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NB: Interview conducted by telephone by Dr. John Darrell

Sherwood of the Naval History and Heritage Command.

Q: It is the 12<sup>th</sup> of August, 2008. And I am interviewing Pete Brown. The purpose of this interview is to record your experience with the evolution of NSPS. A transcript of the interview will be preserved as a permanent NSPS record, and may be used as source material for DoD history of NSPS. Are you OK with this?

A: Sure, that's fine.

Q: Do I have permission to record this interview?

A: Yes, you do.

Q: OK. Let's start --

Q: Can you start off by telling me a bit about your background? The year only that you were born, and where you were born, where you went to school?

A: I was born in 1943 in Massachusetts. I attended public high school and graduated in 1961. In 1965, I received a bachelor's degree in aeronautical engineering from MIT.

Q: When you graduated from MIT, where did you start working?

A: This was the middle of the 1960s, which was just about the best time in this country to be in aeronautical engineering. So I went and got a job in the aerospace

industry, which really didn't have much in New England, so I went down to Philadelphia, and went to work for the Boeing Vertol company, which made helicopters. And I started off there in flight tests, which is where all the young aeronautical engineers are supposed to start anyway. So I would go flying almost every day, and experimented with helicopters for a couple of years.

Q: Were you a pilot?

A: No, I was called a test engineer. We set up the program that needed to be run, the various test points, and I'd ride along and gather data. This was in the '60s before we had anything like real-time flight test data, so a lot of this stuff was taken in flight and recorded in flight, and then we would do the magic on it after we got back.

Q: What helicopters did you work on during that period?

A: These were the two big military helicopters that Boeing built: they were the tandem rotor helicopters, the Chinook CH-47 for the Army, and the Sea Knight CH-46 for the Navy and the Marine Corps. Both of which are still flying today, which is amazing to me. But I guess we built them good back then.

Q: Were you affected at all by the draft?

A: No. It turned out that I ended up with a high lottery number. So I didn't end up being involved in the draft at

that time frame, and I was married with a son at that point.

Q: How long did you work for Boeing?

A: Until the mid-'70s. '77 I think. And after we built all of the helicopters that were needed by the Army and the Navy, I shifted to ground transportation. I got involved designing and building the elevated cars for Chicago Rapid Transit Association, and streetcars for Boston and San Francisco. So I converted over to projects for the civil sector.

Q: Did you attend graduate school?

A: No. Never did. When I got out, I just wanted to go work, and then I wanted to get into airplanes. The thought of spending two more years in school not working didn't seem brilliant to me. And I never went back, and apparently, I gained enough experience and training in the various jobs I did that it kind of led me out of engineering into management. But I never went on and got another degree.

Q: When you worked on these rapid transit projects, did you work for a contractor, or did you work for the city?

A: I was with Boeing and some partners. We built the actual trains, assembled them and built them at the factory we had in the Philadelphia area of Pennsylvania. We also built some demonstration subway trains. We built a specialty

train, things that you'd recognize today as energy-efficient, with regenerative braking and fly wheels, stuff like that. But this was back in the late '70s when the technology wasn't as good as it is today. And then at the end of the '70s, around '78, I decided to try something different. I left Boeing, and I went to work for an outfit called Garrett Air Research, they're part of some other company now. They were based in California, but my job was to put the subway trains and the propulsion and brake systems that they had built into service in Atlanta. So my family moved to Atlanta, and I spent a year or so taking the trains from nothing into carrying people for money--the first system they'd ever had in that city. And as an engineer, that's the thing that you remember: you only get one time to do something first, and that was it. And that was arduous and challenging, but we succeeded.

Q: How long were you there?

A: We were in the city a year and a half, maybe two years.

Q: And what date are we at right now?

A: We're in 1979 at that point.

Q: And from there, where did you go?

A: Since the subway was working, I went back to the home office, which was in Torrance, California, and worked as the program manager to get the rest of the 120 trains

delivered. They were coming from France. That lasted through about the end of 1980, and that's when we decided we needed a way to get back on the East Coast. I took a job with the Navy as a project engineer on a couple of classes of Navy amphibious ships.

Q: The Gator Navy?

A: Yeah, the Gators. And that was pretty big at that time. A lot of them are just razor blades now [recycled into to scrap metal], but it was pretty big. We updated the engineering plant, and other machinery on the ships that had been built in the '60s.

Q: And this was with NAVSEA?

A: Yeah, that was with NAVSEA, the guys who hired me. I have to admit, they took a chance with me. I was not a government employee, and I was mid-career, and I was an aeronautical engineer who had worked on subway trains, which apparently made me a perfect fit for the Gator Navy.

Q: Why was that?

A: They're all machinery. There's not a lot of guns and weapons and such on these things, but they are just absolutely full of machinery, to move loads around, balance the ship, all kinds of stuff like that. And carry hundreds of people.

Q: Pumping water in and out of the well deck.

A: Yeah. And it was just challenging. I worked in that job from '81 until about '87.

Q: Were you involved in actual design, or project management?

A: This was the project management for the ships that had already been built. They last for 20 or 30 years, so they have to be regularly updated and modernized. During that time frame, we had to install the first Phalanx systems on all of the ships, in order for them to operate off of Lebanon. And that time frame, that was not a happy time for Lebanon. So we rushed and put them on the ships in a very quick order. And the thing I liked about the job was that the pace of change was far, far greater than designing and building new ships. That's glacial, in terms of its speed. So once you've built the ship, all of the sudden, you need to decide what you've got to put on it so it can go into harm's way. In many instances, you've only got a few months to think of what to do and get it done. I like that.

Q: Did you get a lot of -- did you spend some time at sea?

A: Mostly on sea trials. We would go out after certain things had been done to repair them. That's where you get to meet the real Navy, and see the people who deserve the best you can give them, in terms of what you do to the ship before they go off over the horizon.

Q: Did you have a title in that position?

A: Throughout that period, I was sort of the Branch Head for all amphibious ships--probably a total fleet of 60 or 70 ships that I managed through a bunch of other people.

Q: And what was your GS grade at that time?

A: At that point, I think I was a GS-14.

Q: And how long were you in that position?

A: I would say from '84 to '87, I'm guessing.

Q: And in 1987, where did you go?

A: Well, I applied for the head of the entire operation. These were all of the assault ships, tenders, underway replenishment ships, flagships, that sort of thing. And I applied for that job, which was the senior executive service, SES career. And I managed to get that job. So then, I think it was '87, I took over as the person in charge of that whole operation. At that point well over 100 ships were under me. And probably 60 or 70 people, plus all the money and the work they did with the field organization. We did a lot of work repairing and contracting for the repairs of ships. So I got a pretty good dose of the business of maintaining a fleet of 100 or so ships.

Q: In that job, who did you deal with?

A: Most of the people I dealt with were in the operating fleets--one, two, three-star admirals, people like that. At



that point, I also started dealing with assistant secretary level political appointees. But within the Navy, and the Navy, as you know, obviously has an intriguing three-way balance between the line officers who are nominally in charge of things, the political appointees, and the career civilians, which I staunchly was.

Q: Did you ever have any dealings with Secretary John Lehman?

A: No. No, we never went up that high. We generally would be at the assistant-secretary level, and generally, it was involved in what I would call the infrastructure type stuff, size of the workforce, change. I was far enough up in the career organization that we were at the match point with what strategically, people wanted to do with the Navy, and we would see to it that it got done. You kind of understand the position and what you have to do. I started as a ship engineer, and by the time I got to be a senior executive, it sort of leveled off who you were dealing with, the downside of things. You get careful about where you spend your money. And we were on the receiving end of a lot of the new ships. As the new ships were built, it was my organization that took care of them. I was in at the tail end of the 600-ship Navy, as we tried to commission ships and get them working.

Q: Did you feel that the amphibious side of the Navy was

getting short shrift?

A: No, not really. Because we were close to the bottom end of the food chain, which actually was more intriguing, because you had to be more clever. You really had to deliver on what you said, and you couldn't afford to waste any money, just had to push and push. And I always felt we were a little more eager, because we had less money, and clever. We also had the flag ships, *Blue Ridge*, stuff like that. So I got to deal with the top end, because at that point, especially on the *Blue Ridge* over in Japan, that ship was still recognized as both a Navy ship and sort of a traveling office for the State Department, and the diplomacy that went on in the East at that time.

Q: The 1987 was beginning of Operation Ernest Will [24 July 1987-26 September 1988}?

A: Yes. That time frame, yeah.

Q: Were you at all involved with that?

A: Not really, because those were the combatant ships. We also had the minesweepers, so at times, we got involved. And that's a long and separate tale. Maybe you ought to look for somebody in the minesweeping crowd. We had to struggle to keep those things going. We were the first crowd that came up with stationing heavy ships at needed spots, instead of wearing them out on the way over [maritime

propositioning].

Q: Well, minesweeping proved to be a vital capability for both the tanker war and the first Gulf War.

A: I recall a very early morning call from the Command Duty Officer when the *Tripoli* [LPH-10] hit an Iraqi naval mine in the Persian Gulf [18 February 1991]. So we got involved in some of the bad things that happened.

Q: In terms of building?

A: Well, see, we were sort of the real time guys, so when the *Tripoli* got mined, we collected all of the information that we could working with the Philadelphia shipyard. And then we attempted to help the people on the spot, and listen to the people on the spot, relative to how bad of a situation their ship was in. They know so much, and they have great people on the ship, and the folks that work in the engineering department of the ship have a certain degree of knowledge based on their proximity to the problem, and that's what we did the day that we were called. The *Tripoli* turned out to be in better shape than the *Princeton* [CG-59, which was also mined on 18 February 1991]. But that something we did in the space of a couple of hours over the phone to Philly and the ship and the divers, and such.

Q: Transmitting the information to the shipyard? And then having them analyze it?

A: That's what you do when you have a fleet and something bad happens. You do the best you can with the on-the-ship information. And then you have a deep sort of brain behind the scenes that they have to be able to access rapidly. We were fairly good at it.

Q: Did you have both military and civilian workers?

A: Yes. And it was always a mixed group, and that's what kept it refreshed, the officers would rotate through, they would bring their latest experiences, and our engineering department had the institutional knowledge. The fleet knows where they can go for help, and it isn't the contractor, it's the in-house experience that over decades helps them out.

Q: How would you compare your uniform staff versus your civilian staff?

A: Equal but different. The civilians were expected to have deep knowledge of how to do things, and to be able to sort out problems and handle them. And the military folks, as I said, they kind of kept the civilians refreshed and connected to what it was they were doing, so that you never got far away from the fact that you were designing, fixing, modifying, doing something that generally was supposed to help the fleet and the sailors as they went off over the horizon. And you needed to remember that, and it's a good,

rich connection. The Navy has done that for centuries. And it just helps. In our organization, the military comprised 10% of the work force, and the civilians, 90%. And, you know, in any civilian organization, you're going to get folks who can basically only "fog a mirror." And then you get folks who are every bit as into what they're doing as the military.

Q: Were you a little bit disappointed by how fast the military folks turn over?

A: I don't know how they sort out the rotation through your office, but for us, because it was ships and shipbuilding, it was a recognizable part of a career track for some of the officers, so they would come and stay for a year, 18 months. And if they would be unzipped and pulled out, it would usually be for something really exciting or scary that they needed an officer with that knowledge, and they'd pull them out, and in our case, we knew that could happen, so there's always a backup. You're supposed to be able to survive the loss of anyone, because that's what can happen. It's harder at times to replace those with really long experience in acquisition and ship design shipbuilding, stuff like that. If it's a good officer, you hate to see him go, but at the same time, you realize they've got a career they've got to work out, and they're going to take

something they know about you back to the fleet.

Q: How would you rate your officers as engineers?

A: Some of them are very, very good. There aren't that many of them, because being an engineer, especially the engineering duty officers, are not generally felt to be the top, the cream of the crop, that would compete against the line officers. They have their own line of progression and such like that. The engineers that I've encountered that were engineering duty officers have been exceptional, generally because of what they've been exposed to and where they've been, and they all generally have graduate degrees, some of them have doctorate degrees. And they just, in most cases, have tremendous hands-on and theoretical knowledge of what they're doing. And they pick up the business acumen. The thing that is heartening, and this has happened to me a couple of times, we would be going after a vendor who had done a really bad thing like product substitution, fake stuff. And we would have a Naval Officer engineer who can talk about anything that company did and handle anything, and watch the opposite side melt; it's just wonderful to watch. And so a good engineer, naval officer, is a prince among men in some cases. They're not all that way, but most of them are princes.

Q: Do they typically have degrees from the Naval Academy?

A: No. Not always. As a matter of fact, a lot of the engineers didn't. They generally had degrees from some other respected engineering colleges, or had gone to Navy postgraduate school, stuff like that. But they were not all Annapolis folks.

Q: How long were you in the SES position?

A: From 1987 until 2005, when I retired. And I went from the puppy SES, which is grade one; I went all the way up to the top, grade six. You can't go any higher.

Q: How did you get involved in NSPS, and when did that occur?

A: I would say in 2003, but I could be wrong, you'll have to check.

Q: Up until that point, you were focused entirely on the amphibious readiness force?

A: Oh, no. I had a few more jobs.

Q: So can you go through that chronology?

A: It's a pretty big place. It had over 100,000 people at one time. So I went from the head of all of the amphibious and auxiliary ships to essentially the corporate planner.

Q: And what year was that?

A: It was around 1992. And we were kind of revitalizing the whole corporate-level plan, and corporate was 120,000 people level planning of this, and that 120,000 people included the headquarters gang, who also bought ships,

these were the acquisition crowd, that was about 4-5,000 people. The Naval Shipyards, of which there were at least eight at that time, and they were probably 60,000.

Supervisors of Shipbuilding who kind of watched and oversaw the new ships being built, and that was probably 5,000 people. And what we call the Warfare Centers. These are the technology labs, like Dahlgren and White Oak, and such, and they were probably 20,000 people. We had a lot of folks in many different business units. None of them were born together; they were assembled over 50 years. And that's like a conglomerate. The three-star vice admiral who was the head of Naval Sea Systems Command, he had a small corporate staff, and I was on that as the corporate planner.

Q: What did that job entail?

A: Well, that was trying to sort out and find ways to align all those different people to begin to treat them as separate, what I would call business units, that's what we called them at the time, because they were very different businesses. You couldn't really compare the Dahlgren warfare center with the Philadelphia naval shipyard or the Norfolk naval shipyard, but they were under the same command. So my job was to make sense of all this, and I got to know a lot of these people was, find ways to bring them



together, as opposed to having them fight with one another. And that was -- we spent the '90s, and of course the '90s, the early '90s, was part of the downsizing. The first thing I did when I became the corporate planning officer was to actually run a reduction in force at headquarters in 1992. That was my first introduction to serious civilian personnel matters. And you know, once you've actually done it, you have a larger appreciation for how things work. And that is when I realized, well, you can't be an engineer all your life; you really need to figure out how to work the people side of things. So that's probably where my first connection was.

Q: With the people side of things, what were your biggest challenges?

A: Not to break faith with the folks who were going to get displaced, not to disrupt the operations, the day-to-day job we all had to do. And to try to get people to do fair and common things, because these groups, a lot of the groups were led by senior SESers who, because they'd been in the government for so long, have a tendency to try to game the system. And that's not what we were going to do. We were going to do it in the open and we were going to do it fair. So we got an awful lot of the people placed in different positions. I think no more than one or two people

were actually put out of work that didn't want to be put out of work. Everybody else either was ready to leave, or we found them a job someplace else for them. But we got smaller, and it was excruciating to go through, because we hadn't done anything like that for a decade, maybe two decades. Nobody even remembered how to do it.

Q: Did you use that, what do they call it, PPP, priority placement program

A: We used the priority placement system for some, but we also actually took it on ourselves to place the team. We took care of our folks ourselves as best as we could. And that's where I got to know the various subtleties of behaviors of the personnel department, the human resource departments, and to understand their culture.

Q: How would you characterize the Navy HRO in -- around circa 1990?

A: There were a number of crafty, very experienced, senior people. These senior people were at the GS 14 or 15 level. They call them the human resources directors, the HRD. And they were very clever, and they understood their system. They were just learning through some good civilian leadership that they needed to be as close to their customers, that would be me and my workforce, as they could be, and stop doing things on their own. I also learned that

they had split personalities. When they faced the customer, they started to become pretty good and sensitive and understanding, and help you understand what you're doing and get you to do it right. When you got them together alone in the room without the customers, they were a somewhat nasty group that wasn't opposed to backstabbing.

Q: Were they...?

A: And they would admit this. And the ones I knew closely would admit this to me. You didn't want to ever be in a crowd of them alone. They were tough on each other. Very tough. I kind of said they used to eat their own young.

Q: My experience with Navy personnel is you don't want to piss them off, because they will get back at you and they will win. And the other issue is that they don't share knowledge; they understand the system, but they're not going to share that knowledge with you.

A: Yeah. I work in a much larger organization, so a number of our HR personnel felt more of an allegiance to us than to the organization of Navy HR. That would not occur in a smaller or more diffused organization. It sets you up in a little bit different power balance. You've got to follow the rules, but they're also going to have to listen to you. That doesn't occur in small organizations, and I can see that, they probably come in and just tell you what you're

going to do, and that's it.

Q: Navy HRO at this time was based in DC?

A: Yes. It seems to be with Mike [Marcisani] and they had already merged a couple of things.

Q: And this was before they were all shipped down in Millington.

A: The civilian personnel gang didn't go. That's the military personnel side.

Q: That was the military personnel.

A: Yeah. And that's another thing. The military grow up in a system that they understand very well, and one which is totally alien to civilian side of government. Civilian careers are not managed by detailing officers, and most civilians do not want that.

Q: With the civilian system, was bumping a problem for you?

A: Yeah, and when you run a reduction in the force, there's a set of rules that you follow that has to do with your seniority and your skill areas, which would include what you're doing today, but also include what you did ten years ago and five years ago. And we had what they call bump and retreat, we had those problems, in that people who were perfectly well in a job, but were junior to somebody else, all of the sudden ended up having a different job. And people tried to play a lot of tricks on the system, and I

just had to hold my foot down and say don't play the tricks. Because once you go outside the lines, you're outside the lines, and the whole thing will blow up on you. There's got to be credibility. So we had troubles with that. And again, the position I was in, I was dealing with powerful SESers, and I was kind of a junior SESer at the time, but I worked for the three-star. That helped.

Q: When revamping the personnel system within DoD, were the problems created by bumping a major motivation behind the formation of NSPS?

A: I don't think so. Because I never got into the what would happen if you ran a RIF. But I don't think that was the problem; I don't recall ever having a conversation about that; we had to get everybody to accurately portray their history. And it took us quality time to do that, so there wouldn't be any fictitious bumping. That hadn't really been a problem. If you're thinking about a huge major reduction, then it's a problem. And the shipyards went through that, as the workload dropped down. And then we ran into the base closure stuff in the '90s, in early 2000.

Q: What about demographics?

A: We had made some headway on that, until the reduction started. And because of the way the system worked, we knew that if you did a reduction in force, you were going to

lose all the people you had just spent an amazing amount of time to get, such as skilled minorities. But we actually struggled over that, and because NAVSEA is so big and diverse, we have just about one of every problem, but they're all under the single flag of a small group of SESers, who like me were in the corporate level. We can talk to the HR folks, and explain what was going to happen if they did this. And that's what actually developed into the buyout process, which we used fairly effectively in the mid to late '90s, to do the downsizing we had to do. I mean, when I started my corporate side in 1992, we had 125,000 people working for us, civilians, not even counting military. When I was done with reorganization and downsizing and base closures, we had 45,000. And everybody would say, well, you haven't gotten smaller. Wait a minute, that's a huge number of people that no longer work for us, through whatever reason. And we did an awful lot of stuff, funded buyouts, stuff like that, we had to deal with the money to do it. And it hurt the diversity a little bit, but it sure didn't hurt it as bad as classic reduction in force.

Q: What about veteran's preference?

A: Veteran's preference shows up in reduction of forces, clearly. And then I saw it hit a couple of times, but it

wasn't huge. I mean, it's not like something that you would rise up and say, man, we've got to do something about that. I never recall ever saying that.

Q: But it is a huge issue in hiring.

A: When you're not hiring many, it's an issue. But again, if you're really looking for somebody who understands high-pressure piping design and 20 years of service, you either have it or you don't. And there are other skill areas where what the veterans have is perfectly suited to the job, and that's the way it should be. Those are the rules of the country. And I didn't feel like I needed to tilt against too many windmills.

Q: You were in that job until when?

A: Well, somewhere -- and I can't remember anymore, but I was the corporate planner for a few years. Then another job opened up, and this was the actual flag level director of our logistics organization. And they asked me to do that job, so I took over for Cliff Geiger, who had moved up to the main Navy and the Pentagon. And that was one of the top senior executive positions we had, and it was actually -- I was actually charged with the whole Directorate; there was no flag officer. And I did that for a couple of years. And I ran all of the logistics, and I was also the Chief Information Officer for the command, and all the IT stuff,

I did that too.

Q: For what command?

A: Same command, NAVSEA.

Q: NAVSEA.

A: The beauty of that place is you can have 15 different jobs that don't look like each other and still work for the same place.

Q: And --

A: There I got much more connected to the fleet and the Pentagon, stuff like that. Budgeting and that kind of stuff.

Q: When did NAVSEA begin to migrate over from Crystal City to the Navy Yard?

A: That was late 2000.

Q: Were you involved in that?

A: Oh, yeah. I ran that. That was part of my job as -- I can't remember which part of my job that was, whether they were under me as part of the logistics and IT group, and we did all of the designs, and the plans for the move. And then the actual head SES for the command, Paul Schnider, had a heart attack in the late '90s, and they asked me to fill in for him as the Executive Director. That was the senior-most civilian in the command. And then when he stayed on at the Assistant Secretary to the Navy's office, they asked me to



do that permanently, which was sometime around 1998 or 2000 or something like that. So then I had gone from being GS-12 ship engineer in 1981 to the head civilian in the command around 1998 or '99.

Q: What was the main rationale for moving all of those people to the Navy Yard?

A: Get them into Navy-owned buildings.

Q: Not ones owned by Charles Smith?

A: Yes. They wanted us out of the rental spaces, which it sounds like it kind of happened again, during the 2005 BRAC round, where they got an awful lot of the folks out of rental spaces, and they're trying to put them on military bases. We did it before 9/11. A lot of the rationale for doing more of it was after 9/11, the attacks on the Pentagon, kind of got people nervous about having everybody spread around town in rental buildings that couldn't be protected. I mean, we were right on the street. What were you going to do there?

Q: What were some of the challenges -- we wrote a history of the Navy Yard, and when we revise it, the NAVSEA move is going to be a chapter in that history.

A: The biggest challenge was to convince the people, and we had 4-5,000 folks, that it wasn't the end of the world, life would be OK. Maybe not be better, but it was going to

be different, and it had a chance to be better. And that place that we would sort of call our own, with our own flagpole and such, and safer, since we wouldn't be spread into 15 rental buildings with stuff underneath you. And we brought folks over. The guy that ran it for me, [Bill Bell], did a great job to introduce the people. We had events, we did things generally when we said we would do them, so people could plan their lives. And it was interesting, and you know this from your experience, that no matter how many bridges you have, a river is a barrier. And the people who lived in Virginia just had terrible trouble, because they had to cross the river to work. Nobody remembered the people who lived in Maryland who no longer had to cross the river. (laughter)

Q: Right.

A: It was kind of interesting to watch it. And for the most part, it kind of worked out OK, until the Pentagon got attacked on 9/11, and we had our gate closed, and we had thousands of people who were simply not used to being on a base who all of the sudden couldn't just go home when they wanted to. And that was a problem. We had to spend quite some time kind of getting people down off the walls after that one, and they eventually calmed down. From the early '90s onwards, I was involved in the workforce in one way or

another at the top end type of stuff. So that's kind of what aligned me for when NSPS came along, and it was kind of like, it was going to happen to me whether I planned on it or thought of it or not. I never spent a lot of time planning or thinking about my career. When I sat down at NAVSEA in the '80s I didn't say, "Well, in ten years I'm going to \_\_\_\_." No. It gets in your way when you say stuff like that.

Q: With the move to the Navy Yard, what about the infrastructure? The old buildings that needed to be renovated? Parking?

A: Oh, that was actually fun. We got the old gun factory that they built, the big building which has the cranes in it, which still has the cranes in it. And a couple of new buildings, and we even got the place renovated for what is now the [Rickover's] old organization, the Naval Reactors organization, which was tough, so we moved them too. And people got comfortable with it. The change in style, we opened up the floor plans. No longer could everybody be hiding in their little cubbyhole, quite frankly. Now we had modular furniture, it looks a cartoon sometimes, but people did actually have to spend more time with each other than hidden in little office rooms, the way we were in Crystal City. So it took some time, and we paid attention to folks,

and I think it was OK when I left.

Q: Were the buildings more expensive to renovate than you ever thought?

A: No. They were expensive, but we were close on the estimates.

Q: What about the issues of parking and transportation?

A: Well, there is just nothing comparable to having a three-star admiral in charge, because he tends to outrank the other guys, which unfortunately kind of ticks off other folks in the Yard who don't have a three-star. But we viewed that we built those parking garages, it was our budget from BRAC, and while we shared them, and there were a lot of spaces in there for others, we were going to cover our people first. And that's what we did, and the people do that. We tried to open up the lots that were over in the old Federal Center that eventually got shut down and stuff like that, we just pushed for it to help everybody. And Chris Weaver, Admiral Weaver, was the NDW guy at that time. We got along pretty well, and he understood that. And we, again, we tried not to harm anybody that was already there, to get more parking for everybody, but we were bound and determined. We were going to be there first, because we built the building with our money. People didn't like us; we were too big.

Q: You were in the Navy Yard during 9/11?

A: Yeah.

Q: And people were upset because the Navy Yard was locked down for a few hours?

A: It occurred one year after we moved, and the mentality of 4,000-plus people was we worked like regular citizens in a public rental building, because we sat in southern Crystal City, and we could come and go as we pleased; there was no gate, there were no guards. If you felt you needed to go home, you would go home. And a substantial number of the people were on the Virginia side of the river, south of the Pentagon. And then you take that open, free mentality, and put it in a gated community, the Navy Yard, and then basically lock the gates so people can't get out, and of course they're already worried about figuring out how to get across the bridge anyway, or to go south, it was very stressful. And it took us a while to unwind them. But the greater good came out; people understood what was going on, nothing bad happened. The rumors spread around about the potential of chemical or biological warfare. And we made some effort on our own building air-conditioning system to lock it down and make sure we were sort of almost pressurized from inside, nothing that special, but we worked with NDW to get the systems adjusted so that we

could actually stop the inflow of outside air. We kind of told people we could do this, but I don't think we ever tested it.

Q: Oh, that's interesting.

A: It is just amazing that there were a handful of us up at the front office, a couple flag officers and myself, couple of chiefs of staff, that sorted things out on that horrible day, and what to do, and to keep -- you know, how do we keep our people in touch, and how do we tell them things that they need to know? Where do they go to find out? It was OK. Well, we battled for hours on end to figure out, were we going to be open the next day or not? And we all decided that we were going to be open for that reason. And that was -- if people didn't want to come in, that was OK, because they've all got leave and things they can take on their own, we'll forgive that, but we're going to be open. And most everybody came the next day.

Q: Well, NAVSEA had a mission.

A: It's great to work for an organization associated with the military. An operating force relies on you being there. You have ships and weapons and things that you've bought or designed for the good of the country. And that's what you do. And you're going to come in each day and you're going to do that, because you've got sailors out there. And it's

just easier to do than, say, working for the IRS.

Q: How long did you stay in this current job?

A: Until I retired.

Q: In '05.

A: In May of 2005.

Q: But then you were detailed to do NSPS?

A: Maybe -- I don't recall we ever used the word detailed. At the SES level, you talk it over with the leaders, if somebody wants you to do it, then you go do it. And it wasn't -- I don't recall any paperwork, NAVSEA just paid my salary. There was nobody else to pay my salary so they just paid it. And I certainly had my history of what I did there in mind, but there are times when you have to be a little bit bigger thinker than just being the front-man for your command, and I'd spent several years early in the 2000s working on the various boards and committees amongst the other SES of the Navy to try to look at the greater good of what we needed to do for Navy. And we came up with different ways to do outsourcing and strategic sourcing and things like that to pay off some of the money bills. And that was stuff we worked on together as SESers. And across NAVSEA, NAVAIR fleet, the big commands that had civilians. And we learned about each other in the early 2000s. Kind of like military officers do by rotating around through

command. So we learned about that, and it broke down some of the parochialism. And to some degree, a number of the other people, senior people in the Navy, knew me and trusted me, so that when they said, "well, come work on this personnel system," they understood that I wasn't just working on it for NAVSEA or Pete Brown, I was there for the greater good. I was less parochial. And I think it has to do with the way I got there. My first job wasn't with the Navy; I did lots of other things before I got there. And I just learned how to handle that kind of stuff, without being brutally parochial where some of the classical SESers were seen to be. They took care of their organization and that was it. I wasn't that way. So when this popped up, and our command had some experience with some of the aspects of NSPS, the thing called the Lab Demo was going on at our Warfare Centers; we had something like probably 20-30,000 people in something like NSPS, with pay bands and performance management and all that kind of stuff. We already knew about that, and I knew the people who ran that, and they knew me. So I lived in Washington, they didn't, so I was a good character to do this. I wasn't looking for that job. Most of the jobs that I got, I'd never actually been looking for. They found me.

Q: What year did you start with NSPS?



A: It was right about the time when it was falling apart dramatically in public. (laughter) I have to explain something, I had a heart bypass operation last year.

Q: Oh. I'm sorry.

A: I'm fine. And I was fine, I never had a heart attack. But apparently, the little feature -- they don't exactly tell you this until afterwards -- but when you're on a heart-lung machine, the pump, it has an effect on short-term memory, it's called "pump head". And it means there's certain things you aren't going to remember right away. And it's still going on, it doesn't necessarily go away. And that period, I can't -- I can remember a lot of things that went on, but I cannot pin a date to it, strangely enough. I mean, it's not going to kill me. It wouldn't be good if I was still on my job, but right now, I can't say -- I think it's 2002, 2003. All I'm saying is -- because I was back at NAVSEA for some time before I ended up retiring, so I would have to say it's 2002, 2003. When it first came out in the legislation.

Q: Historians are obsessed with chronology, so if I bore you by asking for dates all the time, don't worry about.

A: Yeah. I think you can, with some of the other specifics of the program, you can probably fill in the dates.

Q: We can piece it together.

Q: OK. That's fine.

A: We followed the legislation, we saw it coming, we were talking about how would we accommodate this into a group of people that was just doing straight-stick civilian personnel, GS-12, 13, 14 type stuff. And somehow, and it started to fall apart, and that was where the central DoD organization, CPMS or something like that, were working on this. And I remember one of the guys' names was Charlie, and there was a woman involved, and I cannot for the life of me remember her name. But they, as they started to go out public and get comments, and start to involve the unions, it was like a small nuclear device went off. And it was clear they were in trouble, that this was a bunch of personnelists, as people love to call them, who were out to establish decree and make their own policy and give it to them. There didn't seem to be any involvement with the actual organizations who what I would call were responsible for the personnel. Virtually nobody works for the civilian personnel management people. Now, when you trace the lineage of the 45,000 people we had at NAVSEA, you would always find the three-star at the top. He was in charge. And while it wasn't quite that bureaucratic, if you were looking for authority, that's where it was. Well, it derailed. And the DoD folks and CPMS can see a derailing,

and I think that the services were starting to get itchy. But I would probably admit that Army/Navy/Air Force got the biggest itch, because they have the most structured line organization. And somehow, and I recall not that much about it, when it started. The Secretary, and I know our Navy Secretary Gordon England was heavily involved in this, possibly because they were talking to their personnel management leadership, which would have been the civilian personnel people at HR, and also like Secretary [William A. Navas], assistant secretary, saw that this was going to just blow up in our face, and we were all going to lose something that had good in it. And they all raised their hand and said stop, somewhere along the line we ain't doing this right, we need to get more people involved. And they kind of called a truce, a hiatus, and got a bunch of us together, and because I was one in Washington and the head, the civilian head, of a very large organization, I was one of them, my counterpart at NAVAIR was similar. And the Air Force and Army had its people too. And they put together a bunch of working groups to sort through things like policy, the union-type stuff, and the one I worked on was, how do you structure the deployment of something this big to 100,000 people or more? And we worked -- it was clear, and I had talked to the Secretary of the Navy before we started

this work to make sure we understood each other, and I hadn't met him before -- yes, I did, I met him when he was on one of these working committees back in the mid-'90s or something. And Secretary England had the right sense of things. I say this because he had run a large organization down in Texas, [Lockheed], that built something, had hundreds or thousands of people, had unions, and he'd run it. And the stories of him down on the production line and talking to folks and such like that, and clearly that he understood people and how that all worked. And he put his foot down and said we need to rethink this. And after, you know, three or four weeks, a month, of working groups, we all got together and spelled what we thought should happen. And my part of that was the organization, the structure that should be in charge of rolling out something this big, and what we said was, "you know, when we build an airplane or build a ship or do anything, we set up a program organization that has something it's trying to deploy, and that's its job, and it's not a policy shop; it's a "let's get this thing done" shop, it's got to get the policy, it's got to get it right, got to do all kinds of things." And, long story short, that's what the senior group, which included Secretary England and a few other folks agreed that we should do, and that was briefed to Secretary

Rumsfeld, and he said yes. So, in a very short time of like a month and a half, I think that's the time frame, we had gone from the civilian personnel functional group being in charge, with virtually no connection to us folks who actually owned the civilian, to setting up something that large organizations understand, like, you know, Army material command, the Air Force material command, Navy leadership, and NAVSEA and such; we all understood the project structure. So, and I knew, I did this, that every time I did something like that, and helped form some structure, I'd end up doing it for some period of time. And I did the presentation, and said this was the structure we should do, and did it to an auditorium full of the senior personnelists who had fumbled so badly, and I knew they were out there, and I had personally not sought their wise counsel. I had worked with the Navy personnel folks to understand certain things, but I chose not to go and talk to the folks who had caused the problem in the first place. That could be done later, if necessary. They weren't losing their jobs; they still set policy. But setting a policy and deploying it to a few hundred thousand people is a wildly different job. So, they bought the program structure; we actually called the program office the PEO (Program Executive Office). And it happened so fast that, you know,

they want to keep this thing going, and they don't usually establish something new and run it in like a week. So they said, "Well, Pete, why don't you be the PEO until we can hire somebody?" And Secretary England called me and asked me to do that. And what am I going to say, no? (laughter) So I had already talked to my boss, the three-star, and said this could happen; the command I work at is in OK shape for now, it's probably better that I go do this other thing, but I have no desire to want to do it permanently, and I won't even throw my name in the ring to fill that job; I'm going to do this temporarily --

END OF BROWN PART 1

BROWN PART 2

A: -- there is a beauty to having a job like that, because you know you're not going to -- you know you can't screw it up; you know you want to do the best you can for whatever comes. It's only going to be a short period of time, you can survive anything for a short period of time. And you don't want the organization to be branded to you, so it's got to learn to brand itself. So that's what I did. Secretary England and I had a conversation about this; I

told him I was not interested in having this job on my résumé, but I'd be happy to do the best I could, and he thought I was the right guy to do it. So I did it. And this is like, you're coming on to take over what was a pickup organization; they already had a little project organization, but they were understaffed and under-gunned, they didn't have a real senior leader, the deputy, Brad Bunn, was a temporary [SES], from the very same central organization, the personnel organization. So he couldn't go against them. But I could. So I took it over, and it was a different place, different building. And I spent -- I think I was there a month, a month and half. Maybe two months. Not long.

Q: Where was the building?

A: Over in Rosslyn. Same building that the -- I don't know where it is anymore, but it's just in Rosslyn. It's actually within the same building that the DoD CPMS was. And it was, you know, this couldn't have been more than 10 or 12 people working for them, and they were disheartened. They were from various services; they had been put together to try to do something that they didn't seem to be in charge of. And what I spent time doing was to get them to come up and figure out how to do something that they were going to have charge of, and who did they need to get that,

and what did they need to do. And then I discovered that quite frankly, virtually everybody on the outside had more power over them than they did. The policy people this, public affairs people that. They were being watched. They couldn't even figure out how to get help to set up a website without the central DoD public affairs crowd wanting to look over their shoulder. And I had never encountered anything like that. So I spent a month trying to help them get rid of some of the overhanging uselessness that some of the DoD organizations did, and get the services and myself to understand that it was in our best interest to make this thing visible, powerful, and to have it come out well, because it was going to affect all of our work force. And that's what I did for a month or so, and I think I got the morale of the office up; they felt better. Some of them are still there. And luckily, when Secretary England went to sort of pick who would be the PEO, and this was going to be a senior SES person, career, luckily. We're all thinking, oh, we're going to get an outsider, we're going to get somebody with this kind of experience, maybe from the industry, and you just -- as the senior guy like I was -- kind of smile to yourself and don't say anything, because you know that's not the way it's going to work out. And lo and behold, they interviewed a few people, some



folks from outside, didn't go really good. And then I had gotten [Mary Lacey], who used to work for me as a Technical Director at a couple of Warfare Centers, technical centers, and then eventually as the head of the whole Surface Warfare Center organization; she put her name in, got interviewed, and I remember Secretary England being very surprised that we found anybody like that inside DoD and inside the Navy. And he hired her, which was perfect. She knows ships, she knows explosives, she's worked with the really tough unions and very large workforces. And she ran a place that was already pay-banded in that Lab Demo thing. So it was like a perfect match, and she seemed to enjoy it. And I just rapidly disappeared from the field, leaving -- my name hardly ever showed up in anything. Which is what I wanted. I wanted --

Q: You went back to your old job?

A: Yeah, I went back to the old job. But I wanted -- and then we set up our own teams within NAVSEA, because we put ourselves up fairly early to shift over to the system, so we picked up our own teams, and Mary Lacy picked up some people from our place that were good. And it worked fairly well. There was the problem with the unions, that didn't work out. Mary had gone toe-to-toe with a couple of the union leaders that showed up for a luncheon we had with the

Secretary, that was fun to watch. They picked the right person in Mary, and she kept a lot of the staff, she did a lot of things kind of the way I did too. You get better people as you need them, but you try to play with the team you're given, because a team is generally better than an individual for most things. So I think it came out probably less than the leaders expected, because they lost a lot of the union negotiations, bargaining stuff, and as well as you could expect it, because at least we're into pay-banding now. Any time you set up a performance management/performance review system, you've got to change it every few years, because pretty soon people have gamed it or they've ratcheted everybody up. You've got to change it anyway.

Q: Stepping back to the evolution of NSPS, and replacing the old system, what were the weaknesses of the old civil service system? And what really prompted the need to develop a new system?

A: I think you do need to change things just periodically, because the system gets gamed. There were too many grades and too many steps, most of which were automatic, hardly anything had anything to do with actual performance. And the country and the industry was clearly shifting to a performance-based system, and away from pass/fail. And our

experience with the Lab Demo system, which had these pay-bands and performance reviews, was that it kind of raised the performance of the whole workforce when you did that. And in a lot of cases, people would work a little bit harder, and they clearly knew more about what you expected of them in their jobs. Just the creation of the dialogue and establishing what the goals were, making it clear, was useful. It was a dialogue set up between the managers and the workforce. And to some degree, it made the managers and supervisors do better. This wasn't always just about the workforce; it was also about improving management.

Q: OK. So as the national security personnel system, it evolved out of the experiences of demonstration personnel projects?

A: Yeah. And what was happening is because nobody had the guts to try to change the whole civilian personnel system, even for as large an organization as DoD, we ended up with a morass of demonstration projects. Each one was then subtly designed a little bit different from the last one. So the Navy's Lab Demo probably was a little different from the FAA's, was also a little different from what the Air Force might have done. And yet they had all given feedback that said, hey, look, this pay-band thing and performance structure and everything is probably a good idea; we should

try to institute that for everybody. So then I guess the Bush administration put some effort into doing it, and I think they were after the improvement in performance review and such like that, to try to push it across at least DoD, although some of the other agencies had it, Homeland Security had it; we were kind of following them. The organization, I mean, I would never have wanted to deal with it in an organization that big and diverse, but with DoD, they thought at least we were more of a common set. So the idea was to stop having demos and put something in that covered everybody, and get everybody on the same music. It didn't work out that way but that was the goal.

Q: Did you come in before or after the best practices task force?

A: In where, in working on NSPS?

Q: Yeah, David Chu's best practices task force, which was implemented in 2002?

A: I have a vague memory of that. Was this best practices on civilian stuff?

Q: Yes. Civilian stuff.

A: I mean, I must have been after that, because NSPS would have absorbed that or whatever.

Q: So that wasn't --

A: I think that happened before, but I don't know. I wasn't

paying attention to all of this stuff. (laughter)

Q: What about --

A: I just know they were trying to cut down on the -- oh, best practices, that was the Acquisition Demo, I think. We had some of that too. We actually had one or two of our PEOs at NAVSEA under that, which was kind of goofy. People within the same building, sitting next to each other, on two different personnel systems. That's a little weird. But I think that's where that was. So that was absorbed, or would have been absorbed, and was absorbed, by NSPS, I believe.

Q: What about the GWOT, the wars on terrorism on Afghanistan and Iraq? How did those affect NSPS?

A: Oh, this is interesting. As we got into, and this involves the unions and bargaining and stuff like that, and the ability to say, this is what you need to do, so go do it. Well, most of us civilians -- I was never in a union -- just, well, that's what we've got to do, we'll go do it. And we every now and then would send some of our GS, whatever, off close to the war zone, and they did pretty good, but they were doing technical things. Then as we got into NSPS, the Army was very forceful in that they needed to have these changes in bargaining criteria and the bargaining rules, because -- and they used an anecdote from the first Gulf War; I think it was the Corpus Christi Army

Depot -- they needed helicopter mechanics and techs over in the war zone to help repair some of the damage and just wear and tear on the helos going on over there. And they could not get the civilian union workers at Corpus Christi to go over either to Kuwait or even to some place in Iraq to work on helicopters. And that created a big deal, and they were throwing that example around all over Washington, DC, right in the face of the unions and such like that. And they hadn't bothered, at that point, to check with Navy about similar problems. So when they finally asked, and I was actually in talking to Secretary England at this point, it turns out that both Navy management and Navy unions, these are our shipyards, were telling the same counter-story to anyone who would listen to us, and that had to do with the bombing of the USS *Cole*. Turned out that was such a mess after the first day or two that the way the explosion had bent up the bulkheads and the decks that there were dead people trapped in the wreckage. And how hot is it in Yemen?

Q: It's extremely hot.

A: Yeah. And this -- we got the call, I think it was after the second day, and I was in with our flag officer, the three star at that time. And basically the Pentagon said, look, we've got to get some folks over there with some heavy

gear, and they've got to do this. So we called up Norfolk Naval Shipyard, and we said, guys, this is what you've got to go do. And they said, we had so many volunteers we had to turn people down. So they collected a couple of dozen guys, and these were workers and supervisors and union and non-union, and a whole pile of gear, generally had to go with hydraulics, because they didn't want a lot of [torching and stuff] over there. And we put them all on a C-141 and we flew them over there. And the next day, they were on the ship, and they took care of business. So we had the opposite of the Army's story. So tell me what's the problem with getting your union workers to do what they know is their mission. (laughter) And it just -- it stopped all that, because I had this same chat with Secretary England, and the union who represented those guys had the same chat with Secretary England, told them the same story, and I was in the room when that went on, and we said, yeah. So it kind of like removed a little piece of angst that the Army had. And it's like, well, how are you going to handle this across DoD when you've got one side that's perfectly willing to go help, and that's been a Navy tradition, you know, how many Navy guys, ship-riders, were killed in the Cole? More than one. And it's just different. And Secretary England understood this, because of his -- how we worked

with his union and the workforce and such. So we still push for hard things that we didn't get, but it was a different way of doing it, instead of throwing it in people's face. So it's just -- that's what a big line organization that has real people and a real mission brings to the table when you're trying to do something, and that, if you take away anything from all of this, is you can't ever let the policy or functional people who were in charge of something big like that, you can't actually ask them to deploy a big change; it won't work. Nobody's going to believe them; nobody's going to trust them. You've got to get the people who actually are -- whose workforce, the folks whose day to day jobs matter. You've got to get them involved. And that's the way NSPS worked, at least from my point of view and from Mary Lacey's point of view.

Q: What were some of the union's other objections?

A: Oh, they don't like change. So they didn't like any of the bargaining changes. A lot of it had to do with the bargaining change that was going to be the way management said it was in the period. And they would sort of fight over every small little thing. I mean, that's all they had to fight over. What else have they got? They can't really argue about their labor rates, and they can't argue about much of anything else; they've got seniority. With our



shipyards, we lost huge amounts of union workers as we shut down the shipyards and reduced the workload.

Q: For Secretary Rumsfeld, one of his issues was the difficulty of transferring people within the current civil service procedures? A: Yeah, I don't --

Q: And he was saying that there were 300,000 civilian positions that were being filled by DoD uniformed personnel?

A: Oh, I don't know about that.

Q: Because of this problem of transferring civilians?

A: That could be. I don't know anything. I can't say there was anything like that in my part of the Navy, and I don't know that I ever found it in that part of the Navy. So it's something in the way maybe the Army or the Air Force ran their operation; I don't know. The transport ability of civilian workers was not that great. However, if you ever walked into a Naval shipyard and looked around, you would always find people who were on loan or detail to help a yard with special techniques from another shipyard across the country. People from Norfolk Naval Shipyard who had experience with refueling a certain reactor type on a submarine could be found at Puget Naval Shipyard, doing and helping them learn how to do it. And they would spend months there. So our industrial workers understood the

nature of what was going to happen to you.

Q: Can you prioritize, in order of significance, the reasons for moving to the new personnel system?

A: I would say the rejuvenation of the performance-management system, the reduction in the just horrible paperwork glob of the steps in grade and everything you had, with your GS-13, step one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. That sort of malarkey that would be just completely fixed with the pay-banding, where you sort of stay in the band, but can proceed through salary increases without going through steps. And then I think the -- let me think here -- I mean, I think one of the big goals was the changes in the bargaining structure with the unions; it just didn't work out. I think those were the three goals.

Q: What changes in labor relations and employee appeals processes did DoD leaders see as necessary for a better personnel system?

A: I'm going to draw a blank on that one. I didn't spend a lot of time on that, especially when you know you're not going to be involved in it, but I know they were definitely trying to streamline, because you can spend a long time in those procedures now with the old personnel system. This is one of the reasons why I didn't particularly want that job permanently; I would have had to learn all of that.

Q: That stuff.

A: And I didn't want to. (laughter) Not so late in my career.

Q: Were you involved in developing the NSPS concepts and legislative proposals?

A: No. Not at all.

Q: We talked about best practices. How influential, on the developing of NSPS, were personnel-related provisions in the Homeland Security Act of November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2002?

A: I don't know. I think there were a lot of parallels there, and I know we were trying to follow DHS through the breach. But I don't -- I just don't know.

Q: What about OPM?

A: My model for what I was doing at NSPS was some of the things that had happened in the demos that we had, that were about the people and the pay and the performance review and the structure and the behavior management and such like that. That's what I was paying attention to.

Q: What about OPM? What role did OPM play?

A: You've got to get through them, because they were supposedly setting the whole policy. You couldn't get too far away from them. And you had to kiss the ring. There were a couple of guys there, I think Ron Sanders was one, that were... You know, you wanted to make sure you got him involved and paid attention to what he was doing, because

he could derail you if necessary, and he had some history with this crowd in DoD and me.

Q: You talked about employees and labor unions. What about the White House and Congress?

A: I, luckily, never had to deal with them. I never spent the time in the position where I would have had to deal with those folks, and I didn't want to create a relationship and then turn it over to somebody else. I just stayed away from that. I observed, I watched, I listened. But for the short time I was actually in charge, I didn't want -- I just did not want to put my fingerprint on anything when I knew somebody else was coming behind me, even when I didn't know who it was. It didn't seem fair of me to do that, so I just avoided it. I set things up but I didn't pull the triggers. Best kind of job to have.

Q: What about the scope of discretion that was accorded to the SECDEF by proposal legislation? I guess that was a major concern of the unions.

A: Yeah. They didn't - they (unions) liked the National Labor Relations Board, and they liked somebody outside of the lines of the DoD, because they didn't particularly want to set up the new DoD based labor board. They didn't trust it. And that's a standard thing. I don't even remember what happened with that. But that was the big deal. They wanted

what they would view as an independent outsider to arbitrate things, not somebody who's appointed by the big guy at the top. And that was a serious issue.

Q: You never had to testify in front of Congress.

A: No.

Q: OK. Was DoD able to implement immediately any authorized NSPS innovations?

A: I don't know. I don't think so. They could have, but I just don't think so. There may have been something buried in the legislation that went into personnel policy, but I don't know. And that was one of the deals that we set up, was the program office, to create something, do it in stages, so you learned a little before you involved the entire population. So we waited until we knew we had what would work, and you had to have the structure and the policy in place, and then you could deploy them, and then do it in stages that set up a few thousand at a time.

Q: Did you get the sense that Secretary Chu, Mr. Able and Secretary England were satisfied with the legislation?

A: Yeah, I think so. I don't think they were equally satisfied with how it turned out, would be my guess. But the three of them, and I sat in meetings with Mr. Able and Secretary England. We also involved some of the other senior appointed leadership in the Army and the Air Force and

such. It's like they didn't really like what had happened to them, where the thing had fallen apart as they started to deploy it. But they seemed willing to listen to us. But I would always say that Secretary England was more on the side of doing it right and doing it the way it turned out than anybody else. They may have said things behind closed doors, but in all of the small meetings that we had, it was all pretty respectful. I mean, they wouldn't tolerate bullshit; you had to know what you were doing and such like that. But I was actually surprised at that, because most of those were the political appointees. I mean, I never recalled having a session where they kicked out all the careerists and just had the politicals talking together. If they had them, they had them, but they didn't disrupt us by doing it. And I've heard of other cases in other areas where that happened all the time.

Q: You talked a bit about the NSPS office; you mentioned it was very small. Can you touch a little bit more on how it was organized and led, and the scope of its responsibility?

A: Well, in the end, I don't know what Mary did; I can't remember at all. But we were established around some small group of real knowledgeable personnelists who were working on regulations and policy and such. Sort of a deployment team was working on what I would call the hearts and minds

of public affairs, the training, how do we get to the commands and understand what they need to do? And that's kind of it.

Q: What about technologists?

A: Yeah, we had them, but they weren't very big at the time I was there, but they had to tie back in with the central DoD civilian personnel management folks who ran the big computer systems.

Q: Whose idea was it to have this whole system on essentially a big database?

A: Well, the civilian personnel stuff was all structured for GS ratings and such like that. It had to be changed to handle pay-bands.

Q: Is the database that was created -- was it created not just for personnel needs, but for other needs--to rapidly identify people with certain skill sets?

A: Yeah, it was the -- I can't remember, NCPDS or DCPDS, I don't remember what it was called, Defense Civilian Personnel System, something like that. And the services use it a little differently, but the idea was, it was a way to access all your civilian personnel, including their skill. It was our permanent record kept centrally.

Q: Has it been queried, used, in this regard?

A: I have no idea. I knew they had to make changes to it, and

that was part of the connection that the NSPS program office had to make back into the DoD civilian personnel people. And I think Mary Lacy went on and developed as good a relationship as she could with those people. And that was part of the timeline that had to get ready, or you couldn't put the people in the pay-bands. And of course, we, because we'd operated our Warfare Centers and Lab Demo, had already dealt with that on the edge, because every one of these demonstration projects had to connect people back to the personnel data system. We didn't have a separate system.

Q: One of the complaints that I hear people talking about with the system is, for example, to do your interim, your mid-year performance appraisal, you only have so many words, characters, do describe yourself, and people say it's very limiting, in terms of their self-appraisals and whatnot.

A: Yeah. This is the kind of system they put in place?

Q: Correct.

A: I have no clue what they put in place.

Q: What were the plans for the --

A: And I do think the other demos used separate software for that. So this is probably the outcome of trying to make it big in central.

Q: What were the plans for designing NSPS, in terms of human resources, labor management relations, and the employee



appeals system?

A: Those were the three areas of function with any human resources system that needed to be addressed, and generally they had their own separate experts for each of them. So the personnel system would give you your pay-band things, the appeals, the grievance system, and then the labor relations covered the bargaining unit structure. And they were generally the three areas, and you needed to do that and build their policy and their regulations, and then their operating procedures, in a fashion that you had them all ready to go when you put your organization into NSPS. Generally you had to have the personnel and the appeals system, and I think the union thing just got, I don't know, the impression I got was it got derailed.

Q: And the appeals system is almost unique to government; it doesn't really exist in the private sector.

A: Yeah. It's not bad, but it's overused. I mean, when you put it in place, you end up with your own personnel lawyers and stuff like that, helping you handle things.

Q: How is NSPS different in the appeals process than the old system?

A: I couldn't pass that test anymore. I don't know. I just don't know. That's not something I remember.

Q: Were you present at the meeting with union -- yeah, I think

it was February 26<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, 2004, at the Hyatt.

A. Mary Lacey did it. I did not want my fingerprint on something that was going to have to be dealt with by another person; it's just not fair. So I helped set up those meetings with the best consultation with our labor people as we could. And I met with the leaders of the union, and Secretary England and Mary Lacey and I were in the same room; that's how they all found out it was going to be Mary that was going to be the PEO. And quite frankly, they weren't pleased at that.

Q: They were not pleased.

A: Well, a couple of the union guys knew her. John Gage, what's his name, Gage knew her; she'd gone toe to toe with him. And quite frankly, they prefer people who they know, and even if they're tough, they at least know them. I was a complete unknown to these guys, which is not a good thing to have when you're going to deal with changing their lives. So that was kind of a session which I was disappearing into the background and Mary was rising.

Q: What about the DoD employees, Army, Navy, Air Force? How did they like the design? We talk a lot about the unions, but not everyone --

A: Yeah, you're talking about the professional workforce.

Q: People like myself, who are not members of unions.

A: Don't know. I don't know, and I understood that that was a whole area that I just -- I didn't dare speak for, because I understood, to a degree, large commands, industrial and technical command. But in terms of the DoD agencies and such, I just didn't know. I knew some of them were on the acquisition demo type stuff, so that the part about pay-banding and such shouldn't be too fearful to people. Employees generally like the idea that they were going to have to deal with -- the supervisor isn't going to deal with them more differently on performance review. A lot of folks, and I would have to say probably the older ones, just liked the ingrained steps and things like that; they were sure they kind of liked the invisible part of it. But the younger group did not.

Q: One of the interesting things that I've seen within NSPS is, it's -- you go from working directly for your branch chief, who's sort of a little god, to, in a way, working for both your branch head and the pay pool.

A: Yes.

Q: All of the sudden, the pay pool has enormous say over you and your future, and that has both positives and negatives. Can you address that aspect of it?

A: No, I never got that far. I backed out of it before we got into that. I had some experience with pay pools in our own

command, but it was so small that I couldn't balance that.  
So I just am not qualified to comment on that.

Q: Were you there when Secretary Rumsfeld called for a strategic pause in 2004?

A: Yes. I think that's what began -- that's what set up the whole PEO working group. I guess that the -- they had the guts to say, wait a minute, let's think about this.

Q: And we've covered that.

A: So I guess that was 2004.

Q: Yeah. March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

A: Yeah, because I was out of there by summer of 2004, and then that gives me -- and that's about that timeframe.

Q: Did we talk about the strategic assessment of March 2004?

A: That's where I got started with them.

Q: That's where you got started. OK.

A: I was on the team -- there were four teams, and I led the team that had to do with what should be the structure of the organization, that rolls it out.

Q: OK. We've covered that. Good.

A: So I've got my timeline back in order. Or you did.

Q: Yeah, I did.

A: Thank you.

Q: OK. Well, the redesign, once you turned it over to Mary Lacey, you weren't really involved in the redesign.

A: I just became a consumer command, I think we put ourselves in phase one, stage one, whatever. We would help her be successful at that point.

Q: You really weren't there for the implementation?

A: No, actually, I bailed out of my own command before we implemented it.

Q: So you can't comment on that. Lawsuits occurred after you left. Evaluations, were you involved in that? What are the statutory requirements for evaluating NSPS?

A: I know there was supposed to be like a review after a few years. And that some of our best-laid plans, even the gang I think at NAVSEA that was in the Lab Demo, managed to opt out of NSPS until after the first review period.

Q: OK.

A: That's classic political one-upsmanship. The labs have their own constituency, what I would call large, well-paid, rural workforce.

Q: Yeah, they still do.

A: Yeah.

Q: Absolutely. When will NSPS be mature and comprehensive enough to produce the necessary information for a valid overall assessment?

A: Beats me.

Q: OK. We're almost done. We're in conclusions. To the extent

that it has been implemented, how successful has NSPS proven to be in practice?

A: Well, I don't know, but you know, I follow things on the web and the newspaper and such, and I haven't seen any wild uprisings against it. I could be wrong, but I usually read that as positive.

Q: Do you see any current problems that need to be resolved?

A: Not that I know. I don't know; I wouldn't know.

Q: If you could have done something differently, what would it have been?

A: I thought about that, and I'm thinking, you know, it probably became successful because of the strategic pause and the strategic assessment. In other words, that slowdown that the Secretary and a lot of the folks were big enough to see was needed is probably the biggest cause for success that they have, even if it hadn't come out -- even if the structure had been different than the way it was.

Sometimes, when you put your head down, especially the functional folks, and just, this is what we're going to do, we've got a law, we're in charge, we're telling you what's good, and keep going, you end up with massive, massive failures. They were able to see that early enough and made a correction, and put some people in charge who absolutely wanted it to be successful, and knew what they were doing,

and connected to the workforce. And they did the best they could, so they got what you could get. And I think that March of 2004, where they said, whoa, we are on the wrong track, let's rethink this, was a very good move.

Q: What were the most significant decisions you made concerning NSPS?

A: I think the decision that we pushed for and that got made about let's set up the type of office, the PEO, the program office, that the whole DoD structure recognizes as an entity put in place to deploy something. And let's staff it with people who have connections to large organizations that understand the project management process, and let's let the functional personnel people, the HR people, give them the best guidance they can, and then let the people who run the schedule do what they do best. I think that was the best recommendation. Because all else, you can fold everything into that. Well, what was the appeals process, the bargaining process? You lay all of the functional grenades in on an organization who understands how to deal with adversity and change and stresses and politics and budget and everything. That's what a program office does.

Q: How do you assess the long-term prospects of NSPS?

A: I don't know. I think, as I've said, you've got to change your personnel system every now and then, because too many

people get too used to the old way. So we needed to have something different. We were having every demo project du jour, and this one, kind of knocked that off, but two, it put a chance for the smaller organizations to have a good thing, pay-banding and that type of stuff, good, good thing that a smaller organization would never get under demo, they just don't have the horsepower. Just gave a chance for everybody to have it. And I still think that's a good thing.

Q: That is a good thing. It's been especially good for our organization. It's gotten everybody organized, and figuring out what they're supposed to do, and what they're not supposed to do, and we're a more efficient organization as a result.

A: Well, that part of it may have worked then.

Q: Yeah. And we never would have gotten it, like you said, if it hadn't been across the board. What were the high points and low points for you, as you worked on this new personnel system?

A: I think the low point was where we started, and I realized that the functional folks had in essence started a cat fight with the unions, and no one was going to win. There was just going to be blood all over the place. And that from my own personal experience, the personnelists had



never been really good at unilaterally rolling something else; they needed to partner with people who owned the workforce. So that was a low point. The high point was being asked by the Secretary to just temporarily get this thing started, as opposed to just letting it lie fallow for a few weeks while they picked the leader and lose the initiative, he asked me to keep the initiative going and keep it running until they picked a good person. And that's all he asked me to do. He trusted me. That's a high point.

Q: Is there anything we haven't covered?

A: No, I think that's about it. Because like I say, after the summer of 2004, my memory goes blank, because I just wasn't involved. I didn't intervene. That was Mary's job. Once you don't have the job, you don't have the job. And I think a short-term thing, when I arrived at the little program office, the crew there was pretty disheartened. They didn't know what was going to happen to them, and they thought their careers were at risk and everything. And in the short time I was there, one of my goals was to fix that, to make them feel good about what they were doing. And Mary apparently picked up on that, because she kept a lot of the same people, and they did well.

Q: How did you fix that?

A: I can't explain it. I stood up with them, I stood before

them, I listened to where their problems, I tried to go work on them, I sat with them, and we went head to head with some of the other leaders, I used their ideas. All kinds of stuff that creates a value sense amongst people. And I needed this stuff done, it wasn't like -- I wasn't just playing. I had to stand up in front of a group every week or so and say, what have we done for progress, even though I was temporary.

Q: Did you have to get on the phone with high level officials and cajole them for your staff?

A: Not quite that way. But it did happen. Somebody took some unfair flak, and I called the senior folks and said knock it off, knock that shit off. Everybody knew I was just temporary-- I'd given up something and a big job to come and sit there in this little office for some period of time, so I had some capital with a lot of the people. And I had to use a little bit of it. But nobody got hurt.

Q: Was there anyone -- I think you mentioned Mary had to do quite a bit of that. But were there others who had to sort of act as enforcers to make sure the vast enterprise was going to move forward?

A: Yeah, I'm sure that happened, but I don't think it happened while I was there, and a lot of it would have been -- the way we work would have been through assistant secretaries

or heads of HR, you know, done quietly to get something aligned that you need aligned.

Q: I guess Gordon England was --

A: He was just amazing. If I have to say to say one thing, I mean, I don't know whether he took this on personally, or somebody convinced him that he needed to, but that -- his personality, his experience, and his way with people, is exactly what we needed at that time. And the fact that he was the Secretary of the Navy, nobody could just -- you know, nobody guessed that one, nobody did anything against it that I knew of. Interesting to watch. It doesn't mean his thoughts in the news and goals were any different than the other ones, but his style was very different.

Q: What about Chu?

A: I don't know him that well. He'd been there awhile. He seemed aloof. Focused, clearly understood his business. But aloof.

Q: Did you -- you never had dealings with Rumsfeld, did you?

A: No. Mary did. But not me. I wasn't looking for that.

Q: And at this time, England was the DEPSECDEF?

A: No, he was the Secretary of the Navy when I last pulled out. But he was fairly quickly moved up to the Deputy Secretary. And he kept ownership of it once he left.

Q: Well, I appreciate taking the time out of your schedule to

do this interview. It's going to be transcribed, and then you're going to get an opportunity to review, you can edit the transcript, and then it goes back to the DOD History Office.

A: OK. Well, I'll look it over. I'm not generally one to change things unless there's something very egregious, which I don't think I said. (laughter)

END OF AUDIO FILE