

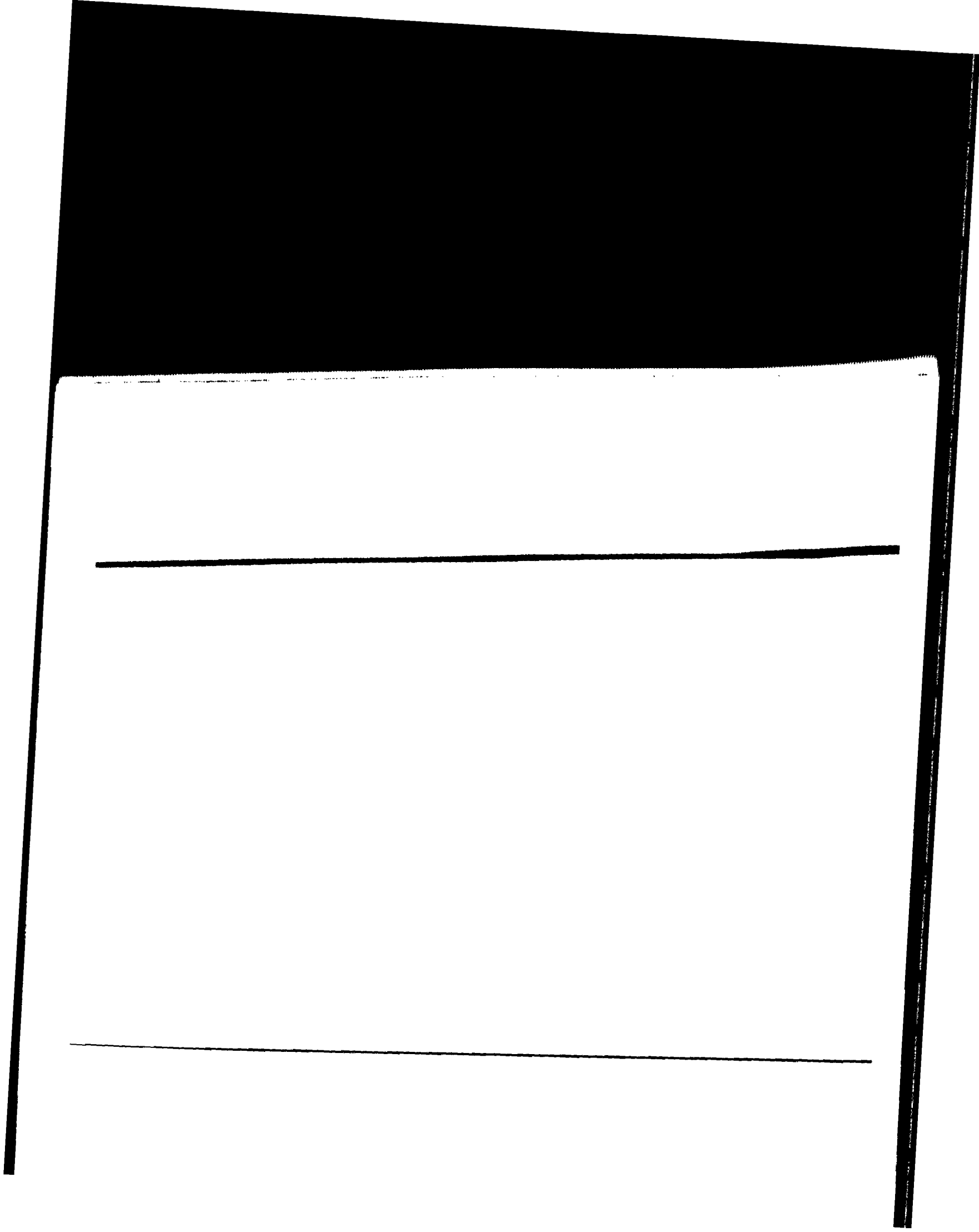
United States General Accounting Office

GAO

History Program

February 1990

Congressional
Delegation Activities



February 1990

Congressional Relations Activities, 1950-1983

Smith Blair, Charles E. Eckert, Martin J.
Fitzgerald, and L. Fred Thompson



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Preface

The General Accounting Office (GAO) was established by the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921. Since then, new legislation and modified policies have been adopted that enable GAO to meet the needs of the Congress as it comes to grips with increasingly complex governmental programs and activities.

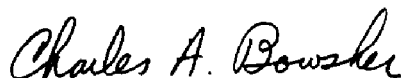
GAO has a History Program within its Office of Policy to ensure that the basis for policy decisions and other important events are systematically recorded for posterity. The program should benefit the Congress, future Comptrollers General, other present and future GAO officials, GAO's in-house training efforts, and scholars of public administration.

A primary source of historical data is the written record in official government files. A vital supplement contributing to a better understanding of past actions is the oral history component of the program. Key governmental officials who were in a position to make decisions and redirect GAO's efforts are being interviewed to record their observations and impressions. Modern techniques make it possible to record their statements on videotapes or audiotapes that can be distributed to a wider audience, supplemented by written transcripts.

Smith Blair, Charles E. Eckert, Martin J. Fitzgerald, and L. Fred Thompson served GAO in various capacities during a period spanning almost 50 years. They assumed key roles in providing GAO's legislative liaison with the Congress, its committees, and members.

On July 13, 1989, present and former GAO officials (see p. viii) interviewed these former GAO officials on videotape in Washington, D.C., to discuss primarily liaison activities from 1950 to 1983, focusing on the expansion of their efforts as congressional demands for GAO assistance increased significantly. This document is a transcript of the videotape. Although a number of editorial changes have been made, GAO has tried to preserve the flavor of the spoken word.

Copies of the transcript are available to GAO officials and other interested parties.



Charles A. Bowsher
Comptroller General
of the United States

Biographical Information



Smith Blair

Mr. Smith Blair began his career with the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) in 1952 after serving as a Special Agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation and working briefly on the staff of what is now the House Government Operations Committee. Except for a 4-year period during which he was the Executive Assistant to the Inspector General at the Department of Agriculture, he served on GAO's staff until his retirement in 1977. Initially, Mr. Blair provided assistance to the Senate Agriculture Committee and then was assigned to GAO's former Office of Investigations. From 1956 to 1959, he was the Director of GAO's European Branch and then served as Manager of GAO's Dallas Regional Office until 1964. In 1968, Mr. Blair returned to GAO headquarters as a Legislative Attorney, and in 1973 he became the first Director of the Office of Congressional Relations.



Charles E. Eckert

Mr. Charles Edward Eckert served on GAO's staff from 1934 to 1966. He started out in the former Records Division and assumed increasing responsibilities in the Claims Division and the Office of the General Counsel. In 1950, Mr. Eckert was assigned to the Office of the Comptroller General, where he was a Legislative Representative to the Congress. He continued in a similar capacity after his appointment in 1959 as a Legislative Attorney in the Office of Legislative Liaison, the predecessor unit to GAO's Office of Congressional Relations.

Biographical Information



Martin J. Fitzgerald

Mr. Martin J. Fitzgerald served on GAO's staff from 1968 to 1983. He began his GAO career as an Attorney in the Office of the General Counsel. He was a Legislative Attorney with the Office of Congressional Relations from 1970 to 1975, when he became the Assistant to the General Counsel. Mr. Fitzgerald was appointed as Director of the Office of Congressional Relations in 1977 and remained in that position for 6 years until he joined a private law firm.



L. Fred Thompson

Mr. L. Fred Thompson served on GAO's staff in Washington, D.C., the field, and overseas from 1941 to 1974, except for two periods of active duty in the Army during World War II and the Korean War. Starting out in a clerical job, he advanced to positions as a Claims Examiner, Investigator, and Attorney Advisor. Beginning in 1960, Mr. Thompson served in the Office of Legislative Liaison until he was designated Deputy Director of GAO's newly established Office of Federal Elections in 1972. In 1973, he was appointed the Director of that office. Its functions were transferred to the Federal Elections Commission in 1975.

Interviewers

Henry Eschwege

Henry Eschwege retired in March 1986 after almost 30 years of service in GAO under three Comptrollers General. He held increasing responsibilities in the former Civil Division and became the Director of GAO's Resources and Economic Development Division upon its creation in 1972. He remained the Director after the Division was renamed the Community and Economic Development Division. In 1982, he was appointed Assistant Comptroller General for Planning and Reporting.

Roger R. Trask

Roger R. Trask became Chief Historian of GAO in July 1987. After receiving his Ph.D. in History from the Pennsylvania State University, he taught between 1959 and 1980 at several colleges and universities, including Macalester College and the University of South Florida; at both of these institutions, he served as Chairman of the Department of History. He is the author or editor of numerous books and articles, mainly in the foreign policy and defense areas. He began his career in the federal government as Chief Historian of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (1977-1978). In September 1980, he became the Deputy Historian in the Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, where he remained until his appointment in GAO.

Contents

Preface		iii
---------	--	-----

Biographical Information		iv
-----------------------------	--	----

Interviewers		vi
	Henry Eschwege	vi
	Roger R. Trask	vi

Interview With Smith Blair, Charles E. Eckert, Martin J. Fitzgerald, and L. Fred Thompson, July 13, 1989	Introduction Biographical Data Evolution of GAO's Legislative Liaison Activities Coordinating Contacts Between the Hill and GAO Auditors Comments on Legislation GAO Staff Assigned to Committees GAO Testimony at Congressional Hearings Keeping Top Management Informed of Congressional Activities Congressional Views of GAO's Effectiveness The Holifield Hearings, 1965 Allegation of Weak Security at GAO Reflections on GAO Career Conclusion	1 1 1 9 23 34 37 39 41 45 47 49 55 59
---	---	--

Appendix	Videotape Cross-reference	60
----------	---------------------------	----

Index		61
-------	--	----

Contents

Abbreviations

CG	Comptroller General
CPA	certified public accountant
EB	European Branch
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
GAO	General Accounting Office
IG	Inspector General
IMTEC	Information Management and Technology Division
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NSIAD	National Security and International Affairs Division
OCR	Office of Congressional Relations
OGC	Office of the General Counsel
OLL	Office of Legislative Liaison
OTA	Office of Technology Assessment
RCED	Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division
TDY	temporary duty
UK	United Kingdom

Interview With Smith Blair, Charles E. Eckert, Martin J. Fitzgerald, and L. Fred Thompson

July 13, 1989

Introduction

Mr. Eschwege

Good morning and welcome back to the General Accounting Office [GAO], where you four gentlemen spent a good part of your working lives.

I would like to introduce on my left GAO's Chief Historian, Dr. Roger Trask.

With us today are [L.] Fred Thompson, Smitty [Smith] Blair, Marty [Martin J.] Fitzgerald, and Eddie [Charles E.] Eckert.

We want to talk this Thursday morning about a very important function that GAO has had for quite a long time. It is particularly important because GAO is part of the legislative branch. This function is GAO's liaison activities with the Congress.

Before we get into the details of those activities as they developed over a period of years starting in the 1940s and going on to at least 1983, when Marty left GAO, I do want to get some biographical background from each of you about your early beginnings up through the time that you got involved in legislative liaison activities.

Biographical Data

Mr. Thompson

I am originally from Georgia. I taught in a country school in Georgia for 1 year. My Congressman sent me a telegram that a grade E-03 position, which was the equivalent of a grade 1, I suppose, had become open in GAO.

I started in April of 1941, and except for a few years in the military, I remained in GAO until I retired. My prelegal college was in the university system of Georgia, and I graduated from George Washington University Law School in 1949. I am a member of the D.C. bar.

My GAO experience began with the old Veterans Affairs Audit Section. I worked in the Old Post Office Building. I remember being fascinated with the way the auditors audited the vouchers at the time. They came in bundles about a foot thick. We were far behind in our audit, so we simply initialed the outside cover with a blue pencil, suggesting that the whole bundle of vouchers had been audited. We would then haul these

vouchers in big pushtrucks and staple a tag to each truck as if the whole truckful had been audited, without actually looking at any voucher.

I had a second session with the Army during the Korean War. When I came back, partly through contact with Smitty Blair, I joined what was then the Office of Investigations. I was sent to the West Coast and then to the Far East. We had a team in the Far East that did the first GAO investigative work in Korea and Tokyo. I came back to San Francisco in 1954 and later was tapped to take charge of a little investigative office we had in Anchorage, Alaska.

I was there about 13 months when the Office of Investigations was abolished. I came back to Seattle and stayed there until about 1958, when I joined the General Counsel's office in Washington. In 1961, I was assigned to what was then called OLL—the Office of Legislative Liaison. There I worked with Eddie Eckert and Owen Kane.

I stayed in OLL until about 1972, when I helped form GAO's Office of Federal Elections. I served there as Deputy Director under Sam [Phillip S.] Hughes and later as Director. I retired in 1974.

Mr. Eschwege

Now, Smitty, you had a career that in some ways touched Fred Thompson's.

Mr. Blair

Oh, absolutely. I feel fortunate in having had a very interesting and satisfying life. I was born in Leesburg, Virginia, way back in 1913 and finished high school in Frederick, Maryland, in 1931. I started my working career at that point. For the next 20 years, I went to night school at Benjamin Franklin and George Washington University, along with a lot of other GAO employees. For 10 years, I worked in a bank—5 years in the banking department and 5 years in the trust department. Then I worked a year in a law office, upon graduating from Washington College of Law, getting my degree in 1941; not being made a trust officer, I decided to go the legal route.

I joined the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] for 9 years as a special agent—from September 1942 to October 1951.

In 1951, I joined the congressional staff of what is now the House Government Operations Committee, the oversight committee for GAO, but at that time, it was known as the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments. Congressman [William L.] Dawson was the Chairman, but I was with Porter Hardy, the Chairman of a subcommittee.

Ralph Casey, an Associate General Counsel in GAO, was detailed as the counsel for Porter Hardy's subcommittee. I met another GAO person detailed to the subcommittee that I respected highly; his name was Ed Shafer, an investigator type. Most of the work of the subcommittee was done by GAO. I got to meet the GAO staffs in Dayton, Chicago, and Dallas.

At the time, I did not know what GAO was all about, although at law school, there were several GAO employees. I developed a high regard for GAO. I know that the Chairman of our subcommittee, Porter Hardy, and the other members of the committee had a high regard for GAO.

I heard a rumor that GAO was going to set up an office in Paris. A friend of mine who was working for GAO as an investigator said, "Come on, Smitty, you'll get to go to Paris." I then joined the staff of GAO in 1952 and was immediately detailed to the Senate Agriculture Committee under Chairman Allen Ellender. We were making an investigation of agriculture storage problems.

An interesting aspect of that is that some 20 years later, I was involved with the same problem as GAO's Regional Manager in Dallas on the Billie Sol Estes case.

Following the committee assignment, I joined the Office of Investigations, which was reorganizing to try to speed up its report processing. Bill Ellis was the Chief and Bob Cartright, a former FBI man, was the Deputy.

True enough, GAO had opened an office in Europe in 1952. Fortunately, I did not have to ask; I was approached to go to Europe as the Chief Investigator for the second team assigned to the European Branch in 1954.

By that time, I was quite enthused about GAO and I really did not want to give up 2 years time in headquarters, but I went. It was the best assignment I've ever had in my life. I spent 5 years over there. At the end of the 2-year term, Charlie [Charles] Bailey decided to go home and I was named the Director of the office with headquarters in Paris. The State Department never really wanted us or anyone in Paris; it was a continual battle.

Eventually, we did have to close the office because President Charles de Gaulle threw out all our military, so there wasn't much point in staying.

In addition to having our headquarters in Paris, we had offices in London, Rome, Madrid, and Frankfurt.

One of the sad duties that I had just before coming home in the fall of 1959 was to close the Madrid office, because we had completed our basic mission of auditing the Spanish base construction program. We also closed the Rome and London offices because basically we could accomplish our audit work there through travel, TDY [temporary duty].

Incidentally, when I left Europe, Mr. [Joseph] Campbell wanted to know what I wanted to do. I told him that I'd like to go to OLL, but I didn't get the assignment.

He offered me a Regional Manager position. Dallas was one of the choices. I had worked in Dallas, so I went there and remained for 5 years. Then I had an offer from Lester Condon, the Inspector General at Agriculture, to become his Executive Assistant. Because I wanted to come home, I joined him in 1964.

In January 1968, I got a call from Bob [Robert F.] Keller [GAO's General Counsel] inquiring whether I was interested in joining OLL. That was the best call I ever got. I replaced OLL's Hazen Dean, who was highly respected on Capitol Hill. He died suddenly as a result of a tragic accident.

I stayed in OLL/OCR [Office of Congressional Relations] until I retired on March 12, 1977. It was a wonderful experience.

Mr. Eschwege

In 1973, you became the Director of the Office of Congressional Relations, which by that time was the successor to OLL.

Mr. Blair

Right. Until 1973, OLL operated without a head man. Eddie Eckert, Owen Kane, and Fred Thompson were there. There was an autonomy there; it was an unusual relationship.

Mr. Eckert

Well, I think it worked because they did not want to choose between Owen [Kane] and me. We came up together, we worked at each one of those jobs together, and we were good friends. I didn't think the Comptroller General cared either way, but I don't think Keller or Frank [Weitzel], at the time, wanted to put one above the other. It was as simple as that to me.

I don't know to this day why the Comptroller General didn't want Smitty Blair in OLL in 1959. We spoke to him about it. We thought possibly someone on the Hill had given Smitty a bad time, but I don't know.

Mr. Eschwege

Perhaps they simply had a greater need to staff the regional offices?

Mr. Blair

That's very interesting. I couldn't understand it; he seemed to give me encouragement.

Mr. Eckert

We never understood it. Of course, there were a lot of things about Mr. Campbell we did not understand.

Mr. Blair

Incidentally, after leaving the Office, I was really exhausted because OCR is a tough job and there is nothing easy about it. I then joined the National Association of Retired Federal Employees and worked for another 7 years with the same congressional committees that I had worked with while at GAO.

Mr. Eschwege

Marty, tell us about your shorter but important GAO career.

Mr. Fitzgerald

Like all things, there are certain connections here. Just coincidentally, I interviewed with Bob Keller for a position in the General Counsel's office within a day or two of the time that Hazen Dean met his death. That was less than a week, Smitty, before that telephone call was made to you down in Dallas inviting you to come at long last to OLL.

I was born in Erie, Pennsylvania, although I don't recall anything about it. I grew up in Brooklyn, New York, and then here in Washington, D.C. I went to college here and graduated from Georgetown Law School in 1967. Immediately, I took a job with the State Court of Appeals in Detroit, which was at that time a very new element in the state court system.

The state of Michigan had a constitutional convention in 1964, and one of the things it did when it rewrote its constitution was to change the judicial structure to insert an intermediate appellate court.

This court was only 3 years old. I became a clerk for a judge in Detroit. I gained very good experience that year, but it was not a very happy living experience in Detroit. There were lots of untoward incidents. Although 1967 was before the Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy assassinations, Detroit was ahead of everybody but Watts in having riots that year.

In the fall of 1967, I decided that when my year's term was up as clerk, I was going to come back to Washington. Having planned a vacation back here during the Christmas holidays, I decided to enlist my father's help. He was an FBI agent and, in his liaison job, had gotten to know a lot about a number of different agencies.

As a result, I had two interviews—one with Bob Keller, who was then the General Counsel of GAO, and another with a deputy assistant attorney general who was in charge of what was then the Internal Security Division of the Justice Department.

Job offers came out of both of those interviews. I sat down and talked it over with my father and decided that GAO was the place to go. Since the Internal Security Division no longer exists as a separate division and GAO is still here and alive and well, I obviously made the right decision. I joined up with GAO and went right away into the General Counsel's office.

After doing the initial rotation within that office as part of my training, I ended up in one of the government contract law groups, writing bid protest decisions. A couple of years later, Owen Kane of OCR decided to retire. That created a vacancy in that office.

Fred and Smitty were holding down the fort. Bob Keller called me in one day and said, "Are you interested?" I said I was. He suggested I talk to Fred, which I did. So I spent 5 years working in OCR until 1975.

In 1975, I went back to the General Counsel's office as Assistant to the General Counsel, who was then Paul Dembling. I had a variety of functions, including writing a few of the bid protest decisions that no one else wanted to write because they were either too boring or too dull or too long or something; that was just right for me. Mr. Dembling and I had a very good working relationship.

When Smitty decided to retire in 1977, creating a vacancy in what was by that time the position of the Director of the office, I decided to go back and assume that position. I remained in OCR until 1983. It was a very interesting period of time because it gave me the chance to go through several experiences, not the least of which was the change in command of Comptrollers General.

Then, in 1983, with Chuck [Charles A.] Bowsher firmly in place and his new team already rapidly building, I decided to pursue what had been a long-deferred desire on my part—to go out into private law practice.

I joined a small law firm here in town, which is where I've been ever since. It is good to be back here at GAO today because I spent some of the most enjoyable and challenging years of my life here. There are some memories about this place that time will never be able to erase.

Mr. Eschwege

Eddie, we left you until last, but you are really the first one of this group who came to GAO.

Mr. Eckert

I am a peculiar duck in that I am a native Washingtonian. I was born and raised in the District, as were my parents, and my mother's people were living in Georgetown before the Revolutionary War. I wasn't here for the Revolutionary War, but I have been here a long time.

I went to the local public schools, to Central High School, and then I went to work. This was in the 1930s. At night, I went to Benjamin Franklin University, an accounting school here, and got a degree in 1935. I didn't have a Congressman to root for me like Fred did, but I got a job with GAO in 1934. After President Roosevelt came into office, he set up this emergency system and hired a lot of government people and built a lot of new government buildings. I was a lot better than Fred so I came in at a grade 2. I didn't come in as a grade 1.

Fred spoke of auditing packages of vouchers. I was the fellow that put all those vouchers in order; two behind one, three behind two, four behind three. I put the pasteboard binders on them, tied the rope around them, and sent them on to storage. That was my first job after coming to GAO and being assigned to the Records Division.

I progressed from there to the Claims Division and worked my way up within that Division. At the same time, I went to Southeastern Law School in the morning and did my studying at night. I got up before work and went to law school 6 days a week. I graduated in 1939, passed the Bar in December 1939, and became a member of the D.C. Bar in 1940. I then transferred to the General Counsel's office and remained there until 1950 writing decisions.

Lindsay Warren came to GAO in 1940. He decided he wanted a staff person as an aide, and he selected Frank Weitzel as Assistant to the Comptroller General. It was a civil service job; it was not an appointed job.

Later, in the mid-1940s, he brought Bob Keller up from the General Counsel's office. It progressed that way until I joined that staff. I served in GAO under every Comptroller General until Bowsher. I came in under [J. R.] McCarl, served under each Comptroller General, through Fred Brown and Warren and Campbell. I was there for about a year with [Elmer] Staats.

I then took an early retirement in 1966. I had an offer from the American Hospital Association to join its Washington office as a representative on the Hill to do, in effect, the same work that I had been doing in GAO. I retired from the Association in 1973.

Mr. Eschwege

You mentioned McCarl. Do you remember him at all?

Mr. Eckert

I met him only once, at the time of his retirement, when he invited all the people to come through his office to shake hands and say goodbye.

In those days, the staff was smaller and the then Assistant Comptroller General, Mr. Richard N. Elliott, would wander through the office, usually on Friday, and say hello to everybody.

Mr. James Baity, who I think was an Administrative Assistant, was the man who interviewed me when I was hired to work for GAO. He was quite a character. I didn't know why a clerk like me had to be interviewed by the Administrative Assistant, but apparently he interviewed everybody applying for a position.

In the Claims Division, I worked on the same floor as Assistant Comptroller General Elliott and other members of the staff. Often before they'd go home, they'd wander by and say, "How's everything going, fellas? Was everything all right today?" It was that close an office. Of course, I think that was one of the beauties about the General Accounting Office. It was a small office compared with other Washington agencies.

Since GAO had field operations, the few people that were in Washington were all reasonably close. You didn't know everybody, but you knew a lot of the people. We had no problems with knowing the heads of other divisions or their assistants.

In almost all cases in those early days, promotions were made from within. If you did your job and you were looking for something better and working and striving for it, you got it. They didn't always tell you

about it. I had a chance to leave the office a few times for other employment. I remember that on one of those occasions, I went in to the Chief of the Claims Division to discuss my prospects for advancement in GAO. Being young, I didn't know why they hadn't already chosen me as General Counsel. [Laughter]

The Chief said, "I can't tell you. Make up your own mind." He knew then that my promotion was already in the mill, but he wasn't going to tell me.

Anyhow, I have said this many times. There was never a day while at GAO that I wasn't happy to come to work, even though a couple of those days were a little shaky when Mr. Campbell came in in the morning.

Evolution of GAO's Legislative Liaison Activities

Dr. Trask

Let's try to fill in the history of the establishment of the GAO legislative liaison function. Eventually, it became organized as OLL and then OCR. But I think there was some kind of legislative liaison function going back further, certainly into the 1940s. Maybe you would be the one to first direct this question to, Eddie.

Mr. Eckert

Yes, it began in the 1940s. At that time, for practical purposes, we had no audit function as we would define it today. There was some accounting for appropriations in the Accounting and Bookkeeping Division. Our involvement with the Congress was based on investigation reports.

Those investigation reports would come from our field offices, mostly to the Office of the General Counsel (OGC), to be reviewed before they were processed. OGC would then decide whether to send them to the Hill or what else to do with them. We might just mail them to the Hill with a letter. That is about all that happened to them.

Early Liaison Activities

Now, we did foster some interest. Smitty mentioned Porter Hardy. He was a great friend of the Office back in the early days. For example, we got involved in the Veterans Insurance Program. The Veterans Administration, like the Justice Department, said, "Forget it. You are not going

to audit anything over here. You got no business auditing. We are separate and we are not a regular department." So it did not agree that we could audit at all.

This happened after Lindsay Warren came. General Gray, who headed the Veterans Administration, met with us in the Office of the Comptroller General, and he finally agreed over the objection of his General Counsel and the head of his Veterans Insurance Program to allow GAO access to the agency's accounts.

Earlier, it had been determined that there was more work required in the Office of the Comptroller General than Bob Keller and Frank Weitzel could handle. So they added more staff; Charlie Johnson, I think, was the first man they added, and then a little later Owen Kane and I came in the same day from the General Counsel's office.

I got involved in the conference with General Gray because I had just grown up with a couple of those old cases in veterans matters that I had worked on in the Office of the General Counsel and testified before the committees on them. Because of those experiences with the committees, it was sort of natural to offer me the job on the CG's [Comptroller General] staff. I was assigned about 1950. We worked very closely with the committees on that veterans insurance issue. General Gray, who was a former railroad man, did finally agree that we could audit these functions. We worked that out with Porter Hardy so that [the Office of] Investigations was able to do a lot of work around the country on the insurance program. Similarly, we did a nationwide study on the G.I. Bill of Rights program.

There were a lot of complaints about this program to provide education for the veterans after they came back from the war. The money went directly to the schools, and some schools were overcharging the government. They charged students out-of-state tuition, and they charged them extra for everything they could think of. Sometimes there were irregularities in recordkeeping, such as whether the veterans were actually enrolled and attending school.

Congressman [Olin] Teague of Texas chaired a subcommittee that wanted to look into the G.I. Bill Program. He talked to Porter Hardy and some of the others, who suggested that they talk to me at GAO.

So the upshot of it was that for a period of time, we used all the regional offices of the Office of Investigations to do this work. I flew up to Chicago and met with all the regional managers. We outlined a program to review a number of universities and schools. As a result, we recommended changes to the program. When we worked with the committees like that, we sat down with them in the drafting sessions. We helped revise the legislation, even wrote speeches for the Congressmen, and helped prepare the committee report.

There would always be someone there from the committees. In the Veterans Administration case, it would be Pat Patterson, who was the committee General Counsel. Then there would be a representative of the House Legislative Office, who was Jim Menger most of those years I was there. Also, the Budget Bureau had to be included; Sam Hughes was its legislative man at that time.

I think one of the great functions of GAO was to try to help in the drafting of legislation and prevent problems from coming up in later years when we had to review it and interpret what a particular Congressman had really meant when he introduced the bill.

Mr. Blair

Eddie, I think your early activities in OLL were different from those I encountered because when I was in OLL, this activity was very limited. I don't remember helping any committee to write legislation.

Mr. Eckert

We not only did that, but we performed other staff duties for the Comptroller General. If somebody came into the office that the Comptroller General, Frank Weitzel, or Bob Keller didn't want to see, I saw him or Owen Kane saw him.

If there were disgruntled employees, we saw them. If there were former employees who wanted to come back to work and the boss didn't want to see them, we would see them and then we would talk to the division chiefs. If they thought they were good employees, of course, we'd take them back. If not, we'd tell him them that was too bad. We did all these other types of things in addition to helping with the extensive legislative work.

Mr. Blair

I think that is the reason only attorneys were hired. Later, while I was there, there was great concern. We did break the lock, and we did also assign auditors to OCR.

Mr. Thompson

I think those few cases you are talking about—where you worked so closely with the committees and the subcommittee and Porter Hardy, and Teague—gave a lot of impetus to the development of OLL later. Those Chairmen had been impressed with the assistance that you and Owen and others had given them. It was easy for me, then, for instance, when I came in and Porter Hardy had become Chairman of the House Subcommittee on the Armed Services, to establish an effective relationship.

He could easily see the advantage that he could derive politically from taking some of our choice reports and creating a chamber of horrors. I remember one of the first ones when Hassell Bell [GAO] set up these displays of little screws that cost the government \$15 a piece; Porter Hardy got a lot of publicity out of it.

Mr. Eckert

I think the members of the Congress really wanted to do some good, too. It wasn't just the publicity.

Mr. Thompson

Those drafting assistance cases that you were talking about, I think, set the stage for the broadening of OLL and caused us to assign to each OLL member specific committees to service. We always thought OLL really was a specialized public relations office. Your constituency, your public, was the Congress, its members, and the committees.

You mentioned McCarl a while ago. I never knew McCarl. He had gone before I came, but I gained a lot of respect for him during my years in the General Counsel's office, researching decisions and reading some of the early decisions that he had signed. He was a tough hombre, apparently.

He set the stage for what developed as a healthy relationship, I think, between GAO and the Congress, its individual members, and its committees. He was rather standoffish; he wasn't taking orders from anybody up on the Hill.

Mr. Eckert

That's right.

Mr. Thompson

McCarl felt that GAO was created as an independent agency. By golly, he was going to keep it that way.

Mr. Blair

Incidentally, on this point, at least two members talked to me when Staats was in charge. They said that you have a real good organization, but the reason you have a good reputation for independence is McCarl

and then also Lindsay Warren. I think that this is true. McCarl did nitpick, he took some dollar exceptions, and did some other ridiculous things, but he called the shots as he saw them. Then Lindsay Warren too gained high respect. I think that gave Campbell and Staats a sound foundation on which to build.

Mr. Eckert

We were without a Comptroller General after McCarl for about 3 years. The problem apparently was that President Roosevelt wanted to get rid of GAO. He agreed with a lot of other people that there should not be an independent review. He had legislation introduced several times to abolish the Office.

Lindsay Warren as a Congressman was the guy that spearheaded the work to keep the Office. In the final analysis—and this is hearsay—Roosevelt called Warren and said, “Now look, you’ve given me all this trouble. You’ve beat me. I have to give up. If you are so proud of that Office and you think so much of it, how about going down there and running it?” This I understood is what happened.

Dr. Trask

Actually, Roosevelt offered Warren the job three times—shortly after McCarl retired, then another time, and then finally the time he took it in 1940. When Warren accepted the appointment in 1940, he extracted a promise from Roosevelt that he would no longer try to abolish the General Accounting Office. This is on the record.

Mr. Eckert

There are a couple of cases that I remember and I thought we should highlight.

One case involved the health programs for government employees. We worked very closely with the committees on that. We sat in on the drafting sessions; we met with Jerome Keating, the head of the Postal Union, and with a representative of Blue Cross. The drafting effort started in the Senate, but we also got over to the House to assist with the legislation. Sam Hughes was there also from the Bureau of the Budget.

I sat in on the task force to draft that legislation. As it originally was envisioned, there was going to be only one program—not a low- and a high-option program.

Well, I got the idea that with my grade I would want something better than an insurance policy that provided such limited coverage. So I checked that with our office, and it was agreed that we recommend a high- and a low-option program. So I took it up with the staff director.

We met with Senate committee Chairman Olin D. Johnston of South Carolina and with Keating. The staff had arranged for Keating to come because they wouldn't do anything without the Postal Union's agreement.

Our recommendation for two programs was adopted. Here again, I sat in on the drafting session, helped write the committee report, and prepared statements for the members who would speak for the legislation on the floor.

One of the other major efforts GAO undertook a few years later [about 1957-1958] was to help Senator John McClellan and his Senate Investigating Committee in its investigation of labor racketeering. Bob [Robert] Kennedy was the committee counsel.

We used our staffs in every office in the country on that job. They served subpoenas, they found witnesses, and they investigated everything you could think of. Ray Bandy in our Seattle Regional Office made a particularly great contribution to that work. Anyway, this was a tremendous effort.

So this developed into where we had entre into Senator McClellan's office, and to the White House too, of course, because Jack Kennedy was elected President, Bob Kennedy got to be Attorney General, and Kenneth O'Donnell, who worked with the McClellan committee and had been the President's roommate at college, went to the White House as assistant to the President. While he was at the White House, Owen Kane and I met with him a few times to discuss matters of interest to GAO.

Dr. Trask

Can we establish when this legislative liaison function was formalized in the Office of Legislative Liaison? The records are really not very clear on that. OLL first pops up in GAO's organization charts in fiscal year 1956. Was this part of Campbell's reorganization?

Mr. Eckert

Yes. It started after Campbell came in. I should have told you that in the Office of the Assistant to the Comptroller General, we handled also all the press releases. The first beating I got by Mr. Campbell was over something I turned loose to Jerry Klutz, who was a Washington Post reporter. Campbell came in the next morning; he was not in a good mood. Normally, he would come up the hall, and as he passed my office, he would come over and say, "Good morning, Eddie."

On this occasion, he came roaring in and chewed me out for releasing this report to Jerry Klutz before discussing it with him.

I said, "Mr. Campbell, all of that has already been released." I do want to give him credit, however, for coming back later and saying, "I'm sorry about that Eddie. That was already made public, so there wasn't any problem."

But to get back to the story of OIL. After Campbell came in 1954, he reorganized the Office. I don't know how much you want to get into it, but he abolished the Office of Investigations.

In my opinion, Mr. Campbell made his greatest contribution to GAO when he reorganized the audit functions and set up the two audit divisions and, for the first time, hired qualified accountants to do accounting systems review and financial reports.

To get back to why the Investigations Office was abolished, it related to an effort in the 1950s to stockpile zinc as a defense material, and a GAO report on that effort. Bill Ellis, who had also been in the Office of the Comptroller General with Weitzel and Keller, later headed up the Office of Investigations. He was a wonderful man; he was bright and was a brilliant attorney. Like McCarl, his back was so strong and his ethics were so good that nothing would sway him.

We got involved in this zinc case. Someone got his Congressman to hold a hearing on it. He was irate about it because he said our data was wrong. It was wrong.

All of us, including Weitzel and Keller, sat down with Ellis and decided that really what we should do is draw in our horns and let it go.

Ellis wouldn't do it. He sent telegrams out to all the regional offices and sent men in and tried to find something else or other evidence of wrongdoing on the part of the involved mining company. We took a real beating on the Hill on that case. Of course, Campbell had just come in as Comptroller General and could know little of the background. The upshot was that Campbell asked for Ellis' resignation.

Next they abolished the Office of Investigations and reassigned the investigators to the audit groups.

Mr. Blair

Let me just mention that the zinc job was part of an overall material stockpile investigation. I was looking at feathers. Others were looking at nickel.

Mr. Eckert

Those were hard days in the Office. Lord, we burnt the midnight oil for weeks trying to take care of those problems. You didn't know when you were going home back in those days.

Now to go back to your question, I really don't know exactly when OLL started. As far as I knew, there was no Office memorandum designating OLL. The function was in the Office of the Comptroller General, as far as I know, until it passed to the General Counsel.

I think it probably happened when Bob Keller became the General Counsel. Campbell asked him if he would like to be General Counsel since it might be a little more permanent position. Campbell liked Bob very much. When Bob took the job, Campbell told him to take the liaison staff with him.

Mr. Thompson

That was before my time, but I do recall hearing about conversations along that line. I think you're absolutely right. The office followed Bob Keller. That was also true when Bob became the Deputy in 1969.

Mr. Eckert

As I have previously pointed out, when we were part of the staff of the Comptroller General's office, we did many duties in addition to our legislation functions. One such duty was that of reviewing all the so-called audit reports that went out of the Office.

The Government Corporation Control Act of 1945 was being implemented at that time. By the time we got a substantial number of reports out, it was the early 1950s. The Corporation Audits Division issued reports on all the major government corporations. We reviewed those reports for the Comptroller General with the division auditors before they could go out of the Office.

After we got to be OLL, the review function was delegated to the divisions, which had qualified accountants like Sammy [A. T. Samuelson] and others.

Also, prior to Campbell's reorganization, we did all the testifying. The division people were not allowed to testify. They came along as support people.

Dr. Trask

How much testimony was there in those days?

Mr. Eckert

Well, there wasn't a whole lot. I couldn't even get a handle on whether it was a half a dozen cases a year or what it might have been.

Under Campbell, we started to develop interest in our reports among the committees. Owen Kane, who handled the labor rackets investigation, worked with the Appropriations Committees. We had not been able to get those Committees to take any interest in GAO's work. We appeared before them only on the day they allowed us to come up and testify on our own appropriation.

Owen finally was able to get together with Congressman Robert Byrd of West Virginia on the House side. He convinced Byrd that we could help the Committee and that broke the ice.

Of course, then there wasn't any end to it. Byrd not only wanted help, but he wanted us to assign GAO staff people to the Committee. That was the beginning of GAO assigning personnel to the Hill.

As far as I know, we still are assigning our people to the House Surveys and Investigations staff. That's one thing we did with Charles Wolfe, whom you interviewed earlier as the employee with the longest tenure in GAO.

When the Investigations staff was disbanded, Charlie was sort of at loose ends. We didn't have a whole lot to do for him. Here was a qualified man, a good man. We used him constantly as an assignee to the committees. Charlie liked it, too. He was happy. We did this with a lot of other former investigators.

Office of Congressional Relations, 1973

Dr. Trask

The name, Office of Legislative Liaison, lasted until 1973, and then it was renamed Office of Congressional Relations. Why was the name changed?

Mr. Blair

OLL didn't seem to signify the real work of the Office. The original principal function that it engaged in was writing legislation. We no longer did that. Mr. Staats wanted to improve the extent of assistance provided

to the Congress, and he was very concerned about having gone down to almost zero on congressional requests. Actually, we were using about 8 percent of staff time on direct assistance. Our job really became a [public relations] activity to sell the GAO product up on the Hill.

It eventually reached the point where Staats got concerned and talked in terms of limiting our direct assistance to about 30 to 35 percent of our time. So by the ending years of my tour at OLL-OCR, we were turning down requests. You had to fight off requests.

I think the name "Office of Congressional Relations" more clearly identified the main function of the Office, at least while I was there.

Mr. Eckert

You dealt with a lot more subcommittees. I can't believe how this Congress has grown, both in buildings and staff. I really feel that the country needs to be fully aware of what it actually costs to run the Congress and what functions these subcommittees serve. Each subcommittee wants to make some contribution and get some publicity. Their staffs in turn ask GAO for assistance.

Mr. Blair

Well, if you appoint a man to a job, he has to produce something.

Mr. Eckert

That's right. He has to have a secretary and legislative assistants.

Mr. Blair

This whole thing grows out of the demand for information. In other words, in the last 30 years, there has been a tremendous growth and this demand for instant information is growing more today. The more information you develop, the more people you hire.

But, Eddie, that all developed from the change in our society. The Congress that existed when you were there is no longer around. It changed over time. Really, it has its strong points and its weak points.

You used to be able to deal with a half a dozen men. If they gave you the word, you could get something done. Today, you have to deal with 435 members on the House side alone.

Mr. Fitzgerald

That has been a real problem for GAO, too. There has been, as we just noted, a tremendous evolution to the point where instead of encouraging and developing relations with the Congress, you had to play fullback with a stiff-arm.

Mr. Eckert

That's part of the reason you got so many requests. Everybody's looking for action.

Contrasting Views of GAO's Liaison With the Congress

Mr. Thompson

I think you can trace the philosophy of the Office from McCarl, who really conducted an adversarial relationship with the Congress.

Lindsay Warren, who had been a member of the Congress and had fought the battle for independence with the President, was a balance. He understood both sides. He understood the relationship that the Congress wanted with GAO and also the need for maintaining a certain distance and independence from the Congress in the sense that GAO should not be subjected to the whim and wills of individual members, whereby individual members could come and demand GAO to do this, that, or the other.

GAO would honor almost any request from a committee or a subcommittee because it is good business. [The law now requires it.] If it was a bad request, you could try to talk the requester out of it, but you just couldn't stand firm. I think Warren introduced that element, as opposed to McCarl. Campbell was more inclined to an adversarial relationship at first, although not as strongly as McCarl.

When Staats came in from the Bureau of the Budget, he obviously was aware that executive departments regarded themselves as being adversaries of the Congress, but he recognized the importance of GAO's working with the Congress. There has been a gradual evolution reflecting the philosophies of the different Comptrollers General.

Mr. Eckert

Mr. Campbell was sometimes not as friendly as he could be, but he did a great job for the Office. When he focused on an appropriate audit [comprehensive audit] of the government agencies, it was the best thing that happened to the Office.

The time had come that we needed such audits. I guess they arose from the work we did under the Government Corporation Control Act.

Mr. Eschwege

Those audits really started under Lindsay Warren.

Mr. Eckert

That's right. Warren developed this concept. I remember that when we discussed this, Warren had to go out and hire real accountants because we couldn't do the job with the people we had in the Office. That's when he got Ted Westfall and other CPAs [certified public accountants].

Dr. Trask

I think Fred has done a good job of summarizing Warren, Campbell, and Staats. But, Marty, you were here for a time under Mr. Bowsher. Do you see any contrasts or basis for comparison?

Mr. Fitzgerald

Well, of course, Mr. Bowsher had some experience in the position of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Financial Management, both during the last 2 years of the Johnson administration and the first 2 years of President Nixon's administration. So he had experience dealing with government financial matters, a very large agency, the defense budget, and the Congress.

I did not know him at all before his nomination was made. As for Mr. Staats, I was here for 13 of his 15 years. I got to see him as someone who—despite having come out of the Budget Bureau, where there was a certain adversarial relationship with the Congress—had, in my view, learned and acted in a way that made relationships with the Congress very comfortable in some respects. "Comfortable" may not be the right word, but Mr. Staats gave a certain shape and direction to what those of us in OLL-OCR were doing.

You have to remember that Mr. Staats' wife, Margie, was the daughter of a member of the Congress from Pennsylvania who served on the Appropriations Committee. There was perhaps a certain fostering of the relationship with the Appropriations Committees because of that and also because of the Budget Bureau, whose principal relationship with the Congress was with the Appropriations Committees.

I know that after Smitty retired and I came back from the General Counsel's office to OCR, one of the clear themes of my work effort was organized around restoring what had been a very good working relationship. There had been a transition period after Chairman George Mahon's death and before Chairman Jamie Whitten really took over. Maintaining a good relationship with the Appropriations Committees was a principal part of the work during my second tour at OCR.

My understanding of the mission that Chuck Bowsher came here with was that he was very concerned with financial management. I think he felt as though we had become very much absorbed with congressional

request work, which, as we have indicated, had become a problem in and of itself. Much of this congressional request work did not revolve around financial management.

It was, by whatever term you want to call it, program evaluation that got most of the attention. The 1970 Legislative Reorganization Act gave us a very important statutory mission to perform evaluations of government programs and not sheer financial management.

I think that perhaps in the course of the evolution over time, Mr. Bowsher felt as though we needed to pay more attention to financial management. He was also concerned with the fact that perhaps GAO was not as well-equipped as it ought to be to deal with the developments that are, of course, extremely rapid and are occurring every day in the computerization of large organizations.

I think that he saw that as important long before his confirmation, and he has since set up IMTEC [Information Management and Technology Division] here at GAO to provide a focus for that kind of activity.

Tom Hagenstad, who is now the Director of OCR, and I, during the course of the consideration of Mr. Bowsher's nomination, accompanied him on a number of courtesy calls that he was making on members of the Senate in particular but also on members of the House. That is, of course, a very delicate period of time for any nominee, particularly a nominee who is going to be in a position for 15 years.

He dealt extremely well with members of the Congress, but it was clear that beyond the nomination process, he wanted first to focus on what the agency was doing before he got into a very extensive relationship.

Once his nomination was confirmed and he entered office in October 1981, he began to focus very heavily on what was going on within the Office, and it led to a reorganization that produced the audit divisions structure that now exists in GAO. For example, he established NSIAD [National Security and International Affairs Division] to principally focus on the Defense Department. By that time, we had gone through the evolution of the Manpower and Welfare Division, which became the Human Resources Division. Henry, you recall that we had at one time already gone through organizations that were predecessors of what now is RCED [Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division]. It had been two separate divisions, but already we had organized on kind of a functional basis.

We already had several defense-oriented divisions. The question was, "How were we going to go about organizing our effort in the Defense Department?" That was one of his principal focuses of activity.

The way in which GAO internal report review went on was a matter of concern to him. So in the first year or two when I was still here, he paid a lot of attention to internal organizational and personnel matters.

He testified at oversight hearings and at our appropriation hearings. He reviewed all of the reports very carefully, and he was extremely interested in hearing what we could tell him about the history of GAO and the history of the relationships with particular members and particular committees because he was going through a learning process.

From what I have learned since I left GAO, he has now reached the phase, or some time ago reached the phase, where he is very actively pursuing his own personal relationships with members of the House and the Senate on a very widespread basis.

That brings to mind something that Elmer Staats said, when he was Comptroller General, in a meeting with some people from the outside. As you said, Eddie, one of our other duties as assigned was to meet with people when there was no other logical person in GAO to do it. We used to meet with people from the UK [United Kingdom] Parliament, the Government of Canada, or whoever it might be.

Well, Staats was meeting with some outside group, and it doesn't really make much difference who it was, and the question was raised by one of the members of the group about the character of GAO's relationship with the Congress.

The question that we have all frequently dealt with is, "Since GAO is in the legislative branch, why does GAO need to have an Office of Congressional Relations?"

In that vein, Mr. Staats made the comment that in his view, the character of an agency's relationship with the Congress is determined primarily by the nature of the personal relationship between the head of the agency and members of the Congress themselves.

I remember being very struck with that comment, and it has always stayed with me. I think Elmer Staats, by the time I got here and started

working in congressional relations, already had a very-well-developed personal relationship with members of the Congress.

Chuck Bowsher, I think, developed a relationship differently. He was not well-known to many members of the Hill, and he developed a relationship in a very methodical and sensible way and now has developed that kind of personal relationship that will stand the agency in very good stead.

Coordinating Contacts Between the Hill and GAO Auditors

Mr. Eschwege

We've talked a lot here about how we relate to the Congress, but there is another side to it. In OLL and OCR, we also had to deal a lot internally with our own GAO people.

What I found in GAO that differed from what one finds in a lot of executive agencies is that we were the core of congressional relations but that just about every audit supervisor, assistant director, or associate director could have contact with congressional committees and their staffs and vice versa. They could often directly contact us.

One of the things from my perspective that concerned the auditors was that in their dealings with the committees, either through OCR or directly, they were mostly meeting a committee staff or a Congressman's staff. I am sure you often heard the question, "To what extent do these staff persons really portray and reflect the views of the chairman and the members of the Congress?" Any comment on that? Is that a real problem?

Mr. Blair

I think all of us want to comment on that. I know that it was a problem with the audit groups or the operating staff. They wanted to talk to the chairman or the member.

We know that the staff director is an alter ego of the member. He often knows more about any subject than the member does, and he is the one that reflects the thinking of the member. So it was pragmatic to deal with the staff man.

Now, there was a very excellent article recently in The Wall Street Journal on this very subject. It mentioned a couple of men in the Appropriations Committee that I knew and worked with on the Hill.

The point is that the man who deals with NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] is not the chairman but his staff man. A former Chief of the Corps of Engineers said that if you had any problem you wanted the answer to, you dealt with a certain staff person. The staff man is often better informed, and unless you had his support, you weren't going to get anywhere with the member.

Mr. Fitzgerald

That is absolutely right, if you are talking about the person who is the subcommittee or committee counsel or staff director.

I think that Eddie touched earlier on the question about the proliferation of staff and the size of the Congress and the number of its subcommittees.

You know, here it is the summertime. You probably have 500 summer college interns sitting on the Hill who are parading around with the banner of Senator this or Congressman that or Subcommittee XYZ who have no ear to the particular member. They are there working before they go back to school in September, thus increasing the number of staff members.

I think the situation in which we find the Congress operating today is very different from the situation in the days when Lyndon Johnson, for example, came up from Texas to be the staff person for Congressman [Richard M.] Kleberg of Texas. There weren't 18 or 20 people in Congressman Kleberg's office and 20 more on his subcommittee and 30 more on his full committee. There was one person.

This is where, I think, we in OLL and OCR in the later years would be able to help and did help wherever possible. That is to try to distinguish between staff members who are significant and those who are not.

Mr. Eckert

We didn't have that problem, but I would venture to say that if we tried to go to the Congressman without going to the staff director, GAO would never have been invited back and the staff director would have cut our throats in 2 minutes.

Now, we often met with the members. That was not a real problem. But the staff director called the tune, at least in our day. Now, you would still have a basic staff director of a committee that you could go to.

Mr. Fitzgerald

Even today, if you pull an end run around a person of significance, you'll have Hell to pay for years afterward.

Mr. Thompson

Members of OLL-OCR played a buffer role. The staff director of the committee is a buffer between everybody and the chairman. That is what he is hired for. We were a buffer between our staff people and the staff directors of committees.

It was just safer that way. I remember several assistant directors in the audit divisions who just were chafing at the bit all the time to have a free hand to go up and sell the staff director or the members. Actually, they wanted to see the members, not the staff.

It could have gotten out of control, really. From an organizational standpoint, it is much better to have a buffer to weed out some of the chaff. Because we were close to the Comptroller General, the General Counsel, and the Deputy Comptroller General, we easily could air in those quarters any problems we had with whether something should be brought up to the staff director.

I think that one of the best things that happened during my tenure in OLL to make our job more functional and more effective was the initiative by Staats to have a staff meeting twice a week. At 8 o'clock in the morning, we got together with the Comptroller General for however long it took, an hour or 2 hours, to cover all the problems. Sometimes division directors and assistants were also present. It gave us a much better feeling about what the attitude of the Comptroller General and the whole Office was.

Uneven Use of GAO Resources by Committees and Members

Mr. Eschwege

I think that is very enlightening. There seemed to be an uneven use of GAO resources by committees and members. Some newspaper articles appeared questioning why we were doing so much for Senator So-and-So and for a particular Congressman or a particular committee.

Did we try to deal with that in any way? Did we try to encourage some committees to make more use of us or encourage some members to lay off?

Mr. Blair

Well, a very important part of Staats' program was to develop relationships.

Mr. Eckert

You have to first recognize that our patron saint up there was the Government Operations Committee. Its members were the ones that we were really responsible to.

Mr. Blair

Eddie, I think the point goes beyond that. Staats was attempting to develop a congressional oversight responsibility, and the Congress was not carrying out this responsibility. You had exceptions to that—Senators J. J. Williams and William Proxmire and Congressman H. R. Gross. So part of our selling job was to suggest that GAO could help the Congress in fulfilling this oversight responsibility.

The fact that we had directed all our work to the Government Operations Committees initially created a problem for me in developing relationships with the Banking Committee because its staff person wouldn't talk to me. At first, I had a very difficult time getting in to see him; finally, I did and broke down the barriers and had good relations with that committee.

The problem was that our Office referred all our reports solely to the Government Operations Committees. It's true that committee had overall responsibility, but our Office made a mistake in that it should also have been conscious of, and developed a relationship with, the other committees having oversight responsibilities.

Handling Congressional Requests

Mr. Fitzgerald

Let me ask a question here because when you were talking, Henry, about imbalance, or the perception of an imbalance, it seems to me that problem can be broken down in two ways.

We are talking about Committee A versus Committee B, Government Operations versus Banking, Appropriations versus Government Operations, and so on.

My own personal feeling has been that we don't gain anything at GAO by acting in a way that prefers or creates the appearance of preferring one committee over another. It got to be a real problem in the 1970 to 1980 time frame with respect to requests from individual members.

You have to assume that requests from individual members originate outside of the congressional structure itself. By definition, they don't come from the committee or subcommittee chairman, they come from Congressman X.

If the truth be known, these requests sometimes involved situations when the requester either was antagonistic to a subcommittee chairman or he had tried unsuccessfully to get the chairman to sponsor the request and then decided to write the letter to us directly.

Those kinds of problems existed in the early 1970s, particularly with respect to military matters and the Vietnam War. Certain members of the Congress, particularly junior members, got to discover GAO. This was the period of the discovery of GAO. After the committees discovered GAO, the members also discovered GAO.

A couple of Congressmen, who shall go unnamed because they are now committee chairmen and can write letters in other capacities, would fire letters over here almost daily. If a day went by when we didn't get a letter from one of these members asking us to take a look at something, it was kind of a dull day.

There can be an imbalance if GAO responds more than is warranted to that type of a request. You may find that you are spending your resources on matters that are of relatively parochial concern, that are of concern to a Congressman in a particular state, or that concern a particular contractor or a particular contract. A committee is usually concerned more about how that particular program is operating in an agency or about contracting practices in general.

I think there was, and there probably always will be, some problem of developing a sense of balance between committee requests and member requests. Any legitimate committee request that you get, and you have to assume they are all legitimate, has to be taken with 100-percent seriousness. I believe, however, that you have to analyze the member requests and see really where they are coming from.

Mr. Blair

I think you also have to consider the statutory requirements. The statutory requirements on GAO emphasize assistance to the committees. The initial 1921 act talks about rendering assistance to committees concerned with or having jurisdiction over revenue, appropriations, and expenditures. That at one time could be looked at very, very narrowly. It was the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 that broadened the requirement to provide assistance to all committees.

The member requests to us, often resulting from constituent inquiries directed to their Congressmen, are much more frequent now than in my days.

Congressmen are not going to get reelected unless they provide constituent service. Marty seemed to be talking about a member's work being related to helping a constituent, as opposed to a program.

Mr. Eschwege

I meant to cover not only the fact that we were doing work for specific committees but also whether we tried to encourage doing work for those committees that were silent and never or hardly ever asked us to do anything.

Mr. Blair

John Martiny [congressional staff person who was formerly in OLL] told me that the concern up on the Hill was whose ox GAO was going to gore. The committees and the members were interested in a particular end product and in the conclusions we reach; they were concerned about the degree of independence we had.

Some committees attempted to direct our investigation. We turned them down and told them it had to be an independent investigation. There was concern that the conclusions we might reach in our reports could assist a member's opponent in the next election.

Mr. Eschwege

Marty, it seems that we also had to put some limits on these individual requests that were politically motivated, so highly staff intensive, frivolous, or just not doable. How did we deal with such requests?

Mr. Fitzgerald

Well, no specifics come to mind, but I do know that if a request came in, say, from an individual member that seemed to have a great deal of merit to it and that we wanted to do to justify the effort and to ensure that the product had the maximum impact, we would often go up to the member and say, "You know, you really have your finger on something. But, you know, Committee X has jurisdiction over this problem. What we would like to do is have your key staff folks sit down with us and

the staff of Committee X and tell them that you have requested this and get their input before we get started. Maybe they would like to have a certain thing added to the request." We would try to encourage people to work within the committee system.

You can get into some very damaging relationships. I recall that in one situation, there was a tremendous antagonism between an individual member to whom we provided some assistance and the structure and the powers within that committee. We got caught in the middle when our motives were questioned during GAO testimony before that committee. It did not help our relationship.

Mr. Thompson

There is a certain turf battle going on up on the Hill all the time. I recall an instance that could have been very important. It happened in my last days in OCR before I went to the Office of Federal Elections.

It was an incident with the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee. Senator [John L.] McClellan personally got offended. It was no fault of mine. It is an example of how these relationships up there sometimes get a little bit sticky.

Senator Proxmire, being the originator of the Golden Fleece Awards, had a staff man who watched all the little bits of legislation. He called me one morning and said, "In the Congressional Record yesterday, there is this mention of an amendment that is going to pass unless somebody objects to it. What does it mean?" I looked at the Congressional Record and agreed that it was a bad piece of legislation. It was something that GAO would have an interest in seeing not pass. It was legitimate for GAO to object to it and we did. The staff member said, "Well, we'll knock it out." It took just one member to object.

It turns out that this legislation involved a pet project of Senator McClellan's. His staff man, purely out of suspicion because he knew that I dealt with Proxmire and with his committee, accused me of undermining the chairman's pet project.

Mr. Eckert

Also, there were political differences, too, that caught us in the middle—not real often. I can remember a couple of instances when we appeared before a committee to discuss a GAO audit report. The chairman would call the hearing to order and refer to our report. A member of the minority party would say, "What report?"

The chairman would innocently suggest that the member should have gotten the report, since he had told his staff to provide copies to the minority members which, of course, he had not done. While this may have involved some internal politics, it could also generate, unjustly, some harsh feelings against GAO, which had sent the report to the committee.

Mr. Eschwege

Let me pursue this question of independence a little bit more and also the idea that Mr. Staats wanted to try to keep the requests down to a certain level because he felt that we needed to have some independence by doing a certain amount of self-initiated work.

You probably know that at this moment, about 81 percent of GAO's work is congressionally requested. That includes both request and statutorily mandated work. The latter is a relatively small portion of the 81 percent.

Mr. Blair

Mr. Staats wanted to keep the request work at about 35 percent of the total effort.

Mr. Eschwege

In order that we do not compare apples and pears here, I want to point out that there is at least on the part of GAO a feeling that a request today is often not what it seemed to be in the old days. It often does not come out of the clear blue sky from some committee or Congressman. GAO develops its plans with input from committee staffs and sometimes from members. Long-range plans are then made available to the committees. A lot of the work being requested is really work that we, GAO, identified, along with congressional sources, as being important work.

With that in mind, I still would like to get your reaction to the current high percentage of requests. In that connection, I also would like your views about instances when members or committee staffs have tried to actually direct GAO's day-to-day work. For example, I was aware of some congressional staff members wanting to direct specific audit approaches or travel with us to assist in the audit.

Mr. Blair

I remember when committee staffs had a close working relationship with the audit group. At times, I felt that our auditors were too anxious to respond to the requests being made. I thought some requests were a little too narrow or politically motivated, and I would have liked to have greater control than I did.

I can recall a particular committee and its staff director wanting to direct our work. I really think that we succeeded in forestalling these efforts. When committees attempted to have their staff members go with us, I hit the ceiling. Having been an FBI agent and trying to maintain GAO's independence, I was personally offended that they would make requests like that.

I had to make the point that what they asked for was a GAO report and not a committee report. I pointed out that if they wanted to direct the work, they could ask for GAO personnel to be detailed to the committee staff.

We had a little leverage because the Senate passed a rule that it had to pay for the GAO staff on detail to committees; the House never adopted that rule.

Mr. Fitzgerald

I recall that when I started in 1970, Elmer Staats and Bob Keller and the senior staff held an annual review session each fall with various audit groups assigned to audit executive branch agencies to discuss the work plans for the succeeding year or 18 months. These sessions went on pretty much all day for several weeks.

One of the ground rules for developing a program plan was that the plan must reflect the extent to which there had been discussions with the cognizant committees of the Congress in the development of the plan.

My impression in 1970 was that these program plans were developed almost exclusively on the basis of the staff's own knowledge and experience with the agency and with practically no consultation with the committee staffs.

From what you have described and from what I knew when I was still here, I feel that GAO has gotten to the point where program plans themselves are being shared with congressional staffs and documents are being shared in draft form with these people to get their input.

So now, for example, if you are a chief counsel for a subcommittee, you have a menu of everything to be reviewed in a particular agency or activity that is under the subcommittee's jurisdiction.

We had a priority designation system at GAO. That was often discussed with the Hill. The staffs knew that if the committees had a particular

interest in planned assignments, they could get first priority by converting what were planned self-initiated reviews into congressional request assignments. In that way, the jobs might get done in time to be of maximum use to the chairmen.

If the evolution in GAO's planning process has been what it appears to be, a lot of this request work is work that we would do anyway at GAO. Such requests don't trouble me so much, particularly if they are coming from the committees of jurisdiction.

Again, I do get back to my problem with member requests. We need to ask what our basis is for coordinating our work with members and what their jurisdiction is to make requests.

So a committee request that converts something that we would do in 18 months to something that we would do in 12 months to meet some needs of the committee, be they political or whatever, doesn't bother me that much.

We have to be a little bit humble about our thinking. We may think that we know the agencies very well, and I'm sure that the individual audit groups do know their agencies very well, but I'm willing to say, and I don't think you will dispute me when I say that, that Jamie Whitten also knows something about the Agriculture Department.

I think that we have to recognize that there are sources of information and viewpoints that are not necessarily our own but have a validity of their own.

Mr. Eschwege

Let me ask about a problem that I think you ran into in later years as these requests came in hot and heavy. As more subcommittees were formed, you had some problems deciding which division to assign these requests to, didn't you? I always said that if only the executive branch and the Congress could organize themselves the same way GAO does, we might have less of a problem.

I am talking about problems not only within OCR but also the turf problems that sometimes developed when you didn't assign a request to the division that really thought it should have it.

Mr. Fitzgerald

The Energy and Minerals Division, which is now part of RCED, comes to mind. The Resources and Economic Development Division had jurisdiction over the Environmental Protection Agency. The Energy and Minerals Division had responsibility for all federal government energy and minerals programs. You can't have energy without environmental questions and vice versa. There was competition and your division [Henry Eschwege] was involved in that.

Between defense and health, for example, the old Civil Division, later the Manpower and Welfare Division, and still later the Human Resources Division, claimed all defense health programs as their jurisdiction under the rubric of health programs of the federal government. Yet, the Defense Division and its successors would say, "Well that is defense, and we are responsible for defense, including defense manpower and defense readiness issues."

Any way you cut a pie, you are going to end up with people saying that it should have been cut more this way or that way. Those turf problems did crop up, although I didn't view them as being serious in the long run. More often, the problems arose from the personalities involved when an individual really wanted to do a certain job. What helped us greatly to deal with these problems was that we were part of the staff of the Comptroller General. We were able to say, "Look, we've heard both sides out and we've assigned it this way. Maybe we made a mistake, but I don't think we did. Now, if you don't like that, talk to the Comptroller General about it."

Sometimes that happened. It might happen in the context of the weekly OCR meetings. A question would be raised by a division director about why OCR assigned the case to another division when his division had some responsibility in that area. That's the way the appeal would be taken. Having the Comptroller General behind you was a very important factor in resolving the issue.

This problem got to be a little bit more complex as we started to share our work plans on the Hill. A work plan in one area might be shared with the committee of jurisdiction, and then the committee of jurisdiction would send a request to GAO. If we didn't know about the sharing and we didn't know how the request had arisen and if it was a close call, we might assign it to another party. Then the guy who thought he had himself all squared away found his job assigned to another division.

Mr. Blair	Life was very simple when you had only the Civil and Defense Divisions. It was even simpler before then, but then it started getting complicated as we reorganized and Staats, instead of having 2 or 3 people reporting to him, had 20 people reporting to him.
Mr. Thompson	This discussion makes me realize just how much GAO has changed since 1972 when I got out of OLL. During my tenure, it was just the opposite. Staff people and assistant directors were saying, "Don't give that stuff to me. Don't take my people and don't assign this to me. I don't want it." They had their own schedules to follow; that was before we shared the menu [plans] with the committees.
Mr. Eschwege	I wouldn't exclude the fact that that still happened once in a while in later years, but it was usually on those few requests that nobody wanted to handle.

Comments on Legislation

Dr. Trask	One of the responsibilities OLL-OCR has had is to consider legislation referred to GAO by the Congress, bills affecting other agencies, and in some cases legislation relating to GAO itself. Did this constitute a heavy workload for you? Exactly what did OCR do in this area?
Mr. Blair	<p>A lot of the committees just routinely sent us every bill referred to them. Of course, they were not going to take action on many of these bills. On the other hand, other committees never referred any bills over to us.</p> <p>So Staats' interest was in getting those bills over here for comment that were likely to move through the legislative process and to eliminate those that were not going anywhere. At that time, the comments were pulled together by our Office of the General Counsel. Later, this responsibility was given to the audit divisions. I think that this was a very healthy development, because there was a lot of unnecessary paperwork being generated. OCR still had the job of looking for any bill with a provision affecting GAO, such as a requirement that GAO do something that it couldn't or didn't want to do or a failure to provide for GAO access to audit a particular activity. That was a time-consuming job.</p>

Dr. Trask	How did you go about discouraging the Congress from sending bills that weren't going anywhere?
Mr. Blair	We wanted the Congress to use some judgment. So it was a matter of talking to the staff directors of the committees, pointing out the problems and asking for their cooperation. I'm not aware of having any real problems selling that approach. Most of our comments contained boilerplate language and had no import. Once we focused on the important bills, there was interest in reading our comments.
Dr. Trask	Were GAO's comments on legislation essentially of a technical nature? Did they also address some matters of policy?
Mr. Eckert	We were trying to ensure that technically the legislation was correctly phrased. We couldn't tell them that they shouldn't have a bill to produce ink or whatever they wanted to do.
Dr. Trask	They never asked you to deal with policy?
Mr. Eckert	I don't think so.
Mr. Fitzgerald	<p>No. In fact, we added a standard kind of boilerplate language at the end of a lot of our comments that the decision to engage in the contemplated activities or programs was a determination by the Congress and that we were taking no position in regard to that.</p> <p>From time to time, there were some pieces of legislation that were of particular import to GAO. We did get involved in those bills, very frequently, by way of written comment and testimony by working with the committee staffs.</p> <p>I think that prior to my time, Fred, Smitty, and Owen Kane were very much involved in the development of several provisions of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970. Subsequently, there were, from time to time, pieces of legislation like that in the 1970s, in particular, as the Congress was trying to recover from what was perceived to be the imperial presidency. For example, when it created the Office of Technology Assessment, there were lots of questions about how another legislative branch agency of that type would relate to GAO. Similar questions arose when the Congressional Budget Office was established. From time to time, there were also questions about GAO's relationship with the Congressional Research Service.</p>

These were different kinds of issues than those involving, for example, how we might relate to the Veterans Administration or the Defense Department or the Department of Transportation.

These issues were handled by one or another person at OLL-OCR. Fred and I were involved back in the early 1970s in the legislation to impose upon GAO the responsibility of monitoring political contributions and expenditures under the federal election laws.

We did take a policy position on this legislation. The Comptroller General and the Deputy Comptroller General took the position that this was a matter that was not consistent with the rest of GAO's relationship with the Congress. We said so in letters and in testimony. Fred and I even made a few telephone calls one day until we got caught up short when one of the members of the staff of the Senate Majority Leader called Mr. Keller and suggested that it was not necessarily appropriate for GAO to lobby on this proposed legislation. Clearly, he was a proponent of having GAO assume the monitoring responsibility.

There were some instances like that in which GAO would take a "policy position" when the proposed law seemed to affect GAO's independence or modify some aspect or other of GAO's institutional character.

Mr. Blair

In the critical ones, Staats himself would make his views known to the chairman of a committee.

Dr. Trask

Just following up on what you said about the 1972 election law: In 1974, the law was changed to take GAO out of the business. By that time, GAO's position was somewhat different, wasn't it?

Mr. Fitzgerald

We'd learned to live with it.

Mr. Thompson

Well, as I recall, we never really changed our position that this responsibility should not belong to the Comptroller General. We maintained a consistent position that it should be somewhere else.

What we recommended during this 2-year period, even while we were living with the responsibility, was that the Congress create an independent commission to handle all three categories of candidates—House, Senate, presidential. We recommended also that the Congress give it a very strong executive director and make it pretty much an independent agency. We did not have in mind the type of commission that exists now in the Federal Elections Commission.

The Congress agreed to take us out of any involvement in the new commission, but it did not follow our recommendation as to the type of organization it should create.

GAO Staff Assigned to Committees

Dr. Trask

Let's go on to another subject that actually has been alluded to earlier, the matter of GAO staff assignments to committees. How much of a problem or burden was it for OLL-OCR to select appropriate GAO staff members for such assignments?

Mr. Thompson

There was within GAO a little difference in philosophy as to how we were to furnish the staff assistance. We naturally wanted to make the best impression we could by sending the best man we could identify. The divisions had the very opposite viewpoint. They wanted to send somebody they could do without. We knew that wouldn't be effective. So there was a constant negotiation process going on between OLL and the divisions from where we had to draw staff people. It was nothing more than what you have to put up with in any job.

Mr. Eckert

Let me tell one little story there. This involves Hassell Bell, whom you have already interviewed.

Hassell was a tough customer. He was a good division man. We borrowed, I believe, one man from him for about 3 or 4 days. Of course, we had no guarantee that the assignment was going to last 3 or 4 days, and sometimes assignments lasted a week or a couple of weeks.

One morning, Hassell called me up inquiring where this man was who was supposed to be back on the job that day. He went on and on and on. I finally got Keller to call him to try to get him to calm down.

In my days, we didn't pick the man. We went to the division director. If it was a civil matter, we went to Samuelson; in defense matters, we went to whoever the director was at the time. They might give us two or three names from which to make a selection, and then we sort of worked it out as to which person would be assigned, but divisions really wanted to keep their better men. They were expanding their activities at the time

I'm talking about, and they had their audits to run and reports to write and get out. It was a tough, tough thing for them to do.

Dr. Trask

Did the numbers of people requested ever become a problem?

Mr. Blair

I think that Roger Sperry looked into this in his report, and I think that the average was about 60 people a year. It would vary, but it wasn't too tough. A basic problem was the concern that a prolonged Hill assignment might impair an individual's career development.

The audit directors' attitude was that their scheduled work should not be delayed to accommodate Hill assignments. Then an employee who was to go on such an assignment for any length of time would say, "If I'm out of sight, I'm out of mind."

So it took full support from Staats to meet our obligation for assigning staff.

Mr. Eschwege

I think the big concern, Smitty, was that if detailees remained on the Hill too long, they weren't going to get promoted as fast as the others. Part of the solution was that we would focus more on these people to ensure that their Hill performance would be an important factor in evaluating their promotion potential. Committee staffs would rate their overall performance, and OCR too had a role to provide input to the evaluation process.

I believe that GAO, for the most part, has overcome those problems. Also, GAO has been very successful in assigning people to the Hill who are best suitable to do the job.

Mr. Blair

That's good. I thought the training for the people was just excellent, and many of them enjoyed their Hill assignments.

Mr. Staats had some problems because certain committees kept holding onto the people we assigned to them for a very long time. [Eventually, such assignments were limited by law not to exceed 1 year.]

Mr. Eckert

When the Office of Investigations was abolished, we had some investigators who needed to be reassigned but who really didn't fit the mold of the auditors. To the extent that we could, we would make these investigators available for Hill assignments calling for their type of expertise.

Dr. Trask

As part of our History Program, we interviewed Charles E. Wolfe, who had served GAO for 53 years. He talked about his Hill assignments as a former investigator. He was involved with the McClellan committee's labor rackets investigation.

Mr. Thompson

When I left the field as an investigator and joined the General Counsel's staff, I got one of those assignments, too. A fellow was nominated—I believe by President Eisenhower—to the Civil Service Commission. The Senate Civil Service Committee had some questions about the nominee, so it sent me up there to investigate his record. Sure enough, I found some fabrications in his applications for employment. As a result, his nomination was withdrawn.

GAO Testimony at Congressional Hearings

Mr. Eschwege

Let me just get a reaction from you on the GAO testimony. It kept increasing, initially under Staats, and Marty saw that continuing under Mr. Bowsher.

There was always a question of who should go and testify. Also, every time we did testify, a member of OCR came along and sat there, for hours sometimes, listening to what transpired.

Mr. Thompson

My experience with Mr. Campbell, for instance, would indicate that it was his policy that the man most familiar with the subject matter should be the one to lead the testimony. I recall that one time in testimony before Porter Hardy's subcommittee, for instance, one of the assistant directors in the Defense Division was testifying on a report that his section had issued. His auditor sat behind him, but he had to turn very frequently to this guy to clarify details. Unbeknownst to everybody, Mr. Campbell had slipped in the back door and was sitting in a row right behind me. I didn't even know he was there. After a while, Mr. Campbell touched me on the shoulder, and I looked around and almost fainted. He said, "Fred, that fellow should be testifying"—meaning the staff auditor. That explains very clearly what his policy was. I think Mr. Staats followed pretty much the same policy.

Mr. Blair I really don't think so because he restricted testimony to the division directors.

Mr. Eschwege I think Smitty is right. This is what I was getting at. On the other hand, he also told that division director to take along to the table the most knowledgeable person.

Mr. Blair That's right. Staats himself did that when he testified. When it reached a point in later years where it was too much for Staats to handle, he enlisted his division directors to do more of the testifying.

Mr. Fitzgerald Mr. Staats has tremendous capabilities, but it was hard when he had two or sometimes three different pieces of testimony a week to prepare on different subjects and still do all the other things that he had to do.

One of the reasons why I think it has been good for an OLL-OCR person to be there is that you may from time to time get someone who is uncomfortable testifying. The persons know the subject matter but are uncomfortable.

As an OCR representative, you are partly there to provide a sense of security and continuity to the witness and to assist the committee. Its members may not know very much about this fellow. He is the witness that you as the agency are presenting.

Also, you are there to evaluate, for possible future testimony, any problems that come up. You never know what is going to happen.

Mr. Eckert We worked with the committees we were familiar with, and we worked with all the other aspects of the Office that committees knew about. It wasn't just this one thing that this auditor was coming up to testify about. Often, the chairman would turn to me and say, "Mr. Eckert," or "Eddie, what did we do in this other case?" or "Why did we take a different approach here?" I think that the Comptroller General really wanted someone there from the policy standpoint.

Mr. Eschwege You could also provide some direct feedback to the Comptroller General.

Mr. Blair Another point is that to the extent that we were involved and had the proper relationship, we attempted to find out from the committee staff what questions were going to be raised or suggested questions to be asked. We didn't want to be caught by surprise. We were like lawyers

going into court. We also wanted to be able to provide all the answers, but it didn't always work out because sometimes we got clobbered.

Keeping Top Management Informed of Congressional Activities

Dr. Trask

How did you keep GAO's top management informed about congressional work and contacts, especially as the number of people going up to the Hill and dealing with committees and members expanded? What kind of mechanisms were developed in that area?

Mr. Blair

A problem did arise, and it reached the point where OCR was not large enough to handle it. The rule book said to write congressional contact memorandums. As the contacts broadened, the audit groups did not always submit the required memorandums.

The main purpose of OCR was to keep the boss involved, but really he was his own best representative because of his contacts with the chairmen. I found that there was little I could ever tell Mr. Staats that was new to him. He knew far more than I ever knew because of his contacts with the chairmen.

The failure of the audit groups at times to submit contact memorandums concerned Mr. Staats because he wasn't getting the feedback that he should. If he didn't get it in the memorandum, he would hear it at a cocktail party or by way of a telephone call.

So the auditor was exposing himself by not writing the memorandum. It was in his own interest to write it.

Mr. Fitzgerald

I don't know if any of you ever did this, but as the network of relationships grew both on the Hill and here at GAO, you got to the point where it was hard to keep track of what everyone was doing with everyone else. There were times when you would find out that somebody in the audit division or one of the members of the regional offices was having some discussions with the Hill but that he wasn't writing contact memorandums. We in OCR would find out about it from people on the Hill. I would hear about a meeting that I hadn't been told about at 4th and G Streets

[GAO headquarters building]. I would just kind of show up for the meeting.

It had a very salutary effect. It kind of got the message across that we were expected to be kept informed about things and that we certainly didn't like to hear about GAO's relationship with the Hill from somebody on the Hill. We wanted to hear about it from the GAO staff first.

The contact memorandums grew to the point where we got literally thousands of them every year. A good deal of the routine OCR work every day was culling through those and identifying significant issues and problems.

Mr. Thompson

Also the memorandums would show if a commitment was made to a committee or member to provide some information or report. We had to make sure that a control case to follow up was set up and that the memorandum did not just drift into the file.

There was another function we had to perform. Every now and then, somebody would insert at the last minute some legislation, some wording, in a bill that had no legislative background and on which there had been no hearings or anything. We had to find out what it was all about.

I remember one case when the Congress had passed an appropriations act. Congressman John Dingell had inserted a last minute clause that no money was to be paid to Martin Marietta for building the C5A, a big cargo plane, until GAO had audited the firm. Well, what did he mean by "audit?"

So Mr. Staats said one morning at an OCR meeting to contact Congressman Dingell and see what his intentions were. You don't audit every item and every payment.

I talked with the Congressman and told him that we needed a little refinement of his language to know what he had in mind. I won't use the exact words he said, but he said that he had meant for GAO to audit the Hell out of them. [Laughter] This didn't help much from our standpoint, but we did get some refinements made.

Mr. Fitzgerald

Your talking about legislative history like that reminds me of the OTA legislation. I remember being in the Rayburn Building the day when the House was voting on that legislation, and we had been very much involved in it.

I was getting on an elevator. Two Congressmen got on and discussed the legislation. One of them said to the other, who was engrossed in some notes, "What is this bill we are voting on?" The other replied, "Something about technology assessment. Congressman X wants it, so I'm going to vote for it." So the inquiring Congressman said, "Okay with me." [Laughter]

Mr. Eckert

Another duty we had was to point out to congressional sources that the way some legislation was drafted wasn't going to accomplish what the author had in mind. We would then redraft the legislation to reflect the appropriate intent.

Dr. Trask

Somebody mentioned the OCR meetings a couple of minutes ago; they now occur once a week, usually on Friday morning. When were they originated, and what was the initial motivation there?

Mr. Blair

They originated under Staats and initially involved just the OCR group. Mose [Ellsworth H.] Morse was brought in eventually because he headed up the Office of Policy and Staats wanted his input on policy matters. Then that led Bill Newman and later Charles Bailey, as well as Samuelson, to attend. Then all the directors were brought in, but it was something that grew. The number of meetings was reduced from twice a week to once a week. We would have a formal meeting, early in the morning, with the boss; it would last about an hour.

Dr. Trask

What was the main purpose of those meetings?

Mr. Thompson

As I recall, it was just a general briefing. We met and we discussed, of course, whatever Mr. Staats wanted to discuss, but a lot of times a discussion was prompted by one of the contact memorandums that he had seen and had some questions about or wanted to give some input on. Generally, the purpose was to bring us together so that we understood better what Mr. Staats' and Bob Keller's attitudes were on specific subjects. Frequently, we might provide some additional information that they did not have.

Mr. Eckert

Another thing—I don't know whether anyone still does it—was that Mrs. Margaret Macfarlane, who headed the Legislative Digest Section, used to come in at 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning to mark in the Congressional Record items of interest to GAO. The Congressional Record would be on our desks every morning when we walked in and then we had to review it. If there was any urgent matter, we'd take care of it right away. Other items were taken up at the next scheduled meeting.

Mr. Eschwege Did the OCR meetings deal exclusively with congressional work, or did they spill over into some other things?

Mr. Thompson They also covered ongoing audits.

Mr. Fitzgerald When Elmer Staats created the position of the Information Officer under Roland Sawyer, he would attend so that articles of interest to us in The Washington Post, The New York Times, and The Wall Street Journal would also be discussed.

The meetings were not restricted to legislative matters, although these were probably the principal focus, but anything that was of concern to the Office of the Comptroller General could come up.

Dr. Trask Now the Comptroller General also uses that meeting as an opportunity to announce executive appointments or changes. So it is broader now perhaps than it was years ago.

Mr. Blair I felt that a purpose was to let the boss know what was happening in the congressional committees. I was so deflated because I hardly ever told him anything he didn't already know. So I figured I better make sure my contacts are good with the committees because he knew before I did.

Mr. Fitzgerald You tend to get a little bit less clarity in a larger group like that, with all the people there thinking to some extent what things mean to them and their groups individually.

There is more ambiguity about the way things are presented so as not to get people's noses out of joint, as the saying goes. One of the changes that was adopted during the interregnum period between Staats' completion of his term and Chuck Bowsher's coming in was that Milt Socolar as Acting Comptroller General would have pre-OCR meetings on Thursday afternoon. That allowed us in OCR to give him the kind of unfettered advice that he wanted and needed. We would alert him to the things that we were going to bring up and anticipate the things that the divisions were likely to bring up. Also, we would suggest the things that Milt should bring up and the things that we didn't think anybody ought to bring up.

Those Thursday meetings would run sometimes to 2-1/2 hours. I don't know whether that still takes place, but you do need the Comptroller General, and whoever he and his deputy or special assistant might be, to have that completely unrestricted kind of feedback.

Congressional Views of GAO's Effectiveness

Mr. Eschwege

Let me just briefly touch on a question frequently asked. Who audits GAO? You people were involved from time to time in receiving some criticism. I know, Marty, that you were involved in some oversight committee review of GAO. What was the view of people up on the Hill as to GAO's effectiveness? How did they express themselves when they had some problems with us?

Mr. Eckert

In my days, I can't ever remember a case where they weren't pleased because we were there to give them an extra arm. You take the House Appropriations Committee. We put 50 members of our staff up there for a period of time to assist the Committee, so we would expect its members to be glad. We might review that whole appropriations bill for them. When we assigned people to Senator McClellan to investigate labor racketeering, his committee realized how helpful the contributions of our regional offices staff were. The Congressional Record is full of letters where they praised us very highly for all this work.

Mr. Eschwege

There was also a question of timeliness, wasn't there, over a period of years?

Mr. Blair

Oh, yes. In my time, that was always a big complaint that GAO took forever to get its reports out and that they were not timely enough.

I think that part of the planning process was designed to speed up our reporting. The Hill network wanted us to give absolute priority to Hill requests; in my opinion, the self-initiated work basically got thrown in the corner, but if it was something members of the Congress were interested in, they couldn't help being happy, unless the results were something they didn't like.

Mr. Eckert

Already, in the early days of the audit divisions after Campbell came in, an awful lot of attention was given to trying to simplify the process of reporting.

We wanted them to pull the reports together quickly after the fieldwork came in so that we could forward them to the Congress in a timely fashion.

Mr. Blair

The Congress doesn't have the time that we devote to getting out a report. The House member is in there for 2 years, and he wants to be reelected. He can't wait 2 years for the report to come out.

Mr. Fitzgerald

In getting back to the subject of oversight, Mr. Staats strongly believed that it was important for the Congress to institutionalize the oversight role. For example, whenever he had a chance, he urged all authorizing committees to create oversight subcommittees. Some of them did. He felt that was an important function of the Congress that was not reflected adequately in the way the Congress was structured.

I think you were referring in your question to the hearing that took place before the House Government Operations Committee in 1976 or 1977 when I was in the General Counsel's office. Congressman Jack Brooks decided to hold an oversight hearing because he had been hearing some complaints about GAO. You do hear complaints, depending upon how people feel at any particular moment. Incidentally, I think that the record is very clear that year in and year out, the Congress as a whole is extremely happy with GAO and its work.

There are always complaints. If there are no complaints, then you know you are doing something wrong.

So there was this oversight hearing, and it covered everything from soup to nuts. It fell to the General Counsel's office, and under Paul Dembling [General Counsel], it fell to me to pull the information together.

I can recall Mr. Staats practically imploring the committee at the end of that hearing, and I know he said it on other occasions as well, to hold that kind of oversight hearing every year in conjunction with the issuance of GAO's annual report. It has not happened.

Mr. Eschwege

Was that the time also when Chairman Jack Brooks' staff sent out a questionnaire to other committees and members to assess how satisfied they were with GAO's services?

Mr. Fitzgerald

Yes, they did.

Mr. Blair

As I recall, GAO staff would meet periodically with the House Government Operations staff to go over what we were doing.

I am talking about the early 1950s because I was the victim of such an investigation. There were complaints made about the European Branch's

[EB] handling of the Battle Monuments Program. The Committee staff came over and investigated us, and we came out smelling like a rose, but really, the future of EB depended upon a favorable outcome of that review.

Mr. Fitzgerald

I think the most regular review of GAO goes on in the Appropriations Committee. Each year, as part of the budget process, not only do the staffs of both the Senate and the House Committees take a look very carefully at GAO's budget presentations but also they are in touch with a lot of people at GAO. They are long-term professional staff members. The Appropriations Committee at the member level tends to be very stable. Congressman Vic Fazio has chaired the Appropriations Subcommittee related to GAO for quite a number of years. Those who preceded him tended to have the Subcommittee chairmanship year in and year out, and they got to be very familiar with the workings of the agency. I think that is probably the only regular kind of oversight GAO gets.

Mr. Eschwege

I would add one footnote here. Just the fact that GAO now testifies several hundred times a year in effect provides some overview over GAO's work and its testimony.

Let me get into just a couple of your favorite topics here.

The Holifield Hearings, 1965

The Holifield hearings—you were there, Eddie. Were they really as severe as GAO feared they would be at the time?

Mr. Eckert

They were rather severe and rather vicious. There were political aspects to the hearings. Defense contractors out in California were urging Congressman Holifield to hold the hearings. They alleged that GAO was interfering with their making more money, I guess. In my opinion, it was as simple as that. Holifield's key staff man, Herb [Herbert] Roback, never did agree with GAO's view of independence. He didn't have any problem with our checking those vouchers that Fred and I used to bundle up, but he wanted us to stay out of the Defense Department's hair. Herb set up these hearings, and Frank Weitzel coordinated the GAO testimony.

Mr. Campbell went up to testify initially, and in subsequent sessions, Frank Weitzel testified, but other than that, I really don't know a lot of the details of it.

Mr. Eschwege	Apparently, the rest of you either were not in GAO at the time or were not involved?
Mr. Fitzgerald	<p>The hearings took place before my time, but I was here at a subsequent hearing when GAO was testifying on some defense procurement items. Mr. Holifield chaired the Government Operations Committee, and Jack Brooks and Congressman Benjamin Rosenthal of New York were there also.</p> <p>Congressman Rosenthal pulled out a copy of the report that resulted from the Holifield hearings of 1965, and he started reading from the minority views of Congressman Jack Brooks.</p> <p>He went on and on and concluded by saying, "The only regret I have is that having been a member of this committee at that time, I note that I failed to subscribe to these dissenting views of Congressman Jack Brooks of Texas."</p> <p>Holifield turned to him and said, "The gentleman's confession is duly noted."</p>
Mr. Blair	I was not working in GAO at the time, but the feedback I got was that that was a very critical time for GAO.
Mr. Eckert	It really was. It was the first time we had ever really been raked over the coals.
Mr. Eschwege	We talked to Mr. Holifield. He didn't think his hearings were so damaging. He certainly had a very close relationship with Mr. Staats in the years that followed. He still speaks very fondly of the subsequent period. So I don't think it has had a lasting effect on him.
Mr. Eckert	He was a good friend of the Office before this hearing. I think it was just a political thing.

Allegation of Weak Security at GAO

Mr. Eschwege

Marty, your time has come. We had a situation in GAO involving an individual who at one time worked for me and who made a number of allegations about a lack of physical security within GAO. I realize that there is only so much we can say about that, but can you just lead us through this episode? I know it has been covered to some extent by the media.

Mr. Fitzgerald

Well, the origin of it goes back I guess to about 1979. A year earlier, GAO had turned over its function for distributing reports to a contractor—General Electric. One of our concerns at OCR was that our customers on the Hill receive very prompt service.

We had one or two cases when people on the Hill were dissatisfied with how quickly the contractor was able to distribute reports. So as part of the evaluation, one afternoon, a number of us from OCR were to be briefed by GAO staff and the contractor's staff about their response time frames and volumes of reports being requested. Quite frankly, I was very tired that afternoon sitting through this long meeting. At the end, the woman who was conducting the briefing said that there had been a couple of unusual incidents. She mentioned one and then she mentioned another one. She said that this Russian person had come in and that he had asked for classified reports before they had even been issued.

I said, "Let's talk about that one some more; come on up to my office." It turned out that a fellow [Vladimir Kvasov] who was later identified as a member of the military intelligence unit in the Soviet Embassy here in Washington, D.C., was in fact asking for reports. We could document it. He was asking for classified reports on military systems, by number, before they were published. The obvious question was, "How did he know about these reports?"¹

Peter McGough, who was on the staff of OCR, was assigned to pursue the matter and get back to me, Bob Keller, and Elmer Staats.

¹ Editor's note: At the time, GAO regularly made available to certain congressional and executive branch offices an unclassified list of reports carrying the titles and report numbers of the unclassified and classified reports being prepared. For further information on the Kvasov matter, see the staff report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, published in the Congressional Record, September 24, 1982. The Committee found no security breaches at GAO.

When we could not quickly come up with a plausible explanation as to how this individual knew about these reports, we decided that there was only one place for us to go, and that was the FBI.

Prior to that time, the GAO employee you referred to, Henry, came to our attention because he was involved in some Navy oceanographic work for GAO that required high security clearances. He had done a pretty good job at it.

GAO had recently been the lead witness at the House Intelligence Committee hearings, chaired by Congressman Otis Pike of New York, discussing the intelligence budget. Questions were asked as to what GAO did to audit the intelligence agencies. I had been the principal staff person on that one going back to the history of GAO's relationship with the intelligence agencies.

Flowing out of that history and out of all this was a lingering question as to whether GAO should train somebody on its staff, in the event that GAO ever did get a formal commission from the Congress to audit the intelligence agencies, to be able to understand what the intelligence community was like.

This fellow was interested in doing that, and he brought us some information about some of the schools that were available. Despite some reservations on the part of all parties, it was decided that he would be sent to one of these schools.

He had just completed his assignment at one of these schools when this incident with the Russian military officer took place.

I called this fellow up and said, "If you had this kind of a problem, whom in the FBI would you call?" He gave me the name and the telephone number of somebody in the counterintelligence office at the FBI.

As you know, this fellow from GAO was a very aggressive fellow. So having gotten wind of this event, he wasn't about to let go of it. He was busy trying to stay in touch with us while we were then working with the FBI to develop a program of activities to be pursued. The GAO man was reassigned from your unit, Henry, to work on a project of analyzing GAO reports to determine the extent to which they could be useful under certain circumstances. He produced a report that was supposedly very highly classified, eyes only, for Mr. Staats and Mr. Keller.

Mr. Keller and Mr. Staats asked me several times if I had ever read that report. I said no. I pointed out that I was not cleared to review that report.

The matter more or less seemed to go away. We had some efforts that did not prove to be successful. So at least the matter had gone into an abeyance situation. This fellow subsequently left GAO to work at the NASA IG's [Inspector General] office, where he ran into some other FBI agents. He also ran into the surveys and investigations staff over at the House Appropriations Committee, which utilizes a number of FBI agents, as well as GAO people.

I had recommended to Mr. Staats and Mr. Keller at the outset of the FBI investigation—on the basis of what I believed to be the normal investigative techniques, particularly when you are dealing with intelligence matters—that we would leave it to the FBI to report the matter to whom-ever it ought to be reported to in the Congress. So it was agreed that GAO would not take it upon itself to make a report.

Later on, through a series of events, this former GAO employee, who apparently carried with him the so-called tickets, the access to compartmented information, became very disaffected not only with GAO but with NASA and decided to go to the Hill.

Fortunately, I had maintained a kind of speaking relationship with this fellow, and I counseled him several times to be careful as to whom he would go to and under what circumstances. I said, "You know, you are no longer a GAO employee, but you know certain things have to be dealt with very carefully."

Well, finally one night, after several months of this kind of discussion, he called to tell me that he had gone up to see certain people on the Hill. He was very cagy about whom he had contacted, but he did finally mention several names to me. He said that I would be hearing from them and that I and a certain FBI person would be summoned up to the Senate Intelligence Committee to tell them what we knew about the matter.

I said that I would be happy to respond if someone was going to call. I inquired as to who would call me.

He mentioned several names, and one of them was the name of someone who had crossed swords with me personally and with Milt Socolar when Milt was Acting Comptroller General. This fellow was not cleared for

access to classified information. In fact, it was revealed later on television that this fellow had a conviction for crime in upstate New York. At the time, I knew that he didn't have a security clearance. I said, "You talked to that fellow; he doesn't have a security clearance. What did you say?" He said, "Oh, they're going to call the FBI guy up, and then they'll call you up."

Well, Milt Socolar was Acting Comptroller General at that time. Staats had gone. Bob Keller had retired earlier and then just about that time had also passed away of a heart attack.

So only Staats had read this report, and the report was filed away; I knew copies were in Keller's former office and in Staats' office. I didn't know how many other copies existed or where they had gone.

When I heard that the matter had been discussed with the fellow who did not have clearance, I notified Milt. I explained the story to him and took the better part of a day to go into all the details as I knew them. I recommended that somebody in GAO be authorized to read that report and that we notify our oversight committees. He agreed.

I received the criticism that I knew I was going to get from the oversight committees for not telling them what was going on. I said, "It was my decision; don't hold Staats or Keller responsible." They went along with it. The fellow on the Hill who had become personally embittered toward me was very well known to Jack Anderson and had been feeding him a lot of information. The story finally broke in an Anderson column and got to ABC News.

ABC never revealed anything on it, but they had John Scali of ABC pushing that one pretty hard. It did get to Mike Wallace and some of his people at 60 Minutes. Everyone in GAO who knew anything about this refused to talk to 60 Minutes.

When this started to be a public matter, I had to get back to the FBI people and tell them, "Guess what! Do you remember this incident? It has been now dormant for a while. It has a chance of going public."

There was a list of 11 draft reports that this particular Soviet officer had asked for.

The reports by this time had all been finalized and made available to recipients who were cleared to receive them. The FBI wanted copies of

the reports and of the requests for the reports that we had and that were signed by Vladimir Kvasov, the Soviet intelligence officer.

So the story evolved. Certain information was being fed to the FBI from this person on the Hill, who was kind of hostile toward me. One Thursday night, I got a call from the FBI inquiring whether copies of each of the reports in fact were in OCR's files since the records showed that OCR had them. I responded that I could not account for them off the top of my head, but I assured the FBI that I would be able to account for them.

All day Friday, I was busy trying to locate them. Indeed, they had been here, but they were no longer here; this didn't help me very much.

Getting back to Mike Wallace: The first segment on CBS News showed Mike Wallace in front of the GAO Building talking about a Soviet mole. Wallace had a picture of Kvasov and said that sensitive information had been getting out from the arm of the Congress that had access to most intelligence.

It was to be a two-segment series, with the second to be shown on Monday. I was over one night at the FBI until about 9 o'clock meeting with the assistant director who was in charge of counterespionage. The fact that my father had been an FBI agent didn't hurt me. In fact, one of the guys said when I walked into the room, "You sure do look like your father."

I was a little nervous nonetheless, but finally with the help of others, I was able to produce document receipts showing that the former GAO employee was indeed the person who had received these reports from me and had taken them out to an atomic energy facility in Germantown, Maryland. So I was able to turn to the FBI and say, "Here is the document receipt that shows that these 11 reports exited from my office to this fellow's custody. Where they went after that he will have to account for."

The second broadcast segment again had Wallace suggesting that this was a terrible and awful situation, but on the basis of new information, the FBI was continuing its investigation. But I am convinced that if I had not been able to produce the document receipts, this could have become a very damaging situation. With the help of Bill [William J.] Cornelius, who is still here at GAO, and a plug to him and Arthur Klekner [former Director of Security], who is now retired, we were able to produce documentation to counter the serious allegation. Otherwise, all of our access

to Defense Department and State Department matters involving security clearances could have been affected.

Mr. Eschwege

The point also was that this Russian never got the reports. Is that right?

Mr. Fitzgerald

Yes. He never got the reports. All copies were accounted for. They were later located in a safe out at Germantown. Incidentally, with the permission of GAO, the CBS cameras were allowed to come in to our document distribution facility here in the building to just film some background footage. Mike Wallace and our Information Officer were there. I was deliberately not there because I was not talking to CBS.

This happened shortly after lunchtime, and there were a lot of people who came in, including one fellow with a raincoat and a hat. And he stepped into the back of the room. There were all these TV lights on, and before he had a chance to really react to it, he said, "Vere are my reports?"

I got a report about this, and I inquired as to who he was. We had, of course, been developing a large amount of information from our document distribution facility about who was requesting GAO reports. We found that people from the Czech, Yugoslav, and Bulgarian Embassies had visited our facility. This fellow who walked in during the filming happened to be a colonel in the Bulgarian Embassy. Our Information Officer told me that he thought Wallace had noticed this visitor, who was asking for documents in an eastern European accent. It seemed that Wallace and his crew were trying to figure out who he was.

Mr. Eschwege

I appreciate your going through all that. Were any one of you involved in anything related to Watergate? We've got the story from Sam [Phillip S.] Hughes concerning the involvement of GAO's Office of Federal Elections, but did any of you in your liaison activities with the Hill get involved in Watergate?

Mr. Blair

I got involved somehow or other with Congressman Wright Patman. It related to the visit that Sam Hughes made to see Maurice [Maury] Stans in Miami to get him to comment on a GAO draft report identifying questionable transactions by the Committee to Reelect the President.

Mr. Thompson

We followed the age-old GAO practice of giving the "victim," so to speak, the opportunity to review the report. So Sam was flying down to see Maury Stans to say, in effect, Is anything wrong with this? Are we telling the truth? That was about it.

Mr. Eschwege	There was some concern that the action could result in a weaker report. As Sam pointed out to us and as the record will show, while he was in Miami, he got additional information, which actually strengthened the report.
Mr. Thompson	The intense inquiries about when that GAO report would be released elicited one of the most unusual statements by Sam Hughes ever quoted in the press. Members of the press ran up and down the GAO halls every time Sam or I would stick our noses out. They would pounce on us and ask, "When is the report coming out?" Sam told one lady from the press, "Not tonight, Josephine."

Reflections on GAO Career

Dr. Trask	Let me ask each of you to reflect briefly on your own GAO careers in terms of what you consider to be accomplishments, frustrations, most satisfying roles, or regrets.
Mr. Thompson	<p>I certainly have no regrets. I think my entire career from beginning to end was most rewarding and probably exceeded any expectations I had in 1941, if I had any. Probably, overall, my OLL experience was the most rewarding because it lasted the longest and we did make considerable progress.</p> <p>Then, of course, the last job I had with the Office of Federal Elections, in a sense, was both the most frustrating and the most interesting. The most frustrating aspect of it was the development of the regulations. The legislation set up the three entities—the Secretary of the Senate took care of the Senatorial candidates, the Clerk of the House handled the House candidates, and we were responsible for regulations affecting the presidential and vice presidential candidates.</p> <p>Mr. Staats and I agreed 100 percent that it was absolutely essential, if there would be three separate entities doing the same thing with different people, that at the outset, some uniform regulations be established so that everyone was doing things the same way.</p> <p>That was the most frustrating experience I've ever had—in dealing with the representatives from the Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the</p>

Senate. We spent about 6 months and I think that we probably averaged three or four meetings a week going over the legislation word for word. We couldn't get any agreement, particularly out of the Clerk's office, to deviate one iota from the language in the act.

The act itself was most unclear in a lot of places. Some words were ambiguous and totally without meaning. As administrators, we attempted to research the existing record, including the legislative history, as well as we could and put some meaning into phrases that had no meaning. You could not budge the Clerk of the House. This lasted about 6 months and meant total frustration for me. Finally, we made some headway. Basically, the regulations that we all issued were uniform, but they were deficient in a number of ways. They were far from clear.

Overall, I consider myself very fortunate to have been associated with GAO all those years, and particularly with OLL.

Mr. Blair

That's a big order, Roger, because, as I mentioned at the beginning, I've felt very fortunate in my life. I loved the bank where I worked, I loved the FBI, and I didn't see how I could be happy anyplace else. But GAO is the one that has brought me the greatest sense of satisfaction of a job well done. I enjoyed my associations with the people. I can't say too much about it. Within GAO, I thought my experience in the Office of Investigations was great. I was very sorry to see it disbanded. I had the highest regard, and still do, for Bill Ellis, and I think it was a political dagger that caused the demise of that office.

As for my European experience, I don't see how you can have a better job where you get to visit frequently places like London, Paris, Madrid, Frankfurt, and Rome over a 5-year period.

The life in Europe was great. We had complete satisfaction with the job we were doing. We were not under any guidance from home. We thought we were doing a far more effective job by dealing directly with the military. I am glad that I was in the European Branch at a time when we dealt directly with Frank Weitzel; it was supposed to be that way with Campbell. Campbell did take an interest, and he came over to visit us. I had the satisfaction of getting an excellent report as a result of a review of the branch by Congressman Dante Fascell, and it saved our skin. Then, OLL was the job I wanted in 1959 and got in 1968. What more can you ask? So really, I'm ecstatic, but I mean every word of it.

Mr. Fitzgerald

Well, as was pretty evident from some of my earlier remarks, I did not set out to make GAO a career. I had other plans in mind, but OCR was what kept me here for 15 years. I think that otherwise I would have been gone in a couple years. It was a way station to a different career that I had thought about for myself involving private practice, but every time I turned around, I found that GAO was so enjoyable, so challenging, and so stimulating. The variety of the challenges that I faced, the kind of people that I met, and the issues I dealt with while I was in OCR kept me here. I wouldn't have traded it for the world.

I had come from a job as a law clerk in Michigan, where I had a lot of latitude and freedom to make recommendations and to draft language that would ultimately become court decisions. That was a pretty heady experience for someone fresh out of law school. It was hard to think that there could be anything that could match that at that stage of my career, but OCR did that and exceeded it. It gave me the opportunity to work closely with a large number of people who are without exception some of the most admirable and respected people in my mind that I have ever run across.

I had the opportunity to see up close the transition in the Office of the Comptroller General from one presidential appointee to another, to see what happens in the interim, and to be involved in some legislative efforts to establish a separate personnel system for GAO. That legislation for a separate GAO personnel system was fun to do. It was a long-term objective of Mr. Staats and Mr. Keller. We got that accomplished. We also got subpoena power for GAO, which was another long-term objective.

I don't have any particular frustrations that I can recall. I do remember one incident that shouldn't go uncommented upon, because it does deal with GAO's relationship with the Congress. After the experience with the Office of Federal Elections and after the Federal Elections Commission had been created to take over GAO's responsibility, we had another round that was similar in character. There was a flurry of ethics activity in 1976 and 1977 that culminated prior to the 1978 Ethics in Government Act in a series of rules adopted by the House of Representatives and the Senate regarding financial disclosure of assets, liabilities, outside sources of income, honoraria, gifts of transportation, and lodging.

The Congress came back to us again to suggest that here was a great job for GAO, but we didn't want it. That put us into a more-difficult position

than our earlier negotiations on federal elections. At least the latter involved us in presidential matters, the way it finally worked out, but here we were required by rule to audit—I remember in particular the Senate side—each year a certain sample of Senate staff members and Senators. We set up within GAO's Federal Personnel and Compensation Division a unit that had as its sole responsibility that kind of audit work. There was never any real particular payoff for GAO. We went at it the way GAO would be expected to go at it—with objectivity and independence. One of the funniest things that occurred involved Senator Harrison Schmitt from New Mexico, who had been an astronaut and had been to the moon. Among his assets were some rocks that he had brought back from the moon. The question was What is the value of moon rocks?

We had no difficulty evaluating his real estate holdings and things of that sort, but the moon rocks were a little difficult.

Frankly, that function was something that with the passage of the Ethics in Government Act, we were just as happy to see go to the Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate. If that activity, I think, had remained in GAO for any long period of time, we would have found ourselves in a very close relationship with members of the Congress and their staffs and that would have been very deleterious. It was a very difficult year until the law was enacted in 1978.

Mr. Eckert

Well, like Fred, I came to GAO in the Depression looking for a job. I had no idea what GAO did and what it was about. It didn't make any difference to me, either, but I knew that I might eat a little bit so I took a job as a clerk.

I progressed through each of the divisions. I worked in the Records Division, the Claims Division, the General Counsel's office, and OLL. I said earlier that I never knew a day that I wasn't anxious to come to work.

My work was always interesting. I think I liked GAO, although I may not have known it at the time, because of the security it provided. The Comptroller General was appointed for 15 years. If you kept your nose clean, you would have a job for 15 years. So I liked that part of it. As Fred [Thompson] knows, I was kind of a charger. Only I couldn't see why I wasn't appointed to some higher office. I never got a chance to be selected for Deputy Comptroller General, but those are the facts of life. I enjoyed every minute I was here. I was very proud to be a part of GAO. I very deeply admired GAO's work and its independence. I can't say that

GAO is a savior for the government, but I think that the operations of GAO keep a lot of things on track that would otherwise go awry.

Mr. Blair

I think that all of us would add that what GAO is doing is even greater today than what it was doing when we were here. Thank God for GAO.

Conclusion

Dr. Trask

I'm going to give Henry the last word, but let me just say on behalf of GAO's History Program that this has been very, very valuable for us. It gives us a lot of information, some of which is new, and this will be put to good use for a lot of purposes here.

Mr. Eschwege

I am sitting here saying to myself that GAO is now about 68 years old. Today, we discussed activities spanning a period of almost 50 years from the time Eddie came in 1934 to when Marty left in 1983. What makes me particularly happy—I am excluding you, Marty, since you will be active for a lot more years—is that as hard as you all worked in GAO, you look so healthy today, even though you retired long before me. Marty, I know you are a busy guy, and we appreciate your taking time to meet with us. Anyhow, I want to thank all of you. We took a little longer than expected, but I think that from our point of view, at least, it was well worthwhile.

Videotape Cross-reference

Tape 1		
	Introduction	00:00:53
	Biographical Data	00:02:45
	Evolution of GAO's Legislative Liaison Activities	00:33:10
	Coordinating Contacts Between the Hill and GAO Auditors	01:17:59
Tape 2		
	Comments on Legislation	01:58:31
	GAO Staff Assigned to Committees	02:06:09
	GAO Testimony at Congressional Hearings	02:13:45
	Keeping Top Management Informed of Congressional Activities	02:19:10
	Congressional Views of GAO's Effectiveness	02:31:38
	The Holifield Hearings, 1965	02:40:25
	Allegations of Weak Security at GAO	02:45:24
	Reflections on GAO Career	03:04:11
	Conclusion	03:16:32

The Table of Contents is reproduced above, followed by time sequences on the videotape. The time sequence indicates the beginning of the discussion of the particular topic on the videotape. Users of this oral history are advised also to consult the index for page references to specific topics.

Index

A

ABC News, 52
Accountants, 20
Accounting and Bookkeeping Division, 9
Agriculture, Committee on, Senate, iv, 3
Agriculture, Department of, iv, 4, 32
American Hospital Association, 8
Anchorage, 2
Anderson, Jack, 52
Appropriations Committee, House, 17, 20, 24, 45, 47, 51
Appropriations Committee, Senate, 17, 20, 47
Army, U.S., 2
Auditors, GAO, 23-25, 30, 39, 41

B

Bailey, Charles, 3, 43
Baity, James, 8
Bandy, Ray, 14
Banking Committee, 26
Battle Monuments Program, 47
Bell, Hassell, 12, 37
Benjamin Franklin University, 2, 7
Blair, Smith, iv, 2-5, 6, 9, 56
Blue Cross, 13
Bowsher, Charles A., 7, 8, 20, 21, 23, 39, 44
Brooklyn, NY, 5
Brooks, Jack, 46, 48
Brown, Fred H., 8
Budget and Accounting Act of 1921, 28
Budget, Bureau of the (BOB), 11, 13, 19, 20
Bulgarian Embassy, 54
Byrd, Robert C., 17

C

California, 47
Campbell, Joseph, 4, 5, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 39, 45, 56
Canada, 22
Cartwright, Robert, 3
Casey, Ralph, 3
CBS News, 53, 54
Certified public accountant (CPA), 20
Chicago, 3, 11
Civil Division, 33, 34
Civil Service Commission, 39
Civil Service Committee, Senate, 39
Claims Division, iv, 7, 8, 9, 58
Clerk of the House, 55, 56, 58
Committee to Reelect the President, 54
Comprehensive audit, 19
Comptroller General, Office of the, iv, 10, 11, 15, 16, 44, 57
Condon, Lester, 4
Congressional Budget Office, 35
Congressional Record, 29, 43, 45
Congressional Relations, Office of (OCR), iv, v, 4, 5, 9, 11, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 49, 53, 57
Congressional Research Service, 35
Congress, U.S., 1, 5, 8, 9, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 41, 42, 45, 46, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57, 58
Contact memorandums, congressional, 41-42

Coordination with the Congress, 23-25

Cornelius, William J., 53

Corporation Audits Division, 16

Corps of Engineers, 24

D

Dallas Regional Office, iv, 3, 4

Dawson, William L., 2

Dayton, 3

Dean, Hazen, 4, 5

Defense, Department of, 21, 22, 36, 47, 54

Defense Division, 33, 34, 37, 39

de Gaulle, Charles, 3

Dembling, Paul G., 6, 46

Deputy Comptroller General, 25, 36, 58

Dingell, John D., 42

Direct assistance to the Congress, 18, 20-21, 26-34

District of Columbia, 7

E

Eckert, Charles E., iv, 2, 4, 7-9, 58-59

Eisenhower, President Dwight D., 39

Ellender, Allen, 3

Elliott, Richard N., 8

Ellis, William, 3, 15, 56

Energy and Minerals Division, 33

Environmental Protection Agency, 33

Erie, PA, 5

Eschwege, Henry, vi, 33

Estes, Billie Sol, 3

Ethics in Government Act, 57, 58

European Branch, GAO, iv, 3, 46-47, 56

Expenditures in the Executive Departments, Committee on, House, 2, 3

F

Fascell, Dante, 56

Fazio, Victor H., 47

Federal Bureau of Investigation, iv, 2, 3, 6, 31, 50, 51, 52, 53, 56

Federal Elections Commission, v, 36, 57

Federal Elections, Office of, v, 2, 29, 36-37, 54, 55, 57

Federal Personnel and Compensation Division, 58

Financial management, 20, 21

Fitzgerald, Martin J., v, 5-7, 57-58

Frankfurt, 4, 56

Frederick, Maryland, 2

G

GAO Building, 53

General Counsel, Office of the, iv, v, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16, 20, 25, 34, 39, 46, 58

General Electric Company, 49

Georgetown University Law School, 5

George Washington University, 2

George Washington University Law School, 1

Georgia, 1

Germantown, MD, 53, 54

G.I. Bill of Rights, 10

G.I. Bill Program, 10-11

Golden Fleece Awards, 29

Governmental Affairs Committee, Senate, 26, 29

(continued)

Index

Government Corporation Control Act, 16, 19
Government Operations Committee, House, iv, 2, 26, 46, 47
Gray, General, 10
Gross, H. R., 26

H

Hagenstad, M. Thomas, 21
Hardy, Porter, 2, 3, 9, 10, 12, 39
Holifield, Chet, 47, 48
Holifield hearings, 47-48
House Intelligence Committee, 50
House Legislative Office, 11
House of Representatives, U.S., 13, 18, 21, 22, 31, 36, 42, 46, 55, 57
Hughes, Phillip S., 2, 11, 13, 54, 55
Human Resources Division (HRD), 21, 33

I

Information Management and Technology Division (IMTEC), 21
Intelligence Committee, Senate, 51
Investigations, Office of, iv, 2, 3, 10, 11, 15, 17, 38, 39, 56

J

Johnson, Charles, 10
Johnson, President Lyndon B., 20, 24
Johnston, Olin D., 14
Justice, Department of, 6, 9

K

Kane, Owen, 2, 4, 6, 10, 11, 14, 17, 35
Keating, Jerome, 13, 14
Keller, Robert F., 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 15, 16, 31, 36, 37, 43, 49, 50, 51, 52, 57
Kennedy, President John F., 14
Kennedy, Robert F., 5, 14
King, Martin Luther, 5
Kleberg, Richard M., 24
Klekner, Arthur, 53
Klutz, Jerry, 14, 15
Korea, 2
Korean War, v, 2
Kvasov, Vladimir, 49-54

L

Leesburg, Virginia, 2
Legislation, comments on, 34-36
Legislative Digest Section, 43
Legislative Liaison, Office of (OLL), iv, v, 2, 4, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 23, 24, 25, 28, 34, 36, 37, 40, 56, 58
Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, 21, 28, 35
London, 4, 56

M

Macfarlane, Margaret, 43
Madrid, 4, 56
Mahon, George H., 20
Manpower and Welfare Division, 21, 33
Martin Marietta Company, 42
Martiny, John, 28
Menger, Janie, 11
Miami, FL, 54, 55
Michigan, 5, 57
Moon rocks, 58
Morse, Ellsworth H., Jr., 43

Mc

McCarl, J. R., 8, 12, 13, 15, 19
McClellan, John L., 14, 29, 39, 45
McGough, Peter, 49

N

National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 24, 51
National Association of Retired Federal Employees, 5
National Security and International Affairs Division (NSIAD), 21
Newman, William, 43
New York Times, The, 44
Nixon, President Richard M., 20

O

OCR meetings, 25, 42, 43-44
O'Donnell, Kenneth, 14
Old Post Office Building, 1
Oversight, 45, 46

P

Paris, 3, 56
Patman, Wright, 54
Patterson, Pat, 11
Pike, Otis, 50
Policy, Office of, 43
Postal Union, 13, 14
Program evaluation, 21
Program plan, 31, 32
Proxmire, William, 26, 29

R

Records Division, iv, 7, 58
Report review, 22
Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division (RCED), 21, 33
Revolutionary War, 7
Roback, Herbert, 47
Rome, 4, 56
Roosevelt, President Franklin D., 7, 13
Rosenthal, Benjamin, 48

S

Samuelson, A. T., 16, 37, 43
San Francisco, 2
Sawyer, Roland, 44
Scali, John, 52
Schmitt, Harrison, 58
Seattle Regional Office, 2, 14
Secretary of the Senate, 55, 56, 58
Security at GAO, 49-54
Senate, U.S., 13, 21, 22, 31, 36, 57, 58
Shafer, Ed, 3
60 Minutes, 52
Socolar, Milton J., 44, 51, 52
Southeastern Law School, 7
Soviet Embassy, 49
Spanish base construction program, 4
Sperry, Roger, 38
Staats, Elmer B., 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 30, 31, 34, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 55, 57
Staff (GAO) assignments to the Congress, 17, 37-39
Stans, Maurice, 54
State Court of Appeals (Detroit, MI), 5

(continued)

Index

State, Department of, 3, 54
Subcommittee on the Armed Services, House, 12
Subcommittees of the Congress, 18, 19, 24, 31, 47
Subpoena power, 57
Summer interns, 24
Surveys and Investigations staff, House, 17, 51

T

Teague, Olin, 10, 12
Technology Assessment, Office of, 35, 42-43
Testimony, 16-17, 22, 29, 39-41, 47
Thompson, L. Fred, v, 1-2, 4, 6, 7, 55-56
Timeliness, 45
Tokyo, 2
Transportation, Department of, 36
Trask, Roger R., vi
Turf problems, 32-34

U

United Kingdom, 22

V

Veterans Administration, 9-10, 11, 36

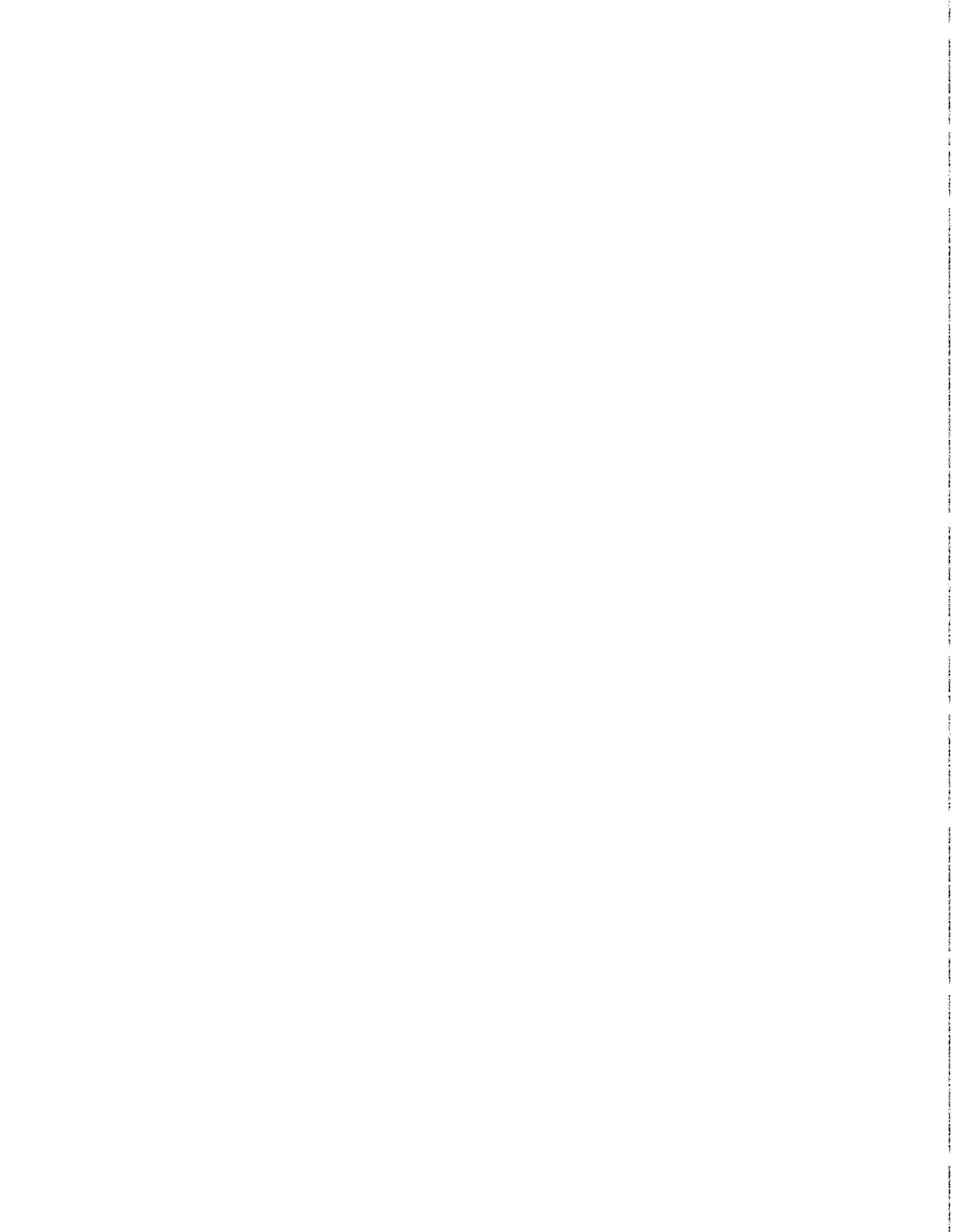
Veterans Affairs Audit Section, 1
Veterans Insurance Program, 9, 10
Vietnam War, 27
Vouchers, 1-2, 7, 47

W

Wallace, Mike, 52, 53, 54
Wall Street Journal, The, 24, 44
Warren, Lindsay C., 7, 8, 10, 13, 19, 20
Washington College of Law, 2
Washington Post, The, 14, 44
Watergate, 54
Watts, 5
Weitzel, Frank H., 4, 7, 10, 11, 15, 47, 56
Westfall, Ted B., 20
Whitten, Jamie L., 20, 32
Williams, J. J., 26
Wolfe, Charles E., 17, 39
World War II, v

Z

Zinc case, 15, 16



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