn't ask Congress for some people to exploit this material. I said, "I know more about it than I like to say. I'm responsible for getting this junk over here." But, as I say, Hally Flannigan saw nothing wrong in getting all this material as a gift. It really belonged there in her mind.

HP: I think she had the first summer theatre school at Vassar, under WPA, where she brought people from all over the country, or from various parts of the country for training.

JD: Can't you remember the rest of the . . . in case you're interested in trashy books, and I've read "The Group," hee hee, you'll find Hally Flannigan's name mentioned there. Mary McCarthy's "Group," you know. Her name is mentioned there.

HP: But she was a bold, imaginative woman.

JD: Oh, very bold, very bold.

HP: Were you able to sample any of the performances that were put on?

JD: Yes, I went to see a lot of the performances.

HP: "One-third of a Nation?"

JD: Yes, saw "One-third of a Nation," "Pinocchio," one of the last of the plays, I must have seen a lot of them. I don't know whether you've heard of the swing "Mikado," it was interesting, imaginative.

HP: Of course it was. Yeah, and ah . . . .

JD: I saw it in Chicago when it opened up.

HP: Well, she did have a kind of -- well is it proprietary or is it just an idea, you know?

JD: She had an idea. Well, you know, it's the same psychology that is exemplified by Harry Hopkins' statement to them. I didn't hear that statement, see. It was before my time there. "You do whatever is necessary to make this thing successful!" And she went ahead and did it.

HP: That's the license.

JD: That was it, see. And there was no change in concept at any time.

HP: But she made, from a public relations point of view, a serious error in the "One-third of a Nation," when she quoted some Senators on housing.

JD: Oh, well, but it did, it did develop a style in the theatre . . . .

HP: Marvelous.

JD: To any newspaper that's become important since.

HP: Marvelous, but they, ah, the Congress took after her something fierce.

JD: I was there, and I remember going up to the Hill at that time, listening to the debate in the Senate. This Bob Reynolds was the man that was most disturbed about the Theatre Project. He's the man that pounded the table and said the Theatre Project must go. He gave some horrible examples of what they had done and so forth.

HP: Well, in the, since you have . . . . You know, the work done under WPA was, in effect, in substance, government property. So far as the art is concerned, and some of it, I gather , was collected here in Washington and displayed once in awhile and I suspect that the Senators and Congressmen could walk through, and see something they like and take if for their office, or so. And I don't know if any records were kept of this, or not.

HP: Well, they weren't. Now, as I say, I get questions from the GSA and the last question I got was maybe 3 months ago, as recent as 3 months ago. Called me up at GSA. Somebody had written them and wanted to know what happened to the pictures that were painted on the WPA Art Project and how could they get a hold of them? These were supposed to be horrible things, you know, they had painted, all kinds of horrible examples, these awful murals and everything else. And they did some splendid work. Some of our leading artists got their start over there in New York, Chicago, in particular. Ah, you gave the answer, the methods of controlling property were rather slipshod. Let me give you the legal theory. The legal theory was that anything done during the federal period, since it was federally-sponsored, it became federal property. Anything done for a state and local sponsor became state and local property. Now these Arts Projects, after the summer of 1939, were turned over to state sponsorship and, like any other business which has come under new management, the new managers take a hold under the new rules. And I assume that the . . . they assumed that, since they were the sponsors, they had sponsored, that they had a right to all of the inventory that had developed previously. It would take a lawyer to answer the question as to whose property it was. It came under the state, state sponsorship. If you build a road on WPA, a state or local road, it became state property. You built a little schoolhouse, or a little police station, or something like that, it became state and local property, see. So I'm not saying in theory they took over this property, that is, if it was tangible, ah, tangible property. An intangible product like music or the work of the theatre project, there was no question of property for this book here, except for royalties, see? There was no question of property. For this book here, except for royalties, see, there was no question of property. But when it came to the Federal Art Project as such, there was property. But now, of course, of murals, other things, mosaics, they did a lot. They did a tremendous thing; I saw it on the West Coast there, some of those mosaic things were just beautiful.

HP: Yes, oh yes.

JD: Very elaborate things.

HP: Well, tell me this. In terms of atmosphere, was there any change in the central WPA office here in Washington when Hopkins was replaced by Harrington?

JD: I would say this; that Harrington was also a first rate administrator.

HP: He was.

JD: No. Harrington had no emotional or intellectual interest in the office as such. But Harrington was a purely objective man, extremely able, an excellent mind, see? But because of his background he had no tie-in with the arts, and so he did not take the interest. I know he was taken to the "Mikado" and praised it as others did, you see, and so forth. Howard Hunter, who followed up Harrington, Howard Hunter was a shadow, in many ways, of Harry Hopkins. He had developed under Harry Hopkins, a good friend of Harry Hopkins. He has been . . . died, I believe, some 6 months, a year ago. I saw in the paper that he died. Howard Hunter -- I was going to say, may I speak off the record, but you'll know what to do with these things. Howard Hunter was the kind of man that tried to ape Harry Hopkins' virtues but succeeded in aping only his vices. By "vices" I mean gambling, drinking and that sort of thing. I knew Howard Hunter quite well because I had worked under him in Chicago when he was regional director in Chicago. I knew him quite well. Fortunately, I kept away from that bunch, that bunch of boys that were in the examiner's office. They used to quit work at noon Saturday, get into some hotel room, start playing cards and drinking until Monday morning.

HP: Look!

JD: And I didn't; I beat it out of town. I left . . . . Ah, Wisconsin was assigned to me. I loved to go over to Madison and wander around the lakes over there. This to me was a lot better. Though, ah, this was the kind of man Howard Hunter was.

HP: Do you have the sense that Harrington . . . .

JD: A straight administrator.

HP: But by this time the handwriting was on the wall, wasn't it?

JD: The demise was inevitable. In other words, let's say I happened to be there with the Federal Arts Project during its heyday. This was '36. When did Harrington succeed Hopkins?

HP: Well, early '38, wasn't it?

JD: Early '38. Well, it could have been around that time. But he fought to do the right thing. I remember when these problems came up with Sommerville, the story I got is that he fought. He was on our side. In other words, he felt that Sommerville had done the Art Project wrong and that he should treat them as well as he treated other projects.

HP: Yes, well he had seniority on Sommerville, didn't he?

JD: Yes he did. I imagine that had Harrington lived he would have been the Sommerville of World War II. Extremely able man, extremely able. I understand that he taught mathematics at West Point. He spoke well and he wrote well. I was very fond of Harrington. I had meet him when he was the engineer -- well, he was on loan, you know. Congress thought so well of him that they supplemented his salary. They wrote a rider into the Act, said that any man who was . . . . Oh, they wrote it in such a way that his salary as a Colonel in the Army Engineers was supplemented to the extent necessary to give him the salary as head of WPA. Had a pretty high regard for Harrington. Politically it was wise, but Congress, except in the very very earliest stage of the New Deal, they had no high regard for Harry Hopkins.

HP: They did not?

JD: I don't think so.

HP: Apparently he didn't have much regard for Congress either.

JD: He didn't have it either, you see. He didn't have the confidence. Remember the difficulty he had in being confirmed as Secretary of Commerce.

HP: Though Ellen Woodward had good relations with Congress.

JD: Very good relations.

HP: Yep, and this hot spot . . . .

JD: There again this is part of the political story. Don't forget that, when Roosevelt came into power in 1930, '32, there were all New Dealers, but by the time the WPA started, the first New Deal was over.

HP: Yeah, I think probably a prior agency had put a thorn in the hide of Congress. The CWA, for example, had

written in a minimum wage of 25 cents an hour, and sharecroppers were leaving the farms in the South for the city, and the Southern Senators who, after all had . . . bad name. There was an investigation and I remember the word "boondoggle" that came into the vocabulary at that time. "Boondoggle" is an old term apparently used in the recreation profession. This man says, "Well, we boondoggled" and all the newspapers laughed and everybody else laughed. It got a very bad name.

HP: Yeah, yeah. But the effective fear was this minimum wage.

JD: This is undoubtedly so. But, as I say, they were all New Dealers in '32. By the time the WPA had started that spirit had gone. I saw the seeds of the thing, when . . . . Ah, I remember going over to hear testimony given by Harry Hopkins before a Senate Committee which was headed by Burns from South Carolina. Now this must have been in 1938. By that time Burns was already against . . . had already grown conservative. He was very anxious to kill the whole relief program at that time. The seeds of conservatism that has developed since we were there, even at that time, more than 25 years ago. I could see it.

HP: Well, you know, there was another project in art, the Treasury Project under Edward Bruce, and there was an offshoot . . . .

JD: I heard of it; I knew about that project.

HP: It was, there was an aspect of it called TRAP, the Treasury Relief Art Project.

JD: Many of the murals were done at that time.

HP: Yes.

JD: And public buildings.

HP: Yes, but this was through competition and they had name people.

HP: Competition -- I know nothing about that. JP: Well, I wondered because there were . . . certain assistants were employed on murals and I wondered, who knows, I haven't any idea. There were certain . . . .

JD: Did Tom Parker know something about that?

HP: He wasn't sure.

JD: He wasn't sure.

HP: But there was, ah . . . .

JD: There must be somebody who knows about that. I wasn't there in those days. I knew about it. That's about all.

HP: Well, the reason I'm bringing it up is Holger Cahill and Edward Bruce seemed to have had thorns for one another.

JD: Oh, it could be. Yes, I don't know about that.

HP: Now I don't know whether it was related . . . .

JD: Cahill had, as I say, he had very . . . . Cahill was not a compromiser.

HP: He was not.

JD: No, he was not a compromiser. Good administrator, not a compromiser. He had definite likes and dislikes, and that's all. Sharp dichotomy.

HP: But there was some thought, I think, under a man called Olen Rows.

JD: The name is also . . . the name is familiar, but I don't know these people.

HP: Well, let me dilute what I've said to say that the Treasury Department got the Ickes', what is it called? Works? No, Public Works Administration to have a percentage of the funds allocated for public buildings for decoration.

JD: Well, at that time public buildings was in the Department of Interior.

HP: Right, but the section on Fine Art . . . .

JD: Went to Treasury.

HP: Where the architect, government architect was, and they had a percentage worked out whereby they could decorate public buildings. They'd put this out for competition which would give them the lead artists. You know, make . . . .

JD: Who ran that? Also public buildings?

HP: Um, this was in the Treasury Department. And I'm told, I don't know how reliable this is, that the assistants to these name artists who won the competition were sustained by WPA funds. In short, it made work for unemployed artists. But that . . . .

JD: Under what program was that?

HP: This is TRAP.

JD: Was that . . . ?

HP: Under the Treasury Department.

JD: The Treasury -- you mean WPA fund were used.

HP: Yes.

JD: Well, the reason for that is that some of the funds were channeled off to these various agencies. WPA -- now you've got to look into this whole history of WPA. WPA, as I recall, under the '35 Act was originally designated as the coordinating agency for the whole relief program, and then they had a miscellaneous clause in there which gave them authority to prosecute projects.

HP: Right.

JD: And actually Harry Hopkins grabbed the whole thing, you see. So they had every right, these other agencies, to run these projects. But some of these moneys were channeled off. Now there were . . . . For example, the Navy Bureau of Docks or something, got some of this money to repair its docks. The Army got some of this money to run some of its projects.

HP: The Public Health Service got some money to run a national health service?

JD: That's right, see. They all got money and then the . . . the original consumer price survey was developed at that time. The money went to Labor. And they got some of the money. And they also, Labor Department, also got money to run the, oh, another project having something to do with some economic implications. It later developed under WPA, but the Labor Department ran it first, something to do with the efficiency of operation, industrial operations. I think it was actually the beginning of a study of . . . productivity study, or it included a productivity study in the early stages, the automation study programs that have been developed. But the Labor Department ran that originally.

HP: So this could have been built in on the basis of the '35 Act. As coordinator, Hopkins could allocate this sum to that public health service and say, "Let's have a National Health Service."

JD: What he did was allocate everything to WPA -- practically all -- and maybe 5% went somewhere else. And in doing that, you see, they often would give them both the project funds and the administrative funds as well. See, they got both. I've forgotten what, see, but you remind me of it, and now I remember very well when it was.

HP: Well, in the light of what you said about Holger Cahill, as being a kind of proprietor and possessor, or so identified with it that the notion that there were artists, unemployed artists, who were working for some other agency, namely Edward Bruce who had, had feelings about WPA quality of art, you know?

JD: I can imagine, but you see the fact remains that what Treasury does, although it remains in public buildings, nobody knows about it. The WPA outfits remains today. They're the people that really developed the modern school . . . some of the modern schools of artists.

HP: Oh sure, the WPA is responsible for that. Well, they in effect paid artists to do what they loved to do; whereas the others had the competition which had to be safe and acceptable in terms of the public image as to what constituted art.

JD: It didn't pay a premium for creative art as WPA did.

HP: No, that's right.

JD: But WPA, as I say - - it outdid itself sometimes, a little bit too creative, and got into trouble with the public, particularly in conservative areas where all you have to do is paint a single nude in the post office and you're sunk. But you see this whole silk screen thing was developed. See, these are silk screen reproductions of the . . . I don't know if you ever saw this -- this was done towards the end of, ah, I think I got the . . . . Somehow or other here I got them, even kept the folder that these came from. Now this, of course, was federal property which I acquired somehow or other. I might be guilty of something or other, but actually it was given to me in connection with a meeting with the league . . . they held with a group that I think was established around 1939, if I'm not mistaken, either before the end of the federal period or right after, called the Planning Committee, to help develop and encourage the Arts Projects. And I remember Helen Gahagan Douglas was very active in that, extremely active, and people from the National Planning Association were also quite active in it at that time.

HP: Is this Delano, or is that the National Resources Board?

JD: That's the National Resources Board; no, National Planning was something different. This is purely a private association.

HP: Private, yes.

JD: Mainly economists and political scientists.

HP: Yeah. Was any thought in the central area, central agency in office given to transforming WPA into something that would be suitable for the preparedness that became the hue and cry in the '38 and '39?

JD: Yes, quite definitely. It started while I was there, but it was extremely active after I left. I left WPA, December 7th was my last day, and that was on a Sunday of 1941. It was Pearl Harbor Day, and the next day I landed in OPA. So I wasn't there during the actual war period, but they did a great deal. Now I said that there are those who think that the WPA Arts Project did better under state sponsorship than they did under Federal sponsorship. These were the people that were active in working in connection with the preparedness program. I know they did a lot. For example, we had dance bands going around the army camps. I remember one trip I took down to -- oh 4, or 5 district offices in Florida, going with the head of the Music Project, the district supervisor, out to some army camp near Jacksonville, or near Orlando -- I forget where it was, where they played dance music for the boys over there. They did an awful lot of that sort of work, and, ah, the Theatre Project -- not the Theatre Project, they didn't have any Theatre Project, but I don't know what the other arts projects did. But, as I say, the Music Project was particularly active. You can see why. Now what the other projects could do, I don't know.

HP: But in thinking and trying to preserve . . . .

JD: The other thing that I remember . . . . I left; I had, when I left the, ah . . . . For 2 years after I left, except for my interests in the remains of the Arts Projects, I hadn't too much interest in WPA. For the 2 years over there I worked in procedures. Also, I had something to do with preparation of procedures, technical statements, reviewing all of the technical statements on project operation and so forth. The spark of it was gone, at that time and when I went up to Mrs. Kerr to tell her that I was leaving -- I think she asked for me. She knew I was leaving. She tried to hold me in WPA; she said that there was a job to be done and so forth. And I begged to differ. I didn't think that the WPA had any charter other than number one employing people who had no employment. The work they did was incidental and secondary. Now she told me she begged to differ. She said she always had an idea that they could sell Congress on the work they did; that this work could be made permanent under some sort of agency program. Well, she later went on to the Community Facilities Operation which really was a permanent program but had very, very little relationship to the WPA work -- all in all the most tenuous connection with the WPA job. But this was one tendency they had. You see, these things, these government operations, tend to keep themselves, perpetuate themselves, when the prime motive, the prime objective, is gone. You see? Now I've talked a great deal about that sort of thing with Dr. Moore when he was there for one or 2 years. Dr. Moore, I believe, also agreed that relief, work relief was not, didn't constitute a permanent foundation for federal interests in the arts, but I think it does illustrate what government operation can do under the most trying conditions. You don't really have the choice of people. Now this is the sort of thing, I think, Professor McDonnald tries to develop in his book. I say it's too bad it isn't published.

HP: Well, it's very difficult I would think, sitting in Washington, you know, with a generalized view of WPA, knowing that the federal projects are tailor-made to fit the local need or what they find on the local unemployment role, so that there really isn't a kind of standard of effort, you know, or a project has to be created out of whole cloth to put people to work. Like the Index of American Design. These are painters. They are not creative painters, but they are copyists of very rare skill, and the net effect of their work is illuminating and a treasure. But this has to be tailor-made locally. They might have people in a given area who might do this

work, but not in another area. So it must have been difficult.

JD: There is an . . . . See, there again you have a dichotomy of a kind where those that are already most of the favored in the availability of the service of art, see, have more of it than they need, and the other areas that need art do not have the artistic talent. Hally Flanningan attempted answer that in terms of these touring companies. It was an awfully expensive operation and, I say, I don't know what the answer is. But this is something I really think should be worked on. Now the President and his message was trying to promote the arts as well as the humanities too. I think a lot of people realize that this is headed . . . this over-concentration in the field of science isn't too healthy. What is your field, Doctor?

HP: The law, history.

JD: Pardon me?

HP: Legal history.

JD: Oh, legal history, yes. Well, that is neither. It certainly isn't science. But it is Social Science in a sense. But I think that something should be done in those areas. Now I tried to, to the extent that it was within my power. I recall being interested in this concept of exchange of people, wherein people, say, from New York, would be made available to places like North and South Dakota, which have deserts as far as the arts were concerned.

HP: Yes. Well, there were any number of people that were shipped out of New York, one to run the Art Center in Tucson, Arizona; a teacher to Seattle, Washington. This sort of thing.

JD: But, you see, apart from the theatre, which is concentrated only in the biggest centers, actually in the other fields you do have some of it in every area in the country. There are painters good and bad everywhere. There certainly are writers good and bad everywhere. Musicians -- you have the smallest town with some sort of dance band. So you have the arts, except for the theatre. The theatre is the one thing that is concentrated. Now in music the symphony orchestra -- yes, the symphony orchestra is concentrated in a larger city, but you have other forms of music, and these people do go around within the state. They certainly do go around within the state. They certainly went around, did a lot of travel. We provided travel for them. Now it became a lot more difficult. It was easier under the federal program than under the state sponsorship. Now what do you do there? How do you send people out of the state? This is really difficult.

HP: Yes, sure. Well, by that time they had started and I think it was in full bloom, the Community Arts Center movement.

JD: There you are -- certainly. Lots of logic through WPA.

HP: Yes indeed -- right. And a number of people were sent out expressly from New York to head up an Art Center, because the local community could get local sponsorship and support, but they didn't have the spark, the idea for continuity. They plucked out of New York's caldron given people whether they be teachers or otherwise to go and at least for the time, get it started, get it on the move so that it became a, what? stop-off place for federal art tours, if nothing else, showing WPA art?

JD: I remember that. Yes, they did a great deal of it in the Federal Art Project. Now the Theatre Project did have an organized technique for touring people. A girl was in town. I don't know if she's in town or not, I imagine she is. Isabelle Kelly -- at that time she was Isabelle Stuart -- who was just a clerk. But I remember when I first came to the Arts Projects, she was in charge of making arrangements, authorizing arrangements for tours, to go from one location to another location.

HP: Must have been terribly costly.

JD: This was costly for that time, was very costly. Very costly.

HP: But it was the only way to share the culture.

JD: Right, but these were the problems, see, that I was confronted with that created different problems, human nature problems. And I was a sort or trouble-shooter at the time -- did the best I could to clear them.

HP: Did you have to go though the Bureau of the Budget in your work?

JD: Of course, WPA had to go through the Bureau of the Budget in getting its appropriation. But at that time I had very little to do with that aspect. Right now we have plenty to do with it because we're in the Legislative Branch and we skip the budget except for format. Legislative Branch, you see, is exempt from Budget review. But, oh yes, we certainly did have to go through the Bureau of the Budget.

HP: This must have made it a very testy affair since Congress was so niggardly with its funds for periods of time.

JD: Oh yes, it was very niggardly.

HP: Does this account for the fact that Somerville would issue announcements periodically that 30 some percent of the Art Project would have to be dropped from the roles?

JD: Well, not, ah, Somerville wasn't responsible for that. I had to send the telegrams out. In other words, when funds were cut by the agency, they'd give me the target and I'd sit down and figure what we could allow, and what we allowed meant bodies. And I would be responsible for sending out those telegrams saying so many bodies dropped. I'd give quotas. I'd establish the quotas.

HP: I see. And you did this on the basis . . . ?

JD: Somerville had no option.

HP: That's what I mean.

JD: Poor press . . . .

HP: I see.

JD: We did that centrally. But that was based on funds.

HP: That's what I meant, because, for example, the Artist's Union and the Artist's Congress did not know the amount of funds that Congress was making available at all. And they were much more interested in mushrooming it anyway, you know, and Congress was on the other side.

JD: There was absolutely no alternative, no alternative whatsoever. Now Congress particularly -- what happened was when they were told that this resulted from budget cuts, some of these pressure groups tried to pressure members of the Appropriations Committee and I think the results were just the opposite of what was intended. It simply hardened their resistance. These boys don't want to be pressured.

HP: Since they already had developed an antipathy for the general concepts anyway, right?

JD: I remember I always read with interest, I always read hearings before the Appropriations Committee. WPA was really established by an Appropriation Act. I don't think that they ever had substantive legislation. There was no reason. Well, they were a creature not only of Congress in general but of the Appropriations process in particular. The only life it had was related to that. They had no substance in law. It was related to an appropriation act. It depended upon the whims of a few people, and no matter which side of the aisle they sat on, they sat in, they were opposed to WPA.

HP: Well, I once understood that the . . . after CWA was thrown out, the theory was that Ickes and the Department of Interior would . . . with his, ah, Public Works Administration, would come up with a program for public building of roads and so on and create work in that way. Ickes, as i understand, spent most of his time trying to design a contract which would keep politician's hands allegedly out of the funds that were granted, so he never came out with a program. Well, A&P's were being invaded by hungry longshoremen's wives. They were just taking food of the shelf, and no one was going to interfere with the longshoremen. There were mortgage riots in Iowa, farmers and so on. It was a pretty desperate period, and something had to be done. And it's in this sense that Hopkins was brought down from New York and made the coordinator under this Appropriation Bill.

JD: Right, now most of the antagonism -- I was right there in the middle of this developing antagonism between the Hopkins theory and the Ickes theory. From the long range point of view, I suppose Ickes was right, but in the long run, some of the economists will tell you, those who are not economists will insist until everybody's dead. If you live that long, things will be solved, see, by this process. Meanwhile, people are starving and what happens under a program like the Ickes program is that certain selected union men will get all the work. It will not be spread where it is most needed, see?

HP: Right, right.

JD: Those who already have it will get it. And a good deal of it is of course siphoned off to various contractors and so forth. It actually is not workable -- not in a period of emergency. Now what the long run situation, or solution, is something entirely different. This is a complex deal, see, a complexity of things that have to do with monetary fiscal theory, related in part to such long run stabilizers as the unemployment funds and Social Security funds, everything else, see? The complication of things, but Ickes, as I say, in theory he was right, but in practice he was dead wrong. The ah, book that develops that thesis best is Sherwood's "Hopkins and Roosevelt" which still remains in my mind a classic, one of the best things I've ever read. Excellent. And also the

old -- Florence Kerr's name is there, and Hally Flannigan. They're all in there, by the way. The whole cast of characters that there were.

HP: Well, is it your view that Congress would have been more receptive to a straight dole than a work relief program?

JD: The FERA -- as I . . . I don't know this program too well. I came into the program after the demise of FERA and CWA. The FERA, I think, gave the states an option. This was a . . . these were contributions to states for work for relief in any form, straight doles or work relief. In my opinion, the dole is not the answer. I still would maintain that for that time WPA was the best of all possible solutions at that time. This was a desperate situation and putting . . . . I don't know what the maximum employment was in WPA, probably 3 million, 4 million, something like that. They only took a small part of the unemployed, but at least it gave the principal breadwinner of the family something to keep body and soul together. And it also gave him a chance to do useful work. Now these roads that were built haven't crumbled nor the bridges crumbled or the buildings crumbled. And these books still remain. Even the theatre remains because we see vestiges of it all the tim.

HP: Well, certainly in the creative fields we kept those fields alive.

JD: And some of the . . . some of the symphonic roots that were established at that time are still in operation to this day.

HP: And look at the number of state and local historical societies that developed because of the Historical Records Survey. It's a whole new movement in itself.

JD: It certainly . . . it certainly advanced the archival profession in a great way.

HP: Yes, well I think in terms of the time, in terms of the problem which the nation confronted, it was a way in which money, funds could be gotten in the quickest way to people who needed them, quicker. Don't you think so?

JD: Yes.

HP: In short, that I guess it was in late . . . .

JD: And without demoralizing them.

HP: Yes, giving them some, in their eyes, useful employment. Yeah.

JD: This was the thing. I recall one time, I think this was during the recession, you might say, within the recession which came around 1937, '38, where Congress was scared and gave WPA more money as a result of which, we got word in the Arts Project that we had to put men to work right away, as many as we could. And I was asked just how to do it. I was not necessarily in policy circles, although I imagine I did in some way have some influence on the course of events. This time I think I had a definite influence on the course of events because I sat down and figured it out. I forget what the total quota was for the Arts Project, but as near as I can remember it was something in the order of magnitude of 50,000. That was for all of them -- Art, Music, Theatre, Writers and Historical Record Survey. All in all 50.000 nation-wide. And at that time the smallest of the projects was the Historical Records Survey. Now when it came to putting people to work right away, solving an unemployment problem, see, the one project in that group that could do it was certainly not the Music Project, or the Theatre Project, not the Art Project and it's not the Writers Project see? It was Historical Record Survey. From the point of view of a work relief program, although it had no glamour, it was solid, and it could do it. So they asked everybody for suggestions and I by simply adding a one in front of the three, I got the Historical Record Survey up from 3,000 nationwide to 13,000. Just like that. It was the only major change that was made, and that one stuck. Because there again you had to think of what the immediate objective was. Putting the white collar people to work, and this was the way to do it. Now you couldn't organize this other, even if you had the talent you couldn't organize it, but Evans was the man who had all kinds of projects. He had all kinds of inventory projects. He had one even that bordered on the arts. He had a portrait survey of some kind tied in with the Historic Record Survey -- why, I don't know, but he was able to boost his employment overnight. It was not difficult for him to set it up.

HP: He was a good administrator, too.

JD: A first rate administrator. And the hardest worker of the lot, you might say.

HP: Was he really?

JD: Oh yes, he worked day and night -- terrific capacity for work.

HP: Well, he had the thing . . . his program so well organized . . . .

JD: Very well organized.

HP: And the reports and so on, that he knew everything that was going on. He had no . . . he had that kind of compulsion.

JD: That's right. But this was a . . . this was a white collar project that employed people not of the high . . . necessarily of the highest professional caliber, and it was excellently designed for work relief.

HP: And, moreover, he wasn't embarrassed by organized voices, vocal groups and not . . . .

JD: Not any . . . he had no unions to contend with.

HP: No opposition in effect at all. In short, it was, of the projects, probably the safest and the quickest because it was . . . .

JD: But that stopped, stuck. It went on that way, and it was an excellent . . . it proved to be an excellent idea because his was the project that suffered the least during the transition from federal sponsorship to state and local sponsorship. There's . . . it was nothing to take that over, nothing at all, because they were already tied in with the state agency. These people had worked in the various City Halls, Historic Societies, State Libraries and so forth and were already there.

HP: Already known.

JD: The sponsors were already there, you see? There was no problem.

HP: What was the . . . what were some of the problems in transferring the arts projects from federal to state? This would vary, I suspect, with region to region, wouldn't it?

JD: This would vary. I more or less lost sight of the thing. I don't know what -- either that, or I don't remember. All I do remember was that during the . . . early in the transition period, we called a meeting of the various state directors of these projects. I think we had a couple of hundred people around at that time in Washington, see? And these people were all for keeping up the facade of the old program, see, with centralized control and so forth. That thing lasted for about three months and fell flat on its face. They were unwilling to face the facts of life; that Congress had killed the federal project, see? Now there was no problem. I think the Historical Records Survey was not included in that last bunch that came in. They had no problem, see? But the others simply did not want to be under the control of the state administrators.

HP: Since that was a local clash.

JD: They died hard.

HP: Tell me this. I wonder the extent to which the central office was sensitive to the push that WPA had and whether any steps were taken to, you know, soften some of the harshness?

JD: I believe so. I'm quite sure they did. I don't recall exactly what steps were taken. They were . . . . Obviously, with a program as widespread as that, quickly . . . developed quickly with no real choice of people, the abuses were developed, and the newspapers picked them all up.

HP: Yes, isn't it . . . in those early days of the fall of '35, where the order was, as I understand it from Hopkins, ah, "Put people to work, get money to them, worry about what they're doing later on." Well, you know, the raking leaves gambit. If you didn't have any tools, if you didn't have any food, where were you?

JD: They couldn't rake leaves.

HP: Yeah, their tools were a form of property, you know. They just don't spring into being like Botticelli's Venus on the half-shell, and therefore, if you have people out who are going through what -- empty emotions, you know, raking leaves with a single rake, or something like that, it is subject to a form of criticism because people didn't understand the emergency nature of it.

JD: Right. Some of them don't understand the problem because if these critics had to do it themselves, they'd do the same thing. Nothing else they can do.

HP: It's so . . . .

JD: Raking leaves happens to be a necessary occupation. If you've ever had a house, you'd find that in certain

parts of the year you have to rake leaves.

HP: Exactly.

JD: It's an unpleasant chore, but you have to do it. But this was not necessarily characteristic, and, as I say, it's my impression, see, again I repeat, it's my impression that with . . . not withstanding the charges of inefficiency, the average WPA project in my opinion acted as efficiently as they do in the Pentagon today.

HP: Oh sure. Well, I think the key to it initially was . . . .

JD: I'm not talking about the administrative staff. The administrative staff certainly was efficient. There they had the choice. In the early days, you see, the administrative staff was . . . ah, the preference was supposed to be given to people from the relief role, they dropped that entirely, for the time, see. They found that wouldn't work. They tried to choose the best people. These were the key people, the administrative staff. They were a very small group. I don't know how many there were nation-wide, couldn't be more than . . . out of 3 million I doubt whether it was more than a 100,000 on the administrative staff. Washington never had to pick administrative staff. As far as decentralization was concerned, except for the federal project, the program was decentralized.

HP: Right, right, and this despite the general criticism of this period that everything was centered in Washington.

JD: It was decentralized.

HP: Right, right.

JD: No other way it could operate.

HP: Well, I think under FERA and CWA there were already in being state organizations.

JD: State organizations, oh yes.

HP: And these continued although . . . . This was another thing: putting this many people to work in such a quick space of time and creating the administrative structure to handle them, you know, as quickly as it was done, led to some initial commentary about the nature of the work, you know, and the waste of funds which was not borne out by the continuity and history of the WPA.

JD: It can't be borne out by that because I think there was a final history written of the WPA containing some statistical data. The life of the program, I guess the total life was roughly seven years, July of 1935 to, say, June of 142. Incidentally, one of the men who had something to do with writing that history was an, ah, well-known novelist who sort of disappeared from the public scene -- Floyd Dell.

HP: Floyd Dell?

JD: Floyd Dell had much to do with writing the final history. I think he finally landed in the Writers Project somewhere. He's still in town, still alive, living here in Washington. Remember Floyd Dell?

HP: Oh yes, the novelist in the Twenties.

JD: Charming fellow. I knew Floyd Dell, not well.

HP: But the basic proposition borne out by his History survey was that they were efficiently done?

JD: That was the basic value. You have to face that there were so many miles of roads done, so many bridges, so forth, see. No matter who did it, it takes people to do this. It has to be done. These things have to be done by somebody. And where the results are intangibles, you have evidence of so many concerts, so much participation, so forth. The facts are there, and you don't do that by raking leaves.

HP: No, the only unfortunate thing is that the total history of the WPA never caught up with the criticism.

JD: Of course not.

HP: No, by the time it came to an end, you were off on another problem fighting with those angry voices from abroad which changed the whole scene. And so WPA became virtually an eddy, and less and less important. But the facts of the WPA never quite caught up with the criticism.

JD: I would think . . . one of the criticisms that could have been leveled at you is one that I had myself. WPA certainly had gone out of existence in 1941. There seemed to be no reason to perpetuate it at that time. The

reason for it was gone, but you had people like Florence Kerr who thought that we could sell ourselves through the work that we did. Well, this is nonsense; this was not our mission. I suppose in the course of history there are examples where a mission changes, but I don't think that you could get support for that idea. The organization would have to be different.

HP: I think she had in mind the school lunches . . . .

JD: Oh, that kept up, yes. The school lunch program is still going.

HP: Yes. I know, but it began under the WPA.

JD: Yes, it began under WPA.

HP: I think she had that in mind along with other things like the pre-school clinics so mothers could go out and work, this sort of thing. Well, you know, the War created a tremendous demand for workers and retraining programs. There was a thought . . . I think, it may have come from Jay DuVon who was under Florence Kerr.

JD: Did you see Jay, by the way?

HP: Yes, I did.

JD: He knows something of the early history. I think he worked in the Writer's Project in Iowa.

HP: But his thought was that we could start a retraining program, take unskilled people in, teach them a skill and turn them over to the factories, shipbuilding yards . . . in the NYA though, didn't they?

JD: They ran it in WPA . . . a training program. H: Oh did they?

JD: Oh yes, they ran a retraining program in WPA.

HP: I didn't know that.

JD: But the whole direction would have to be changed. As a matter of fact, I think I'm correct in saying that the state director of the retraining program in Minnesota was Hubert Humphrey.

HP: I'll be darned!

JD: Yes, and he's proud to say that he had a connection with the program. He came in late, around '40, '42. Now, how necessary that was an how wise it was to give that punch to WPA I don't know. I was inclined to believe that they were not the agency to handle it. The agency that has its roots in the relief program is not the logical agency to handle it. Coming back, say, to the arts, what do you do with the Arts Projects? Do you see? It just doesn't make any sense.

HP: No. Well, many of the artists were consumed by military installations, schools of camouflage, poster-making, etc. But it was under another aegis and it was, in effect, a job created by the War, not a relief thing to which . . . .

JD: It wouldn't be . . . should not have been relief.

HP: Right.

JD: The statement should have been out.

HP: Right.

JD: If there were a statement, I don't think there should have been.

HP: But there is different logic in this . . . .

JD: Logic is entirely in opinion, see? And I felt it very strongly at the time, and mind you, I was a man who felt dedicated to the WPA in general and the Arts Projects in particular. I had this feeling of dedication. I felt that way when it came to late '40, early '41. There was no rationale for its continuation. Not only was the spark gone, but the rationale was gone, see? And now there again you come back to the subject -- what is the basis of this federally-supported sponsorship of the arts? And there is something wrong with a theory that says the most sponsorship at the time of depression and the least sponsorship at the time of prosperity. That makes no sense. So there must be some other basis for development.

HP: Well, just what its nature is . . . .

JD: That's right. I believe people ought to . . . . I imagine there will be a lot of discussion in the not too distant future. The current interest in the Kennedys and various local interests.

HP: Sure, sure. Well, you must be exhausted!

JD: No, I'm not exhausted. I feel as if I could have a drink, how about you?

HP: Would love one.

JD: OK, what'd you take. I'll see if I can . . .

HP: I, I . . . .

JD: Scotch or Bourbon?

HP: I'm a good Scotch man, just on the rocks.

JD: Just on the rocks.

HP: Please.

JD: You recall the name of John Tabor?

HP: John Tabor, Congressman . . . .

JD: Congressman from New York, the man that held the purse strings of government for many years. Under the Republican administration he was the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee. Under the Democrat, he was the ranking minority member. John Tabor, who is an extremely able man, never should be ignored. The man knew more about the budgetary process than anybody I've ever seen, before or since. Goes back to '36, sort of smells skullduggery, but gets at the root of things in discussions. I admired and respected his ability in that connection, but not his social dealings. John Tabor started opposing liberal policies in the WPA, was one of the leading antagonists against the WPA and continued until he got out of Congress. Well, I had been in WPA 6 years when it was over. I was in OPA roughly 5 years and I think the first year that I was in the Library of Congress was under, I believe, the 80th Congress of the Republicans.

HP: Yes.

JD: The 80th Congress of the Republicans, and at that time John Tabor was the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and I think at tht time he chose to play a role on our particular subcommittee. He asked Leuther Evans, then Librarian of Congress, whether he had any WPA derelicts on his staff. This was the kind of thing he'd do. Ha, ha. Ah, know whether he had any . . . . His favorite term was "WPA derelicts." He was asked whether he had any OPA people on his staff. He was definitely opposed to OPA and so, ah, Evans said, "yes," he had one man, Julius Davidson, but he got him not because he was OPA, but because he was in WPA. So he damned me double. Now this is what you have, see, and it was my luck for 6 years on WPA, 5 years on OPA, to be in an agency that had made front page headlines every single day. This was my, what . . . . OPA was not as well administered as WPA. I think OPA did a job that had to be done. But you've got the same problem, somehow or other. WPA, there again, I say, there was no good rationale, or bad public relations. We did a job, a job that was supposed to be necessary. If there was any way to save our capitalist system, that wsa the way to save it, not to kill it, but to save it. Some people don't understand it. Now OPA got a bad press because we regulated, we regulated. There was no way to avoid it. We did the job that was necessary. Now, that I can understand. You can understand why businessmen didn't like it, and the people didn't like OPA because of the rationing program. Everybody confronted it. The businessmen didn't like either the rationing program, or the price control program and the consumers didn't like the rationing.

HP: Well, none the less, the consumers got the benefit of it, at least an opportunity to have a share.

JD: That's right. And a fair share.

HP: Right. Let's see, I've talked with . . . . Who was the head of the enforcement agency of the OPA -- Tom Emerson?

JD: Tom Emerson.

HP: Yes, which was a very tough problem.

JD: Extremely tough.

HP: Endlessly tough and involved. That is it, you know. I like to think that the OPA suffered less because of the good sense of the American people, despite its bad press, than they would have suffered if the enforcement powers of the OPA had been utilized to the full extent.

JD: Well . . . .

HP: Yeah, that's the toughest . . . .

JD: I had the good fortune to operate a nation-wide program which I think generally got a good press. It was part of the Enforcement Program. I was responsible for all the price lists, this was my program, and I was in charge of it nationwide. I started the program. I saw it through to the very end. This was the easiest program for people to understand, the easiest one to enforce, because you had a published, printed, displayed price list. It was my job to develop the technique, but that program got me recognized nationwide. We tried the same thing in OPS, but it didn't do well.

HP: One thing it's now accounting for. There's really no accounting given the context of the time and the need for the program, there's no accounting for John Tabor's attitude toward either the WPA or the OPA. You see, it insured fairness in the one. It perhaps in a way prevented a more serious dislocation socially in the other, you know. And for him to be blind to the implications of the social dislocation on the one hand and this spurt to a hoarding, or monopolizing given commodities -- I just don't understand the thinking that goes into it, to make a Tabor.

JD: Truman has a documentary on the vital decisions they had to make. Going into that, the last one I saw had to do with the conflict over price control 1945, at a time when price control, if anything, was more necessary than it was during the war. I had . . . the minute that price controls were lifted, I conducted nationwide surveys about what happened. Somewhere in the Archives, there are substantial tables of exactly what happened week after week with price control. There was no sense to it. People should have supported it. They were pressured by steel, by the automakers, by Packers, they had to give it up. Nothing else to do. In '45 we got support. In '46 we got none. We're still suffering today.

HP: Yes, and you know in a very strong way that very 80th Congress helped re-elect him by removing the Commodity Credit Corporation. Remember when they removed the funds so that you couldn't keep the surplus off the market and the price of wheat fell overnight?

JD: The price of wheat went down, and everything else went up.

JD: Exactly, but the price of wheat fell and if you look up . . . .

JD: And the price of bread went up.

HP: Right, but Truman went out into the wheat belt, and he and Brannen, I think, exploited that.

JD: You see, now, during OPS, unless price controls were imposed the day that the North Koreans invaded the south, it made no sense to anybody.

HP: Right.

JD: We were licked before we started. There, although I worked on it faithfully for 2 years, there was no reason for prices. Production was there. There was a great deal at that time, there was an oversupply. '45, '46 there was a change for 4 years, they retooled, production got into gear -- why there's just no sense to drop it like that.

HP: None.

JD: The only things that much relation . . . All these things must relate. As I say, I had strong feelings toward WPA. There was a timing for it: times when it was needed, times when it wasn't. Now I'm interested in the problem of the arts. But the timing is such that . . . . 'Course right now who'd think of bringing in another relief program -- see, we've got 5% unemployed. 15% of the Negroes are unemployed. Now are we going to take advantage of that to run an art program?

HP: No, that's no basis.

JD: Base it on quicksand. Doesn't make any sense.

HP: No, but a school and retraining program, skill program makes sense. Well, you've seen some interesting things come and go, haven't you?

JD: I've enjoyed my government experience.

HP: I'll bet you have.

JD: I've been in government service a long time. I've been in the Library of Congress sixteen years.

HP: Of course, those problems are part of the Legislative Branch and are different than before when you were part of the Executive Branch.

JD: I had different problems when working in different areas. I'm concerned with the substance of the operation. But I can't say I had the same dedication. It isn't as exciting.

HP: It isn't socially related, or economically related to the pulse, although in terms of the operation itself, it's a kind of governor, generated governor on the operation.

JD: Right, I'm the Chief Fiscal Officer.

HP: Right, and that's an internal kind of police.

JD: Lots of things are complicated. The operation is more complicated than most people think.

HP: Well, it's been fun.