



ORAL HISTORY—

C. Louis Kincannon

This is an interview conducted on September 11 and 15, 1992, with former Census Bureau deputy director Charles Louis Kincannon (January 1982-September 1992). The interviewer is Frederick G. Bohme, chief of the History Branch (September 1975 to December 1993).

Bohme: This is Fred Bohme of the History Branch of the Data User Services Division. This is Friday, September 11, 1992. This is an oral interview with Charles Louis Kincannon otherwise known as Louis. So, from that to you, tell me about your background.

Kincannon: Well, Fred, I grew up in Texas and was educated in Texas. I did my undergraduate work in economics at the University of Texas at Austin. In those days that was the only University of Texas there was, but now you need to tag it with “Austin.” I came back from Christmas holiday of my senior year and found waiting for me in Austin a telegram from Don Fay [Donald F. Fay, chief of the Employee Relations Branch, Personnel Division] of the Census Bureau, asking if I would be interested in a job in economic statistics or computer programming.

Bohme: What year was this?

Kincannon: This was December of 1962; and I replied, “Yes.” It sounded like a good opportunity to come to the East Coast. Washington was a very exciting place during the Kennedy Administration. Unfortunately, I had never taken a course in either statistics or computer programming, so in the spring semester I signed up for a course in each and found I liked the statistics far better than the computer programming—at least in the dark ages of computer programming. So I came to Washington in the middle of June of 1963 and reported to the Census Bureau for work. The salaries were—well, they seemed quite generous at the time—\$5,540 a year as a statistician, and I remember living pleasantly, if not extravagantly, on that. I worked in the Industry Division. I reported for work to Milton Eisen, who was the branch chief in

the Industry Division for consumer non-durables, I forget the precise title [Food, Textiles, Apparel, and Leather Branch]. And I worked for Bob Nealon [Robert J. Nealon, chief, Textiles Section] and under him for Evelyn Denny [who later became section chief]. Textiles was a very big item for the Industry Division then. Luther Hodges, the former Governor of North Carolina, was Secretary of Commerce [January 1961-January 1965], and textiles were seen as a troubled industry beset by imported goods, and so forth, so there were a lot of surveys about textile activity.

Bohme: **Did you get involved with the censuses at all while you were here?**

Kincannon: Yes, the economic ones. The planning was pretty much completed for the 1963 Census of Manufactures, but I got involved in final activities in preparing that. Of course, the following year, 1964, there was an intensive period of activity, a lot of work. We used the computer, but work was very labor-intensive and paper-intensive then. As questionnaires started coming in from respondents, the work force in the Industry Division essentially worked mandatory overtime all day on Saturday and two evenings, so the pace was very busy, although the extra income was welcome for that period of time.

Bohme: **Were you using the Jeffersonville facilities at that time, do you remember?**

Kincannon: Yes, we did use the Jeffersonville facilities. As a matter of fact, each of us was also required to spend a period of time every now and then in Jeffersonville working on problem and edit-failure resolution. Most of the paper stayed there for review, so we would go down for two weeks at a time and stay in Jeffersonville, which I found interesting and pleasant duty. I formed a very fond attachment to the people in the [Data Preparation] Division [then called the Jeffersonville Census Operations Office] there and always liked the local area as a place to visit and even to live. Although I've never lived there, it was very pleasant.

Bohme: **All right; take us down to the end of your period in the Industry Division and what motivated then your move.**

Kincannon: The Census Bureau at that time had a wonderful internship program. And after two or three years in the Industry Division, I signed up to compete for that and was selected along with four or five other people to spend a year on a series of rotational assignments. Bob Nealon, who was my supervisor, had encouraged this. He was a wonderful supervisor; he really sought to see to the individual's development and took a broad perspective, not just of what was helpful to the Textiles Section or to the Industry Division, but what developed human resources for the Census Bureau.

So I was interviewed by a panel of Census executives, and selected. Max Shor, who was then an assistant division chief [for staff and special projects] in the Business Division, was my advisor for that period. I did an assignment in the Population Division, in the Labor Force Statistics Branch; and in the Business Division, working on a very interesting project: transfer of a department store survey (the monthly department store survey) from the Federal Reserve Bank to the Census Bureau.

Bohme: **What year was this?**

Kincannon: This was about 1966; I think it was 1966. I did an assignment in the Systems Division, which no longer exists, but shared an office with Roger Lepage [Roger O. Lepage, chief of the Population and Housing Programming Branch], and worked on some matters related to the test in New Haven, Connecticut, for the 1970 census [of population and housing]. And then—something that had not been done before in the intern program—I did an assignment at what was then called the Office of Business Economics [OBE], which is now the Bureau of Economic Analysis [BEA]. It was very exciting to work downtown; their offices were near Dupont Circle, and I enjoyed that for a while. The most interesting thing that I worked on was preparing the input/output tables. We were using the 1963 census of manufactures, taking that apart and producing input/output tables. Now we didn't know about CQM [Census Quality Management] in those days, but in the language of quality management, I had become a “customer” for the products that I had produced. It was a very revealing experience to take the products of the Census Bureau and try to use them. You would discover anomalies and interesting things, but of course, basically you just saw how it worked. That was quite an instructive period. After that, I returned to the Industry Division for about a year and a half as I recall.

Bohme: **Did anything that you did in this internship at OBE affect what would be done in the next manufactures census because you had discovered certain things that you needed to have that you didn't have?**

Kincannon: The only thing that I recall was that I noted that the manual procedures that we used to suppress identifiable data in related tables in the manufactures census were somewhat unsuccessful. The set of tables in that census is very complex and inter-related; and without automated procedures, it was very difficult to ensure that all the related figures were suppressed. And we didn't do a very good job on that. I certainly provided that information back to the Industry Division, and although I'm not

certain, I believe we made efforts to change and improve that. Of course, nowadays we use an automated process that's pretty effective in those mechanical aspects.

Bohme: **All right; you came back then from your foray downtown; you returned to Industry Division, did you?**

Kincannon: Yes; I think it was for about a year and a half in the Industry Division. I became chief of the Textiles Section. Then I ran into Murray Weitzman, who was an assistant division chief in the Population Division at that time. I had worked with him when I had the intern assignment in the Population Division. I ran into him in the cafeteria. There was a vacancy in the division, and he wondered if I knew anybody who would be interested. And I said, yes, that I would be interested. This was a very interesting assignment in heading up a study of scientific and engineering and college-trained manpower on a contract with the National Science Foundation [NSF]. It was to be a followon survey to the 1970 census. It did involve a promotion opportunity, and so I took that. That survey, even though it was supposed to be one-time, evolved into a continuing survey and continues, in fact, to this day.

Bohme: **Did you organize it?**

Kincannon: Yes; it was essentially a blank sheet of paper. One had been done after the 1960 census, but there had been no continuation following that. So it was my task, with (you know) "guidance and advice," to work with the NSF staff on the objectives of the survey and the budget, and so forth, and prepare all that and work with the Systems Division to get the various clerical and other specifications prepared and carried out.

Bohme: **Was it intended to be a longitudinal survey at that time?**

Kincannon: No, it was intended to be a one-time, cross-sectional followup in more detail to the census. The idea was to select people working in engineering and scientific occupations plus a sample of people with four or more years of college, to get those who might have moved out of their field occupationally and look at their career patterns. It was longitudinal in one sense: we asked each person to talk about their current and three and two previous jobs, so that we built backward a longitudinal panel, and we asked a lot of questions about their formal education. The interesting thing that occurred between the beginning of the planning of the survey, about 1967 or 1968, and its execution in 1972 (which was as soon as we could get the records from the 1970 population census), was that engineers had gone from a shortage occupation to one of surplus and where there were engineers dislocated temporarily and looking for jobs.

Charles Falk, of the National Science Foundation [Planning Director, 1966-1970; Director, Science Resources Studies, 1970-1985], was astounded to learn that by conventional labor force definitions, an engineer who lost his job as an engineer was an unemployed engineer, but then if he got a job as a taxi driver he was an employed taxi driver and was lost to the conventional statistics in the Current Population Survey. Therefore, we made certain revisions in the plans for the survey so that we could track people who had once been engineers. The NSF found this so useful, contrasted with their previous method through a national register of scientists and engineers, that over time, they dropped most components of the register and continued biannually to survey this population through the Census Bureau.

Bohme: **Okay. When did you leave the Census Bureau to go back downtown again?**

Kincannon: Well, after about five years in the Population Division, I got a call from Paul Taff, who had been chief of the Census Bureau's Personnel Division, but at that point was head of all administrative activities in what was then called the Social and Economic Statistics Administration [SESA, established in January 1972] through sort of an amalgamation of Census and the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Paul said there was a job opening up in SESA as chief of the Program Review Staff, and he thought, because of my experience on both the economic and the demographic side, that I had some unique experience to bring to that job. I had no idea what the Program Review Staff would do. I soon discovered it was primarily general staff work—just poking around and thinking and asking questions and coordinating things that Paul Taff or the SESA administrator thought needed to be done. The relationships between the two bureaus and SESA were awkward and strained. There had been a lot of criticism from the ASA [American Statistical Association] over the appointment of the director of the Census Bureau, Vince Barabba [Vincent P. Barabba, May 1973-Sept. 1976, and later Jul. 1979-Jan. 1981] and the administrator of SESA, Ed Failor.

So Ted Clemence of the Census Bureau [Theodore G. Clemence, then Program and Policy Officer], Paul Lieberman, who was a personal assistant to Ed Failor, and I really worked very hard to try to get practical things done and make sure that agendas that were less divisive were arranged for meetings and things like that. I did that for a couple of years, or a year and a half, until SESA was

abolished [July 1975], and that's when an opportunity opened at OMB [Office of Management and Budget]. I took that job in the Statistical Policy Division.

Bohme: **Did the submissions to OMB come through your hands while you were at SESA? It sounds like the sort of general thing that might have happened.**

Kincannon: Yes, I think they did, in fact, although the work then, as now, was mainly handled in one of the administrative divisions. In those days there was not as great a concern about paper work burden as there is now, and there was a close relationship in general between staff at the Statistical Policy Division at OMB and professionals at Census, so that things generally worked quite smoothly. It was interesting also that because of the Census Bureau's expertise in statistics, all of the paperwork clearances for the whole Department of Commerce came through the Census Bureau.

Bohme: **Interesting.**

Kincannon: It was an interesting thing, and long gone with the wind. Reforms have prevented such sensible things from occurring now.

Bohme: **Quite so. All right; you went, you heard about a job at OMB, or how did this come to you?**

Kincannon: Well, in that job in the SESA Program Review Staff, I went to a number of meetings on different topics at OMB, and Bob Raynsford, who was a branch chief at OMB, called me when SESA was abolished. I would be at somewhat loose ends even though I was scheduled to move to what was then the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Economic Affairs at Commerce. He said he had a vacancy on his staff and would like to talk to me about it, so we talked, and over a period of months that evolved and I took a position there.

Bohme: **This was what year?**

Kincannon: This was 1975. I actually started working at OMB in September 1975. The branch at that time had responsibility for labor force, income, and wealth statistics. But almost immediately, Joe [Joseph W.] Duncan, who was chief of the Statistical Policy Division, asked me to take responsibility for liaison between the Census Bureau and other statistical agencies and the office of Vice-President [Nelson A.] Rockefeller, who wanted regular preparation of chartbooks for Rockefeller's use.

Rockefeller had always been a big user of charts; he was dyslexic, and so written materials were difficult for him to use. And going back to his days in the Roosevelt Administration in the State Department, he would characteristically

have books and walls filled with up-to-date charts of information and where people were assigned and all those kinds of things. So, when he became Vice President, he had asked that the statistical system provide a weekly briefing book of charted information of statistics. These would come out of regular series of various economic statistics, plus each week there would be whatever was currently coming out on social, or demographic, or health, or other kinds of statistics from other agencies. There was an interagency committee that supported the activity for all agencies, and the production work was all done by Bob Torene [Robert Torene, then chief of the Economic Surveys Division's Transportation Branch] here at the Census Bureau. Bob was a former colleague of mine from the Industry Division. But I was the one who had to deal with the Vice President's office, particularly with an assistant to the Vice President named Dick Allison, who became a long time friend as a result of all that. So, each week, we had to get this book prepared. We produced on color Xerox equipment, which was then rather exotic. Of course, Rockefeller not only used it for himself, but he used it as a centerpiece for a weekly meeting that he had with President [Gerald] Ford. And of course he wanted a copy to give to President Ford, so we then had to prepare two copies of it. Well, anything that the President of the United States gets, other people want to get too, so we soon had a list of 15 or 25 people who wanted to get copies of this book too. They included then Secretary of State [Henry] Kissinger, and any number of Cabinet and White House officials. Dutifully, we would send these books around every week. After a few days, one would come back from Henry Kissinger with his neat initials showing that he had seen it and sent it back.

Bohme: **Did this have a name, this book?**

Kincannon: It was called simply "Weekly Briefing Notes for the President and Vice President." A title with a certain bureaucratic cachet, at any rate.

Bohme: **Well, it sounds as if we're going to lead up to our publication called Social Statistics III. Do you remember that?**

Kincannon: Well, it was only indirectly related to that. Vice President Rockefeller was a man with a brilliant and expansive mind and charming in all my contacts to him—just a very, very positive person. He decided that, what the heck, if it was good enough for the President and him and most of the Cabinet, it would be good for the American people, so he suggested that we develop a proposal for a—I think we did it

monthly—a monthly published chart book, which was called “Status for Statistics, US.” A beautiful publication, multicolored, slick paper; it was handsome.

Bohme: **The kind we would never get through the Commerce Publication Committee now.**

Kincannon: That’s right, never get through the Publication Committee these days. We submitted a proposal to the Vice President’s office and asked for his suggestions. He had a keen eye on these things; he passed it back with but one suggestion—he wanted to see the frontispiece and to review that. Well, I had to look up “frontispiece” in the dictionary, but we provided that. His contribution was to suggest that the frontispiece should be a short paragraph-or-two article signed by President Ford and including a [line-type] sketch of him, which was a very nice touch, and we did that. We produced a series of experimental issues and then finally produced it—I can’t remember whether it was on a monthly or quarterly basis—for a while. The Commerce Department submitted a budget proposal to continue this, but the House appropriations subcommittee [Commerce, Justice, State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies] zeroed it out—excluded this specifically.

Bohme: **You said “we.” More specifically, was the major work done in the Census Bureau or elsewhere?**

Kincannon: The production work was done in the Census Bureau. The data came from various agencies in the statistical system, and we had a major feature in each issue that highlighted a particular national chart. Vince Barabba was still director of the Census in his first term at that point; everyone will recall that he had a great interest in graphical presentation of data, so we had a lot of support. The Census Bureau was not a grudging participant at all; they were quite interested. Shirley Kallek [associate director for economic fields] was in charge of economic statistics, and the preparation was done in her directorate, so that things were on time and very well done. Even though it referred to data, the publication had a descriptive term saying it was the product of the Federal statistical system; it was done under the Commerce and OMB masthead, I think.

Anyway, it was a great idea; it was very popular, but it was not popular with Congressman John Slack [D.-W.Va.] who was the appropriations subcommittee chair at that point. I don’t know whether he simply saw it as unnecessarily slick or as giving too much prominence to President Ford in a reelection year or what, but at any rate, we lost the money for that.

Bohme: Was there any connection with this particular project and one that—I remember its initials—was called DIDS?

Kincannon: Domestic Information Data System. No, no relationship. DIDS was an automated interactive data base that conceptually was very stimulating, and probably was a little bit ahead of its time in technology and certainly ahead of its time in terms of the receptiveness of policy makers to interactive data bases. Certainly, Joe Duncan was comfortable sitting down at a keyboard and directly accessing data, but in general, elected and appointed officials were not of that generation. But I didn't have anything to do, really, with DIDS. You mentioned Social Indicators III; that was a project of OMB and later as it became perceived to be operational, it shifted to the Census Bureau. Dennis Johnston worked on that, succeeding Dan Tunstill, but it died in the budget cutbacks of the early Reagan Administration.

Bohme: Let's go back to OMB now, particularly; what else did you do there?

Kincannon: Well, I had review of paper work under the Federal Reports Act for a set of agencies, including the International Trade Commission and a number of others, new agencies that I was not familiar with, and I learned a lot. In the Carter Administration there was a lot of reorganization activity in Government. The President's Reorganization Project was an active and multi-headed creature that was engaged in all kinds of general review of government activities to try to find more rational ways to organize. And one area that was reviewed was OMB itself, and the connection between the review of organization and application of zero-based budgeting led to a decision, really with unfortunate consequences, to take the statistical policy part of OMB and move it out.

Bohme: To Commerce.

Kincannon: They decided to move it to Commerce. It's very difficult to conduct a central coordinating activity of Government from one of the Cabinet departments, because everyone is a little suspicious of their turf, and Census and BEA—well, Census particularly—was a big man on campus and therefore not always trusted as having every other statistical agency's best interest at heart. In Commerce, the unit was called the OFSPS—the Office of Federal Statistical Policy and Standards.

Left behind in OMB was the “power” component of that unit, the authority under the Federal Reports Act to review paperwork clearances. This authority dated back to 1942, but came to play a role in deregulation. This deregulation function began in the Ford Administration but certainly reached its flowering in the Carter Administration. People forget that now, but this was the deregulation movement,

and paperwork control was seen as a significant component of that. A new OMB division was created called the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. I elected to stay behind and work on deregulation and paperwork. I liked the work at OMB; my view was that it was a mistake to move Statistical Policy out, and I wanted to stay with what I saw as a growing activity. Presently, when Roy Lowry retired (he was the branch chief in charge of the Federal Reports Act), I succeeded him. Stanley Morris headed the new division; he had been working on regulatory policy in the Ford Administration and continued with this responsibility for a time in the Carter Administration. Among other things, we developed the original draft of what became the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980. I worked closely with Steve Daniels, who was minority staff director for the House Government Operations Committee. He worked for Congressman Frank Horton [R.-N.Y.], who had been a co-chair of the President's Commission on Federal Paperwork. Eventually, the major responsibility for that bill was taken over by the chairman of the Government Operations Committee, Jack Brooks [D.-Tex.], who broadened it to cover many aspects of so-called information policy, computers, records management, and things like that. But the core of that, which remains as the means for controlling paperwork that the Federal Government imposes on the public, was drafted in that group by me and by Stan Morris and other people in that unit.

Bohme: You spoke of a “division” here. I’m just a bit curious about how many people were in that division, and what sorts of people were they? Were they statisticians, or what?

Kincannon: The old Statistical Policy Division was about 25 people, I think. I think about 10 people remained behind. Of those, there were a handful of statisticians, including LaVerne Collins, who had worked at the Census Bureau and later returned to the Bureau; Dick Eisinger, who had come out of the Public Health Service and later became chief of staff to the Social Security Commissioner; and a number of other people. Maybe five or six were statisticians or economists, people with quantitative training. There must have been more than 10, because there were at least half a dozen people who worked in the administrative apparatus to handle the receipt and control of the paperwork submissions. There was a considerable apparatus, a filing room, all that sort of thing. When I became chief of that branch, we underwent a major operation to automate that process. It was fairly pioneering for the day, certainly in the context of OMB. We converted it from essentially a paper files system to an automated system with on-line control. In an office in each branch, you could

call up the record about what you were reviewing. You would write your recommendation and decision on that, and a report was then automatically printed out and returned to the agency. We did this because the Paperwork Reduction Act required reducing Federal paperwork by a certain targeted amount—10 percent in the first year or two; I forget. We found out it was difficult to measure, and so measuring this at intervals was an intense manual operation where the whole staff would have to fall to, go through the files at the Clearance Office, jot down what had happened, and then add these figures up. It really was 19th century—an early, pre-Hollerith [punchcard] 19th century. We automated that so that we had control over it, and reports on what had happened occurred in automated fashion.

Bohme: **Did this speed up the review process significantly? I say this by prefacing the question: One of the frequent criticisms heard outside of OMB is that it took so blasted long to get anything approved.**

Kincannon: I think it did, in fact, speed up at least some of the review process, because of one important change that we introduced into the legislation. By that time, the House had finished its work. On the Senate side, Bob Coakley was on the staff of then Senator [Lawton] Chiles from Florida, who was the chairman of the subcommittee involved—maybe the full committee. Bob and I worked very closely on the bill and decided that it would be a good idea to put a time limit on OMB’s review. Under the Federal Reports Act of 1942, there was no time limit. In general, OMB behaved promptly, you know, and in 30, 60, or 90 days things were finished up. But some things would sit around for a year or more, either out of neglect—and I must say the Agency must not have cared either—or because there was some kind of disagreement. Bob Coakley and I had the view that OMB could exercise its responsibility and change something or turn it down, but it shouldn’t have mere delay as a principal tool. So we put in a 60-day limit on activity and provided in the statute that if OMB did not act within the time limit, approval was automatic. And so I think it put a ceiling over OMB activity. There was a provision you could get an extra 30 days, but that was it, so after 90 days, OMB had to act on something. Now, as is often the case, I think the ceiling also became somewhat of a floor. Also, there were new requirements that OMB publish things in the Federal Register before acting on them, to get time for public comment. The combination of those two meant that most things took, I think, between 45 and 90 days to get through. So it may have slowed down some of the old quick-action things, but it also ensured that there couldn’t be infinite delay.

One other very significant change in that legislation was this: The Federal Reports Act had excluded the IRS [Internal Revenue Service] originally, which represents a third or 40 percent of all Government paperwork; and over the years, Congress had granted a further exclusion to the so-called independent regulatory agencies. The Federal Reports Act stopped all that, swept all of them up in there. That was one of the toughest things to do, one of the heaviest rocks to lift, because the IRS did not like that, particularly the Federal regulatory [agencies] did not like that. But with the backing of the Administration and the Congress, we managed to get that changed. That was a very significant change. Out of that came a new organization within OMB called the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs [OIRA]. That was not desired by the Administration, but the adroit tactics and strategy of Chairman Jack Brooks put them in a position where they really didn't have any choice but to accept that. Also, partly as a result of the views of Elmer Staats, who was then the Comptroller General and had been deputy director of the Bureau of the Budget, it brought statistical policy back into OMB, which greatly disliked that move.

Basically, the law passed under the Carter Administration, but then was implemented under the Reagan Administration, so it provided a ready platform for the vigorous deregulatory and paper-reduction activity in the early Reagan Administration.

Bohme: **Now, your career at OMB is moving along; what was your final assignment there?**

Kincannon: Well, my final assignment was essentially as chief of that same branch, it changed names various times. In the six years I was at OMB, we underwent four major re-organizations. I worked under three different principal supervisors—Joe Duncan, then Stan Morris, and then Jim Tozzi. The first administrator of OIRA was Jim Miller, who later on became chairman of the Federal Trade Commission and then director of OMB. A fine and thoughtful person to work for, a wonderful person to work for. After getting the system revised and automated, I found the kind of day-to-day implementation, particularly the strong, essentially negative cast to the work of deregulation, was not much to my interest. I had enjoyed building something new—the legislation, the automated system and so forth—but I did not find it as rewarding to just implement that.

And so I thought I would like to return to a more conventional job of building and growing an organization, and I talked with a number of people, including Danny

[Daniel B.] Levine, who was then deputy director of the Census Bureau, and expressed an interest in returning. He began working to make that possible.

Bohme: **Before we go on to your return to the Bureau, would you comment on the atmosphere in which the Census Bureau and OMB operated from the standpoint of OMB? I can hear lots of things from the Bureau's end, but it's unique to have someone to speak about how the situation was viewed from the OMB standpoint.**

Kincannon: I think there may have been specific issues, problems, but in general, the view from OMB was that the Census Bureau was a competent, professional organization. I remember talking to Jim Tozzi one time, and he said, "The Census Bureau can carry out statistical work, you know. You give them a job to do, you give them the money, and you can trust that it gets done. Like it's one of the good old-line agencies of Government of which we have a very high opinion." Now, sometimes the Census Bureau was seen as inflexible and less imaginative than it might be, but that was kind of a characteristic view. It was valued as a competent agency. We had some tension over the questionnaire content for the 1980 census. Given the objective in the Carter Administration of reducing Federal paperwork, we just about had to cut something out. This was difficult for the Census Bureau. The work of reviewing and preparing the questionnaire was done under an interagency committee under OFSPS. OMB was a participant in that, and we had a vigorous, competent participant, Barbara Young—Barbara Wiess, I think her name was at the time. They had produced a contract. Nonetheless, when it came in for our review, we were obligated essentially to try to take a fresh look at it.

As I recall, we identified four questions that we thought maybe were at the margin. I don't remember all of them; one of them had to do with the existence of basements in homes and it was tied to a civil defense program, and the other one, that I recall, was ancestry. Ancestry still wound up being in the 1980 census and in the 1990 census. Essentially, it was not a very scientific question; it was sort of an opinion poll—"What would you like to be identified with?"—you know, the Poles or the Scots or the whatever. Since it didn't have any scientific basis and didn't have any objective answer that you could evaluate, we took a rather dim view of it. In fact, informally, the Census Bureau didn't seem to express much enthusiasm for it. It had been a substitute for a question called "mother tongue," which had been used traditionally to analyze and monitor immigrant population.

So we recommended eliminating those two questions and some others. The political people in the Carter Administration supported us only on the basement question. Even well before the demise of the “Evil Empire” [i.e., the USSR], it was clear that we were not going to practically use basements in defense in nuclear war and so we got that question off, but the ethnic desk in the White House insisted that the ancestry question go on the census. So basically we didn’t cause too much grief, I think, to the Census Bureau in that process. And as I say, the Census Bureau was respected as an organization.

Bohme: **Okay, so you talked with Danny Levine and Danny expressed some interest to having you come back to the Bureau. What happened next and what year was this?**

Kincannon: This was the summer of 1981, and of course I knew the Census Bureau well. I had expressed interest in some other agencies as well, but Danny was interested in having me come back without reference to a specific job. He began to consider that, and I put in an application. I guess there was a vacancy as assistant director for administration; that’s what happened to be vacant, so that’s what I applied for.

I received a call from a friend who was no longer in Government one day (I had taken the day off and was gardening at home), and the friend said, “You will be offered a job at the Census Bureau. It is not the job that you have applied for, but I advise you to take it.” This is a person that I trusted. In short, in a matter of days I received a call from Danny Levine offering a job as assistant director for processing—a job that I didn’t even know existed. It was one, basically, that had the responsibility for supervising the processing offices of the 1980 census, which by then were pretty much through with their work. So I took that and came back to the Census Bureau.

Bruce Chapman had been nominated, but had not been confirmed as director [Oct. 1981-Jan. 1983], and he asked to meet with me before I took this job, and he and Danny and I had a conversation. Then I came on and took that job, and then when Danny Levine retired, I indicated my interest in being considered for the deputy director’s job, as I’m sure other people did too. Bruce selected me as his preferred choice. Elements of chance and so forth in there.

Bohme: **And rather rapid movement too. You are now deputy director, and it is what year?**

Kincannon: This is end of January, first of February of 1982, so it’s roughly the beginning of February 1982. The Census Bureau basically had a bad public relations problem

because of the 1980 census, perceptions of undercount, all the argument about undercount and whether it would be corrected. In addition, the census had not gone particularly well in an operational sense, and products were very slow in coming out. We had run out of money for processing, partly because we had not been given a contingency fund that we said we needed, and work had to shut down. Then we got a supplemental appropriation and resumed work, but products were months late; programs for tabulation had not been written for some products even as late as 1982.

The last budget of the Carter Administration was a restrictive budget; when President Reagan came in, it was reviewed and, generally, agency budgets were cut back further. We really weren't devastated by direct budget reductions. We took some across-the-board hits, and we figured out ways to cope with them. But this hit us at the time when the decennial budget was declining as well, naturally, as planned. And other agencies, our customers, were being hit, so that our reimbursable work fell even more sharply than our direct appropriations. That left us with more people than we had work to do, and we inevitably faced the necessity for a reduction in force [RIF]. It was one of the most unpleasant periods of my entire Federal career. Happily, the staff of the Census Bureau—the senior staff (the budget officer, Joe Bellomo; and Dave Warner, the personnel officer)—were very skillful and I think we were able to conduct [the RIF] with as much grace as one can, but it is a disaster when it occurs. You were here and recall that.

My recollection is that we took a couple of days of furlough for the whole Census Bureau. The RIF at headquarters alone meant that more than 300 people were actually laid off, and of course they were young people because of the seniority rule. We lost three years of recruiting effort by that. Something between 700 and 800 other people were moved about, higgledy-piggledy, from one job to another, disrupting their lives, putting them back in grade, although they retained their salaries, so the savings were not appreciable. They were put into jobs for which they were no longer necessarily qualified, the [job] technology had changed, or their skills had become dulled, or whatever—very, very disruptive. The union [AFGE, American Federation of Government Employees], of course, was very upset about this and did things that in some cases they thought were helpful, and sometimes were, but in other cases were merely painful to everybody. There were congressional hearings, both on the Hill and right here at the Census Bureau.

Congressman Hoyer [Steny H. Hoyer, D.-Md.—Fifth District, where the Bureau is located] held a hearing in the cafeteria. He was his usual considerate, balanced, courteous self, but it was just another thing. This was one of only two periods of my life when I remember having chest pains; the atmosphere was tense and difficult. People that I had known for years were being hurt and didn't understand what was happening.

But we did get that behind us; Bruce Chapman was effective at seizing political initiatives: An example was the SIPP program [Survey of Income and Program Participation], which had been 10 years in development as the Panel Survey of Income Dynamics [PSID]. The money for it was in the Social Security Administration's budget, and we did the work on contract. Social Security was taking budget hits, and they decided, "Well, let's offer this out; we don't really care so much about that." I told Bruce Chapman that this was an important program—important to the objectives of the Administration, and specifically to Dave Stockman's [David Stockman, OMB [i.e., budget] director] view of finding where the social "safety net" was and ensuring that it stay intact. To Bruce's credit, he immediately understood that and took the battle out of channels to OMB and to the White House, to every political person he could get a hold of, people on the Hill, to discuss how important good data on income of American families was. We got all the money for that survey put in our budget. That was just an example of how we were able to put forward the case on the importance of statistics and do reasonably well under the circumstances.

There were additional across-the-board reductions, but in spite of that, we got new programs and did not have to do any further RIF's. I believe that within a year or 18 months, all people that had been RIF'ed off the payroll and who still wanted a job, we were able to hire back. Now, obviously, some of them went on to do other things, because you can't starve for a year, but we did recover in that way.

Bohme: **We're through the RIF of the early 80's; what came along next in your career as deputy director?**

Kincannon: Well, of course, the population and housing census always looms large and dominates things here. Out of the real problems and the big perceived problems of the 1980 census, we began an earlier planning effort than had been the case for the preceding decade. Commerce Department Deputy Secretary Joe Wright [Joseph R. Wright, Jr.], who had once been deputy director of the Census Bureau [Aug.

1971-Jan. 1972] and then was deputy administrator for SESA, was interested in seeing that we take advantage of the opportunity to make some improvements. Very soon he moved over to OMB as deputy director and called on us there to brief senior staff on our plans for automation and otherwise improving the conduct of the census.

Again, in spite of the general budget climate, the Reagan Administration/OMB supported, and the Congress approved, funding for planning the 1990 census with significant increases over the corresponding period a decade earlier—an order of magnitude of greater funding at that time. So that enabled us to begin earlier, to automate collection activities down to the district office level and, eventually, to switch to a completely different form of mainframe and minicomputer architecture, and to carry out a census in 1990 that operationally was an enormous success.

There still were a lot of public-relations [PR] problems in the census, and I'm not sure that I think those are resolvable, but operationally, we were able to plan and carry out a significantly changed program, with work completed on time and within budget in 1990. I'd say there was an important indicator about the operational quality of the 1990 census: Following the 1980 census, regional directors were retiring if they were eligible. Following the 1990 census, no regional director chose to retire, even though several were eligible. It shows that when the "army" was in the field, field commanders had control over the work and knew what they were doing. They were able to execute the work according to plan.

We had many other things going on: We began the correction of a severe imbalance in statistics—coverage of the service sector of the economy. The U.S. economy had once been dominated by manufacturing, but everybody who reads the newspaper knows that although manufacturing employment increased, stayed steady, and rarely really dipped, it was becoming a smaller and smaller proportion of our total employment and economic activity, whereas the service sector was expanding. We were not covering the service sector very well. In addition, the deregulation movement in the Ford, Carter, and Reagan years eliminated or reduced the activities of many independent regulatory agencies. A byproduct of that was that their administrative information systems vanished and with that the statistics that used to describe those industries. In fact, we were prohibited in Title 13 from collecting information about regulated industries where the

regulatory agency collected it. It took a lot of effort to obtain funding for appropriate statistical measures of those industries. For some of those, it took really a decade to get turned around. Of course, there were whole areas that had not been measured very well at all by the Federal statistical system. That was a major accomplishment over the last 10 years; Chuck Waite [Charles A. Waite, associate director for economic programs] and his people in the economic area were the principal backbone in getting that done, although we had good support in leadership from the Commerce Department, the Council of Economic Advisers, OMB, and private industry. The service industry associations worked on the Hill to support appropriations to get this done because they saw it as a major need.

We had some significant problems in foreign trade statistics. Foreign trade statistics—merchandise trade statistics—are very different from most of what we do at the Census Bureau. They are basically an administrative record system, a collection of documents filed as goods come into or go out of the country, not a sample survey or anything of that sort. The collection of those documents and forwarding of them to the Census Bureau is done by the Customs Service. The Customs Service had many, many other things to do, particularly at that time. They were under stress from budget constraints; they had new duties in enforcing drug control activities, and so on. What we discovered was that a significant proportion of the documents that we got were not, in fact, collected in the month to which we were referring in our publications, but were collected in either the preceding month or sometimes three or four months earlier. They were filed earlier, and they simply were not collected and turned in promptly by the Customs Service. What this meant was that the monthly trade figures in the early and middle 1980's did not bear any relationship to reality in the month: the June figures didn't really pertain necessarily to June. This phenomenon of carryover in documents sometimes was as low as 10 percent, but sometimes was as high as 40 or 50 percent. The Secretary of Commerce [Malcolm Baldrige] supported us with the Secretary of the Treasury [James A. Baker III], and we got the willing interest and support of the Customs Service in taking this task very seriously. They understood better how important it was. On our part, we helped by delaying our release date to give the Customs Service more time to do their job, and we began measuring and publishing the carryover rate in each month's figures. The Customs Service was a lot like the Census Bureau, an old, very professional, very serious organization. Once they understood [the situation], they arranged systems that performed to meet the needs of Government policy makers. We also did

other things, like supporting, with personnel, their efforts to automate the collection of data, and that's proceeded very, very well. We provided training to customs officials in ports so that they understood things from our perspective and were able to keep those priorities straight. It was major victory, and without requiring a lot of additional resources, at least on the part of the Census Bureau, we were able to correct that problem.

Bohme: **Was it part of your role as deputy director to coordinate that whole activity?**

Kincannon: Well, I certainly had overall responsibility, but that was ably handled mostly by Chuck Waite and Don Adams, who around that time came in as the new chief of the Foreign Trade Division and was exactly the right kind of person to handle that problem.

Bohme: **I remember how joyful he was about going over there.**

Kincannon: [Don] did not really want to go to that job, but he performed brilliantly right from the first. As a matter of fact, within two or three months he came down to my office and said he wanted to tell me that he had never enjoyed anything more than what he had been doing in that period in the Foreign Trade Division.

Bohme: **But by contrast, certainly. [Adams had been chief of the Data User Services Division, and before that chief of the Data Preparation Division, under Roland Moore, associate director for field operations, Oct. 1983-Oct. 1991.]**

Kincannon: That's right. I guess I should go back and mention one other circumstance at the beginning of the period as deputy director: All but one of the associate director jobs were vacated in the first year and a half. The post of associate director for demographic fields was vacant at that time and was filled on an acting basis because George Hall [Jul. 1979-May 1981] had retired. Meyer Zitter had filled it on an acting basis [Aug. 1981-Jan. 1982], but he was retiring, or retired, I can't remember. Soon after I came, the associate director for administration [James D. Lincoln, Jul. 1979-Aug. 1982] took an appointment in the United Nations [UN] Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome. The associate director for information technology [W. Bruce Ramsay, Jun. 1979-Jan. 1982] was reassigned on agreement and took a different job at a lower grade [chief of the Future Systems Design Staff, Jan. 1982-Apr. 1983] in the Census Bureau, so that was vacant.

Bohme: **Bob Hagan [Robert L. Hagan, deputy director, Jun. 1972-May 1979] had left very recently and, of course, Danny [Daniel B. Levine, deputy director, May 1979-Jan. 1982] also.**

Kincannon: That's right; Danny had retired as deputy director just immediately before. The associate director for field operations post was vacant, and within a year and a half, Shirley Kallek, the associate director for economic fields, died of cancer [May 1983], so all those jobs came up vacant and it was a struggle.

Federal salaries at the top levels were not very competitive at that point, and I remember when we recruited for the demographic fields job, it was very difficult attracting people. We worked hard on recruiting Barry Chiswick, who was a professor at the time at the University of Illinois in Chicago. Later, he was a member of the [Census] Advisory Committee of the American Statistical Association, an extremely valuable adviser to the Census Bureau. His wife's father had been a Census Bureau executive [Morris B. Ullman, chief of the Statistical Reports Section of the Office of the Assistant Director for Statistical Standards during the 1950 Decennial Census]. I remember we offered Barry the job, and he called up to say that although he wanted to come, he and his wife were expecting a child. It was a difficulty; there were a number of factors. At any rate, he withdrew from consideration. Bruce Chapman and I were very disappointed. Al Tella [Alfred J. Tella, special adviser to the director, Aug. 1973-Apr. 1986] was Bruce's adviser at the time, and we went back and worked on the list. We also had talked earlier with Bill Butz [William P. Butz], who at the time had not been interested, but we talked again and worked on him and convinced him what an opportunity this was. We assured him that Federal salaries were bound to go up, and so forth and so on. And so Bill agreed to come and, of course, that's been an extremely happy, fortuitous selection, and a creative one.

For information technology and administration, I was aware that we had selected people from outside the Census Bureau and had not found the magic solution there, going back some years. The three preceding people in that job had all been selected from outside the Census Bureau, and for one reason or another, none of those had seemed to have the magic bullet for resolving terrible problems of computer overload, very slow turnaround, high cost, high employment, a lot of problems associated with it. We were very dissatisfied with it. So, my determination was to eliminate the job, because I didn't want [to try] yet another

untried outsider. I knew Bryant Benton [then assistant director for administration] a bit, and I combined the administrative and information technology jobs under the associate director for management services. Bryant was not technically trained in ADP [automated data processing], but he learned. He understood management, he understood the needs of the agency, and he understood my desire that we break loose from the monopoly practices of an old, large, central computer system and decentralize a great many things. Technology was ready to do that with many of the micro[computer]s, and over the decade we very, very sharply—many orders of magnitude—increased the number of microcomputers, changed the habits of work, established local area networks. A lot of people were working on this, but Bryant provided the freedom from regulation and control that permitted that creativity. At this point, we now need to probably move the pendulum back in the other direction, but certainly, Bryant, in my view, turned out to be as good a choice as could have been made. We fulfilled what we needed to do in the ADP area—as well, of course, as in the administrative area. I knew he could handle that very well.

In field operations, the choice had been pretty much narrowed down and made before I was in office, but I reviewed and concurred with the choice of Stan Moore [Stanley D. Moore, associate director, Dec. 1981-Jan. 1983] out of our Chicago regional office [regional director there, Aug. 1976-Dec. 1981]. As it turned out, Stan was not able to sell his house in Chicago. After more than a year of his family being in Chicago and him here, and added expense of all of that, he said he just had to go back to Chicago. So, there we had another vacancy occur. I turned at that point to someone I had met in OMB, Roland Moore, who had helped me on a number of recruiting tasks, trying to fill jobs at the Census Bureau. He had a very wide knowledge of people in Government through his personnel work at various agencies. Even though he did not have experience in collection of statistical data, the biggest job in the field organization is personnel—all the masses of people, the hiring, the training, the moving, the motivation. So I talked with him and recommended to Bruce Chapman that he be our selection; Bruce agreed with that. Certainly, that was one of the most extraordinary appointments at the Census Bureau. Roland is a very interesting person and not only provided very insightful and stimulating leadership in that directorate, but was invaluable to us in building bridges to the minority community. He achieved further, very effective recruitment of highly qualified Blacks and other minorities. He has changed, I think in a permanent way, the

patterns of employment at the Census Bureau. Roland was simply invaluable in that sense.

When Shirley Kallek died, hers was a difficult position [associate director for economic fields] to fill. I had met Chuck Waite when we were both on a technical assistance mission to Jamaica and we continued to discuss work, since he was with BEA [Bureau of Economic Analysis] and a major user of what we produced. I had known of him when I worked at OMB. My view was that it was very important—and again we didn’t use the argot of CQM [Census Quality Management]—that that part of the Census Bureau understand the uses of its data better. [The economic area was] excellent at production of statistics, but unlike the demographic area, we are not major analysts of economic data. I thought that by bringing Chuck here from BEA—a major customer, after all— that we would gain a valuable insight that would guide our programs and activities from the user’s point of view. We did that and then some. Chuck has been an ambassador to the broad user community and has built a relationship of trust and confidence with the top economic people in the Commerce Department in a way that has led to a period of great growth in that area and of sustained peaceful, contented relationships.

Bohme: I have been going through Roland Moore’s papers and found quite a file on strategic planning back in Jack Keane’s day [John G. Keane, director, Mar. 1984-Nov. 1988]. Chuck Waite had written a memo in there which I thought was significant. He commented on how people at the Bureau seem to be very well informed about how things were done, but what was seriously lacking was they didn’t know why.

Kincannon: That’s right. Which, of course, is deadly. It’s a fatal flaw if you continue to execute well but don’t understand what you’re doing it for, because the need may have changed. I think Chuck’s great gift to us in that area is saying, “We don’t need to do this anymore, we need to do that.” And he has done it in a way that has helped everybody in that directorate to understand that program better.

Bohme: I think that you have answered a number of “why” questions for me, and this was one of the major reasons for having this interview. Obviously, it is open-ended in the sense that if you think of other things that you would like to discuss, we can set another time for that, but it is 11:30 and I realize you do need to get on.

Kincannon: Well, we have not discussed much in the way of relations with Congress. I’d forgotten that we really hadn’t discussed the “strategic planning” activity. To my em-

barrassment, we have not discussed relationships with the Department, which are important too.

Bohme: I am interviewing C. Louis Kincannon on Tuesday, September 15, 1992 [shortly before he left the Bureau to become chief statistician for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in Paris]. This is session number 2, on interview tape 2, side A.

Kincannon: Well, strategic planning was something that was quite an undertaking, really, over a period of several years in the last decade. I think it began with the turnover in executive staff and the desire to develop a consensus about the direction we were headed in and about major priorities. We had used a consultant to do some work and it had been useful to us in a team-building sense. When Jack Keane became director, he brought his technique of strategic planning along. That provided us with a framework and a procedure through which we moved and accomplished not only some fundamental debate and agreement on directions and priorities of action and so on, but it also produced a concrete strategic plan. We revised that plan a couple of years later on.

A great deal was accomplished under those plans, but the planning was developed largely by the Strategic Planning Committee and did not perc[olate] down into the organization, except for getting specific tasks accomplished. With the advent of Total Quality Management, which we call CQM, we tried to change the nature of the third strategic plan significantly both in preparation and in detail. We decided first to stay away from very detailed project specification, which was a part of the earlier plans, and to stop with rather broad goals with each of the goals having some explanation about what we meant by that goal. Then, even as far as that went, we didn't develop it simply within the Strategic Planning Committee, but involved other groups within the Bureau in a variety of ways.

First of all, there was the Quality Steering Committee, a group mainly of division chiefs and a couple of regional directors. We bounced all the major components of the third strategic plan off that group and reckoned with their comments in at least a couple of iterations. These dealt with quality policy, the goals themselves, the statement of purpose—the “mission.” There was, I think, another statement (the precise term of the art has escaped me at the moment), but all of those things were a result of reiterated consideration with the Quality Steering Committee. In addition, those matters were taken up as well with people who were going

through CQM training, so that there was discussion and comment and feedback, and we reckoned with that too. They weren't the same kind of reiterations, because those groups were changing all the time, but there was input and correction and new input and additional modification to reflect that. So that by the time we were finished, there was not only the reality but the feeling of broader participation in it. Then we had a much more extensive rollout of the plan when the time came.

We expected directorates and divisions and branches to develop specific activities that related to the overall goal, but did not lay down formal reporting requirements. We have had some calls for information and discussion of status, and so forth, but the shape of the response and largely the content of the response has been at the discretion of people doing the work. We really did try to delegate responsibility for implementation in very great detail down to the working level. We think that has been successful; I guess time will tell whether a lot of new things get done, or old things get done in different ways. There seemed to have been a broader organizational awareness and acceptance of the plan than before, so I think we believe it was worthwhile.

I was pleased to see that the way we approached strategic planning was not set into a fairly rigid form. It took a shape that responded to changing circumstances and needs of the organization, and I think that is a sign of the method that we intend to continue in strategic planning, that is, taking a long-term look at our conditions, our problems, and how we can address those and how we can continue to improve them. I certainly hope that it proves that that way of thinking is instilled in the organization without any specific methodology.

Bohme: **Let me take you back to an earlier time. You started talking about strategic planning with Jack Keane's administration. I seem to remember that when Vincent Barabba was here the first time [as director, May 1973-Aug. 1976], he and Ian Mitroff had some rather extensive charts. Obviously, there was a certain aspect of marketing involved here, but it seems to me that there was strategic planning as well. Do you remember any connection between what they were trying to do and what happened when strategic planning began here as such?**

Kincannon: No, I wasn't involved in any of that. I guess I had gone already to OMB. There was a big plan for the year 2000 or something of that sort that was undertaken in Vince's regime. Lots and lots of people were involved in it; I think they found it

exciting. Certainly that, or something else that Vince did, affected our attitude toward marketing. But when I came back in 1981, no one was talking about a strategic plan, or anything of that sort, so it appears to have just passed on.

Bohme: **I remember participating in the year 2000 planning at that time, and I also remember that one of the ideas was to have a census university. You may remember that.**

Kincannon: Oh yes, I do remember hearing something about that.

Bohme: **So there was a great deal of meeting of groups and inter-divisional and intra-divisional planning along those lines, but as you suggest, nothing much happened.**

Kincannon: I can't remember; Vince left in 1976, and maybe he just didn't stay long enough to get it instilled. There wasn't a buy-in a couple of levels down to continue anything.

Bohme: **Could well be.**

Kincannon: Oh I don't know, we, by virtue of luck or whatever, stuck with it a little longer. Of course, it may be gone by December [1992] too; who knows.

Bohme: **Well, we shall see. Would you like to move on now then to Congress and the oversight committees?**

Kincannon: Yes; I think one of the worst shortcomings of my time at the Census Bureau has been our failure to develop and adhere consistently to an effective strategy with Congress. I think we became much more effective at dealing tactically with Congress. We had some very good people, political appointees, working with us on congressional relations at various times, some of them as good as any I've ever seen anywhere. And so we improved on that, and I think the organization tends, at least at upper levels, to be a little more mindful of how a given action might affect opinion or attitude in Congress. But I don't think we have developed products suited to the Hill. The Statistical Briefs, which were intended in that regard, I think have been successful, and we need to do much more of that. Also, we really have not done things that take advantage of what I'll call the "force of gravity." I don't mean simple, "pork barrel" kinds of things—we don't have enough pork to hand out to do it—but...

Bohme: **We don't even have the rind.**

Kincannon: We don't even have the rind; that's right! But we have failed to consider the possibility of undertaking work in areas where there are members of Congress who would then develop a positive attitude toward us. We have tried, in some instances,

to take advantage of work that we were doing and develop a positive relationship with members of Congress in those locations. Certainly, Jeffersonville is an example. We have a very positive, constructive relationship with Congressman Hamilton's staff [Lee Hamilton, D.-Ind.] and so on. We did take one tiny step when it came time to choose a location for a second computer system telephone interviewing site. We found, among the places that seemed to fit the bill, one in Tucson, Arizona, part of which is in the district of Congressman Kolbe [Jim Kolbe, R.-Ariz.] who is on our appropriations subcommittee. Our relations with Congressman Kolbe have always been very positive and constructive anyway, and when we discussed with him that we were coming down to his area as a possible location, he was very pleased. He was careful to note that as long as it was in the metropolitan area, he thought it was a wonderful thing for Tucson, even if it didn't happen to be right in his district, and we were appreciative of that. I think that is an example of what we ought to try to do more; that is, where we have a chance to do something that would be of assistance to us in developing a sustained and positive relationship with a member of Congress, we ought to do it. I don't think we ought to locate things in undesirable places, infeasible places, unworkable places, just because there is a powerful member of Congress there, but where there is a coincidence of interests and it is possible to do so, then we ought to be more sensitive to that.

Bohme: **Was this done in Charlotte for the regional computing center?**

Kincannon: No, we just put it where it worked best, without cognizance of whether that did us any good or not. As a consequence, we have it where it works very well, and I don't know that we have reaped any benefit other than the efficient operation of it. I don't in any way fault the work there; the facility is wonderful, it's been good, but, frankly, you can locate computers anywhere. So, why not locate them in a place where you can build a long-running relationship with someone who has a connection with you? The supportive attitude of Congressman Hoyer toward the Census Bureau's program, I think, is an indication of that. He has understood our need for a modern computer center and has worked to support one where our needs can be met by placing a facility in his district and in the State of Maryland, and that sort of thing. It hasn't compromised any element of quality or propriety, or anything of that sort, but it has worked to meet sets of goals that both we and he had. I think that's fine. If somebody wanted to locate a group of mathematical statisticians in a rural district away from universities, away from regional offices, away from any of our facilities, then no matter how much that would buy us, that wouldn't be a very

good idea in terms of influence. It wouldn't work to meet our operating rule. But we can take a little cognizance of where things would develop. In other words, if you find out how gravity works, you don't try to push water up hill. If water is going down hill, then try to make use of it to turn a wheel or two. That's all that I mean about that.

We generally have had good relationships with our oversight subcommittees in both the House and Senate. Certainly, Congressman Sawyer [Thomas C. Sawyer, D.-Ohio] has been an attentive and helpful chairman in his time. Congressman Garcia [Robert Garcia, D-N.Y.], in his two stints on the committee [chair, 1981-1984], was very helpful and supportive. Where we did things that were in line with his interests, he was extremely supportive. And where we needed help, I think, he tried to be supportive as well. I think that's about all you can ask a Member to do. Congressman Sawyer went through some "sticky wickets" with us on the 1990 census and was helpful. Congressman Ridge [Tom Ridge, R.-Pa.], the ranking minority member for a number of years now on that committee, has fulfilled his role in a model way, I think—extremely supportive, respectful of the needs of the Census Bureau. He has also expressed the interests of his party, his district, and his State when they were different from what we intended to do. But never, in his case or Congressman Sawyer's case, for example, has that disagreement interfered with work that had to be done or with any aspect of the Census Bureau's integrity, so everything has been very good. That's why the tactical relationships have been quite good.

Bohme: **Let's move to the Senate, for just a moment, on not so much appropriations or things of that sort, but inasmuch as the Senate has the confirming power for the directors. Do you remember any instances during your career, either here at the Bureau or observing from OMB, where there have been interesting developments, either positive or otherwise?**

Kincannon: The confirmations of Bruce Chapman and Jack Keane were very perfunctory. I think Senator Percy [Charles L. Percy, R.-Ill.] was the chairman of the subcommittee [Subcommittee on Energy, Nuclear Proliferation and Federal Services] in both those instances, and I think in the case of Dr. Keane, he did not even appear for the hearing; he had someone else chair. The hearing was extremely brief, and absolutely noncontroversial.

Dr. Bryant's confirmation hearing under Senator Kohl [Herb Kohl, D.-Wis.] and Senator Glenn [John Glenn, D.-Ohio] for the full committee [Governmental

Affairs], who came down to chair a part of that too, was quite a different story, because we were on the cusp of the 1990 census. We had the issue of adjustment of census results to correct for undercount, and how we were counting the military overseas, and those kinds of issues up for grabs. There was a clear expression of opinion about how we should move on the matter of military overseas and so on. The room was filled with people; it was a 2-hour (or something like that) hearing, with many other witnesses as well as Dr. Bryant. Quite like night and day; it was just a matter, I think, of what time of the decade it is. I really wasn't involved too much in Vince Barabba's first confirmation [1973], but it was a more controversial one too. There were a lot of tough questions; there were witnesses against his confirmation.

Bohme: **Including the ASA?**

Kincannon: Including the ASA. And, I must say, it's a great credit to Vince how he took all of that and turned it adroitly around so that about 12 months later, they were all eating out of his hand. It was quite different.

Bohme: **Plus the fact that he was made a fellow and the president of the Association.**

Kincannon: Ultimately, that's right. Complete triumph, or complete clarification of misunderstanding; maybe that's a more accurate way of putting it.

Amongst under secretaries [of Commerce], one of the under secretaries' confirmations was delayed a long time and had no substantive relationship to his responsibilities or history, or anything else. It had to do purely with the matter of building of some kind of marina in a Senator's home State. I think that ultimately there was an agreement reached to build a marina. I don't know the details—obviously, that wasn't in our bargaining—but there was no real controversy attached to any of those, as I recall. So, I think the main lesson I take from that is what time of the decade it is. That is the key thing.

Bohme: **Shall we go on to the Department?**

Kincannon: There sometimes seems to be nothing people at the Census Bureau like to do better than complain about the Commerce Department and maybe vice versa. Part of that, I think, is just the natural competition between the supervisor and the supervised. Every organization would like to exercise discretion over what it did, and what it does and what it doesn't do, so I think you have to set a certain amount of that aside. Quite consistently, there is conflict between the under secretary or assistant

secretary, as the case may be, and whoever is director of the Census Bureau. I think this is true in both Republican and Democratic Administrations, and seems largely indifferent to personalities. I think these conflicts are probably natural. You have two Presidential appointees, one of whom, the director of the Census, sees himself or herself as sitting in a long-established seat and in a very important agency of the old-line core of Government, with constitutional purposes and all that sort of thing, and a big organization to administer. The other, the under secretary, has the titular or administrative responsibility for the Census Bureau, largely because of a need to justify the position. After all, what does the under secretary do unless he has all these things to supervise? Some of them understand that and are involved only in broad policy decisions about the Census Bureau. Others do not understand, and really misread the situation and try to get into detailed management of the Census Bureau. I have never known an under secretary or an assistant secretary to bring to their position any appreciable management experience or, frankly, skills, and so that is a prescription for difficulty. Most people who are appointed to that job were staff economists at corporations or banks, and they are very good staff economists. They generally don't have much familiarity or training—and sometimes no knack—for taking the larger view the manager has to take. Those relationships have ranged from the merely tense, where there was strong but careful working together, to really almost a complete breakdown of relationship. There have been directors who declined ever to go to an under secretary's staff meeting and would always send me or someone else. There have been under secretaries who almost would not speak to the director of the time. That has made my job interesting in some instances, but it has also given me the opportunity to serve—to try to keep something working effectively and listen to each one complain about the other, and then try to get on and get the work done. In most cases, things don't get to that condition, but there does seem to be a tendency for conflict to evolve. I think it's inherent in the nature of the people who get the jobs. There is a relative lack of supervision or teamwork training—team-working—that goes on amongst senior political appointees throughout the Government.

Bohme: You are suggesting, of course, that part of your role here as the deputy director was to act as the go-between, to—shall we say—smooth out the rough places. Did you find yourself at times having to find other ways of succeeding in what you had to do? I'm treading very gently here. I remember, certainly, one under secretary and one director who could never, ever, speak to each other except on very formal occasions. Obviously, things did get done in those days, and I'm groping now to see whether they were done behind the scenes and new back alleys were found, or what. What could you say about it?

Kincannon: Well, certainly in some instances the behavior would become, frankly, rather childish. In some of those instances, I would say to one or the other, "You know, you really can't do that." I mean, "Yes, of course, you have the authority to approve or disapprove the director's travel order, but do you really want to say to the Association of Washing Machine Manufacturers, or whatever, that the director of the Census can't travel there and speak to you?" Or, on the reverse, to say to a director, "Yes, of course this is a petty action on the part of under secretary so-and-so, but what does it really do to affect you? Tip your hat, submit the paper, and go on and do this." Deal with the substance of it. In some instances, one has to go to a broader circle, either to work quietly and informally with people at other levels in the Commerce Department to say, "We've reached sort of an impasse here, and there needs to be some avuncular guidance given," or something of that sort. Often, it's been possible for things to get clarified that way, or sometimes to rely on good old OMB to ask certain questions to help get an issue resolved or the like. Happily, a long association with people in both the Commerce Department and OMB have made it possible to use those channels when necessary to sort of break a logjam and get on moving again. The important thing is to try to get work done, to keep things moving. As long as one is reasonable about the ways, I think that that's the main part of the job that I have, to get work done.

I do have this impression that although there are some good people in the Commerce Department, there seems to be a great deal of redundancy in certain staff functions. It seems to me as though we are sometimes subjected to unreasonable regulatory burdens or review requirements—not every time that we complain, but I think sometimes that's the case. Some tools become less useful over time, and yet they are continued out of perpetual motion. The management-by-objective apparatus: the principle is very sound and having

occasional meetings, quarterly or semiannually, with the deputy secretary or other top staff is very useful, but around that process has grown a very elaborate set of paperwork and procedures which seems to grow over time and become a self-absorbed game. Almost none of the principals really pay much attention to that paperwork. They may get something good out of the meetings, but it's an example of something that I think has gotten out of hand, and everyone seems to say it's gotten out of hand.

Bohme: **But, nobody does anything about it?**

Kincannon: Nobody does anything about it. The turnover of political people in the Department is fairly frequent, and that is part of the reason, no doubt. Another feature is that the Secretary of Commerce rarely focuses on Census Bureau programs or activities. I suppose that's inevitable, but it is frustrating to be treated as peripheral to the Commerce Department unless there is some "blip" in the press or something. That is frustrating over the long haul. Maybe that's a failure on our part to deal more strategically with the Office of the Secretary. I think having an intermediary, an under secretary, between the director and the secretary's office (the secretary and the deputy secretary), I think adds to the problem. If I were the deputy secretary or the secretary, I would try to deal differently with the political appointees and spend a lot more time with them. Some have, but I think that's a great weakness in American government—the ineffectiveness of political appointees and their failure to work together. The problem is not between political appointees and career employees; it's among the political appointees, generally. That's not just the Commerce Department, and it's not just Republicans; it's Democrats too.

Bohme: **Have you detected a similar situation in other Commerce agencies as you observed the Commerce "umbrella"—if you will—where you have a variety of other agencies involved?**

Kincannon: I'm not sure that I know the answer to that. In the case of NIST [National Institute of Standards and Technology]—well, I don't think in most of the cases you have a really large and independent bureau that has to report through a secretarial officer whose scope is really narrower than the Census Bureau. NIST generally has a professional scientist as its head. NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration], I think that's often the case there too, although I really don't know that much about how they work.

Bohme: Let us move up the line for a moment and then come back down to your own people here. I say “up the line,” because in DUSD [Data User Services Division], at the moment, the people are scrambling around getting data [on the areas hit by Hurricane Andrew in 1992] for FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Administration]. No doubt, the impetus for that has come from even higher places. Would you comment on any direct relationships between the Bureau and the White House as distinguished from the things that come through Commerce?

Kincannon: Not too much direct relationship. There have been occasional projects where staff members in the White House have gotten involved or have called for data or that sort of thing, but in general we steer those inquiries back through the Commerce Department to bring them under appropriate control. There may have been things directly between somebody in the White House and a Census Bureau director at various times. Certainly, Bruce Chapman had direct connections into the White House and eventually joined the White House staff. I don’t think that Jack Keane had any such relationships in the White House. He tended to reach out more into the area of customers and did not have a political background the way Bruce Chapman did. I was not in a position, as far back as the Nixon Administration, really to know of anything directly about that. But I haven’t seen any of what I would call “White House interference” or unusual involvement of any kind. Mainly, the kinds of things we get involved in are, “Do you know how many unemployed coal miners there are in this State?... How many poor in that State?... How many poor people don’t have health insurance?” or that sort of thing. Those are legitimate questions for the White House to ask the Census Bureau. In general, where there has been a request for a lot of work that we would have had to do special, we have been able to get compensation for that, so it’s really, I think, pretty much on the square.

One thing is that, in these years as deputy director, there have never been any efforts by higher authorities to influence the numbers this way or that. Nothing that crude. There have been arguments about definition, but they seemed to me to have been legitimate. Where we thought political authorities wanted to investigate a definition at the wrong time—merely for the way it might affect an outcome—we have said that it was not something we would do. When the under secretary’s office at various times reviewed our analysis of figures and had professional arguments about whether our conclusions were correct, we tried to respond as professionals, and we made sure we could defend our conclusion, or

we changed our conclusion. It's been really pretty much on the up and up. I think that's a remarkable thing about the statistical system. I didn't see anything untoward in 6 years at OMB either, so that's really quite reassuring, I think.

Bohme: **Let us move on to your own staff now, coming back home, as it were. Certainly I'm sure that you're willing to say some nice things about the late Ted Clemence, who worked for you [Theodore G. Clemence, senior advisor].**

Kincannon: Yes.

Bohme: **But, there must have been other people that you have looked back upon now, and might care to say something about them that wouldn't otherwise get in the history.**

Kincannon: Well, I don't know, it's hard to imagine. Yes, Ted was a unique person, unique qualities at the Census Bureau. I worked with him as a peer 20 or 25 years ago, and then he worked for me as a senior advisor, which he really was. I found him incredibly helpful in making detached observations of what I was doing and how I was doing it—"critical" in the best sense of the word. He helped me understand that maybe I didn't want to do some things or that I wanted to do them in a different way than I had intended. Of course, sometimes I decided I was right after all. Ted was an excellent source of filtered information. Signals would come to me or to the director, for example, through Ted. These were the sort of signals of information that people probably wouldn't come up and say directly to the director or me. This was very, very valuable.

Shelby Weekly, who has worked for me as secretary ever since I've been in this job, has been a major factor in whatever successes I have had. I mean, she runs the office very smoothly. She is absolutely unflappable and good humored, and very good at soothing people and dodging their hostilities and deflecting them and so on. She had worked for Danny Levine when he had been associate director, and then as deputy director when his secretary, Helen Fedele, went to work for Bruce Chapman and he knew he was retiring, he brought Shelby up on loan from his old office. He recommended that I take a look at her qualities because he thought that she was really quite capable. I certainly found that to be true, and I had the good judgement to keep her. She has been a wonderful asset in the director's office.

Sherry Courtland also was, in her job as chief of the Program and Policy Development Office [Jul. 1980-Mar. 1990]—an extraordinary intellect. She

brought invaluable experience to my service. One of her characteristics is to sit and listen to a group of people talking all around a subject, and everybody's got an idea a minute, and so forth. After 20, 30, or 40 minutes of discussion, everybody would think they had covered everything and answered every question. Then Sherry would ask a question that had not been touched on at all, which was a tough question to answer. I've seen many a galloping idea get tripped up in her very careful thinking.

Who else that is especially...? I mean, I could talk about the associate directors. I think each one has brought some peculiar qualifications to that. I have very much enjoyed working with Bryant Benton [management services]. I found him dedicated to the good interest of the Census Bureau—sometimes in ways that are frustrating to people because they would like to do A, B, or C, but he recognizes better than anyone in the Census Bureau what possible dangers there are associated with a particular course of action. He tries to make sure they understand the implications. Then if we all decide we want to go ahead and do something and it blows up in our face, OK, at least we were forewarned. But that's been a great value to me and to the directors that I've worked for—to be able to have that keen appreciation of risks associated with actions. That makes him appear to be a very conservative person, but in fact, when Bryant has assessed the risks, if the payoff is great, he is as enthusiastic as anyone about making needed changes.

Charlie Jones' [Charles D. Jones, associate director for decennial census] [appointment] was one of the two or three things I did as deputy director that I think was an important accomplishment. Before, we didn't have an associate director for the decennial census. There was an assistant director under an associate director, and not too many years ago, just a division chief that ran all of that. My view was that the decennial census is the biggest activity that we undertake; it is the activity that makes or brakes our reputation as an agency, whether it was fair or not. It deserved its own responsibility and representation at the associate director level, and so forth. I don't know how we could have gotten through the 1990 census with any other structure. Charlie brought quite good managerial skills; he was a good delegator, tough manager, and had an analytical bent for the work. He also had the tremendous stamina that the job at the peak years really requires. It took a lot off my shoulders that I didn't have to worry

about. I didn't even have to know much about many details because they were taken care of.

Another person whose word is good and who is loyal to the interests of the organization—and I don't mean by that just a blind loyalty, but to the enlightened interests of the organization he serves—is Don Adams [chief of the Foreign Trade Division]. He and I started at the Census Bureau the same year. Don had a lot of different jobs; he did a very, very fine job at the Data Preparation Division in Jeffersonville [May 1976-Oct. 1985]. When we had a need here, he moved here. He did not want to work in DUSD [chief, Oct. 1985-Jun. 1986], but he understood the needs of the organization and stepped in and soon had a long list of innovations. I was sorry he couldn't stay there longer, but we had an even greater need in the Foreign Trade Division. We had some real problems in processing. Don took his knowledge from Jeffersonville and his very steady management skills and resolved towering problems. They were really quite embarrassing problems—I mean embarrassing to the Secretary of Commerce—about delayed processing on foreign trade. These problems were the only matter about which the Secretary of Commerce personally called me and gave me a gentle chewing out about “Why can't we get these figures to behave themselves each month?” Well, Don solved that problem, and I didn't get any more telephone calls from the Secretary of Commerce, which made me happy. He has been a model kind of division chief in the sense of taking problems and dealing with them.

I'm afraid that if I go down that pathway of talking about successful division chiefs, I could easily fill up several more tapes, so I probably shouldn't do that.

Bohme: **No, I won't let you. I would like to go back to the decennial census for a moment. Were you involved in any direct way with the CPO, the 1990 Census Promotional Office, in the choosing of the chief?**

Kincannon: Yes. We worked through it. This was something that Pete Bounpane [Peter A. Bounpane, assistant director for demographic censuses from 1981 to 1994] and I worked on together; he did the major work. We agreed that we ought to make a careful search and identify people. We wanted to hire someone who had had exposure to the census before, who had been involved in previous censuses in promotions. The Public Affairs regime in the Commerce Department at the time would hear nothing of it; it would be a national search, complete competitive review, blah, blah, blah. So we did that and everyone wanted to interview this person—the Un-

der Secretary's Office, the Public Affairs Office, so forth and so on, downtown, and it took months and months. Finally, the person in charge at Public Affairs said, "Why didn't we just find the right person and hire them instead of going through all of this rigamarole?" Well, Pete and I got into a quiet room and screamed, but those were the circumstances.

We still managed to hire someone that we both thought would have an appropriate background and would be very good for the job. It turned out that the background was there but the willingness to work with the organization was not there, and it was, frankly, a disaster. Even before Dr. Bryant came in [as director, Nov. 1989], I think we had reached the conclusion that this was not possible to continue. But we had a new under secretary [Michael R. Darby]—and all that—[who] didn't want any changes, and so we struggled along with it until they became rather put off by the failure to keep everybody informed and to take direction. Finally, Dr. Bryant came on the scene and became directly acquainted with the person's failure to work in the best interests of the Census Bureau in an effective way. It was decided that we had to move that gentleman aside—very difficult, very difficult.

Pat Kelly [Patricia Kelly, a special assistant to the director] and Al Mirabal [Alfonso E. Mirabal, assistant chief of the Data User Services Division] moved in on a temporary basis and stabilized that operation. This was just a matter of weeks before Census Day, maybe 8 weeks, I can't remember, it wasn't very long. Work was behind, and those two stepped in and, as best they could, soothed everybody's feelings. Pete, of course, was heavily involved in it too. These people together got the feelings soothed, got the work done, got the products out. They paid a price in terms of hard labor in confrontational situations, but the Census Bureau as a whole owes a debt to the three of them for how they got in and sorted matters out and got the work done. The gentleman involved moved on to another job and I think has been successful in that.

At that point, everybody kept his word about dealing with this as constructively as possible, and did. But it was an example of how difficult it is to select a person and how the potential for a mistake and the implications of that mistake really make life very hard.