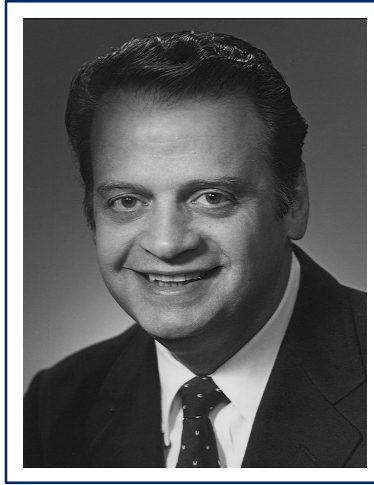


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ORAL HISTORY—

**VINCENT P. BARABBA**



**This is an interview conducted on August 7, 1989, with former Census Bureau director Vincent P. Barabba [May 1973-Sept. 1976 and Jul. 1979-Jan. 1981] . The interviewers are Barbara Milton, Program and Policy Development Office, and David Pemberton, the 1990 census historian.**

**Barabba:** *My name is Vincent P. Barabba. I was born on September 6, 1934, in Chicago, Illinois. My father was an immigrant from Italy; my mother was born here but spent most of her childhood in Italy as well. I went to primary schools in Chicago and in California, where we moved in 1946, ending up in the San Fernando Valley where I attended San Fernando High School. I cannot think of anything of significance that happened in those years. I had a very ordinary primary and secondary school education. As far as college, I went to Woodbury Business College. Maybe my grades and interest in school at the time would not have allowed me into any other place, but I became more interested in learning while attending the business school. Then I went into the military, and it was at that point that I decided to receive an education. I attended what was then San Fernando State College in Northridge, which is now named California State University, Northridge. That is of interest to the Census Bureau because one of the professors at that school—Roy Peel—had been Census director [1950-1953] during the Truman Administration. We met only once, quickly. Little did I know at that time that I would be involved in the Bureau myself. I went to the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) to get my master’s degree in business administration (MBA).*

*There were a couple of events that led to at least an interest in the Census Bureau. I became involved in the political campaigns as part-time work in 1964, in between my MBA and getting into the PH.D. program at UCLA. I was involved in the Republican presidential primary campaign in California between Nelson Rockefeller and Barry Goldwater. I was assigned to an area in southern California to attempt to manage that campaign. It became clear to me that campaigns could be significantly improved if people better understood the*

*geographic areas within these larger areas. That got me interested in small-area data, at that time mostly electoral data. It became pretty clear that there was some power in combining the electoral data with the demographic data. At that point, I formed a company called Communication Associates and got to know census data a lot better. That led to more political campaigns. In 1965 and 1966, I made the judgment that what I was doing on the outside was more exciting than what I was doing at the university and became a P.H.D. dropout.*

**Pemberton:** **What did you do at Communication Associates? What kind of a firm was it?**

**Barabba:** It was a group of fellows who had been in college and were involved in political activity for the Republican Party, and that was just sort of a network for us to work with each other. We did political campaigns, primarily—assessing political trends within congressional and legislative districts in the State of California. We worked with one of the better campaign management firms at the time; we knew that for sure because there were very few of them and this one, Spencer Roberts, was very successful. One of the principals of that firm, Stu Spencer, is still very active in the political campaigns, mostly the Republican presidential campaigns over the last two decades. It is interesting because Stu, who is a very street-smart person, knew there were better ways of doing what he wanted to do. He looked for reasonably bright young people to help him do his job better. This led to the formation of Datamatics in 1966, which was a partnership between Stu Spencer and his partner, Bill Roberts, myself, and Paul Newman, who was a student friend of mine at California State University, Northridge. Paul was a speech major, and was one of the better people I've ever known in organizing ideas and things of that nature.

Our first major activity was the Republican primary campaign of 1966 in California, which was the first election in which Ronald Reagan ever participated, and that led to our involvement in his political career for quite a while. We were involved between 1966 and 1969; that was an interesting period, because we ran a lot of congressional campaigns throughout the country. That was very helpful for me from an educational point of view, because you were able to go into a lot of communities and find out about them. Dealing with a political infrastructure was more like dealing with a business infrastructure because we were primarily, always, on the Republican side, and therefore we always got to meet the power structure of the community from the business point of view.

**Pemberton:** **You say “managed a campaign”; were you actually involved in management or were you still doing demographics?**

**Barabba:** We did the analysis, but the membrane between the actual management and the data analysis was very permeable. We always tried to say, “These are the facts.” In fact,

the successor company was named with that in mind—Decision Making Information. We knew you couldn't separate the two. You really had to understand what the problems of the campaign were if you were going to provide relevant information. That is fundamentally what the theme of this ASA [American Statistical Association] conference is: How do we get practical and how can we be relevant to the society which we, as statisticians, aspire to make better? That allowed us to move all over the country, where I used data from the 1960 census and a couple of academic analytic techniques. One of those was called "social area analysis," developed by Wendell Bell and Essref Shevky, which attempted to synthesize the whole body of 1960 census data into two or three indexes. One was an economic index, one was a family relationship index, and the other was an ethnic index. This tool allowed us to go into a community and tell its power structure a lot more about the community, at the small-area level, than they had ever seen before. They were used to looking at the aggregate of their community. So, at that point, I learned to appreciate the value of census data as a useful tool. Quite dramatically, I mean making my living using it. That went reasonably well, and we developed a reputation for being good at that.

Then in 1968, in the Nixon vs. Humphrey presidential campaign, we were asked by some Republican organizations to act as a purchasing agent for some survey research. At that time, this was the largest package of surveys ever contracted for—something like 20 or 30 House races and 8 or 9 Senate races. We used three companies to conduct that, after a very thorough bidding process and assessment of the companies' quality. One of the companies at that time was called Merrill/Wirthlin; one of the principals was Dick Wirthlin. After that experience, we decided we should become partners, and so that's when we formed Decision Making Information.

**Pemberton: Was Mr. Wirthlin involved in Datamatics?**

**Barabba:** Yes; prior to that exercise, Spencer Roberts dropped out of the relationship and Dick and I were the principals of that firm along with Paul Newman, who came in with the Datamatics group, and a fellow by the name of Vince Breglio, who worked with the Wirthlin people previously. We all came together at the right time because there was a demand for the service.

From 1969 through 1973, I was an active participant in the company prior to coming to the Census Bureau. Dick has done very well since I left. We stay very close; he did work for me wherever I've been, with Kodak and Xerox, and he currently does a lot of work for us at General Motors. We see each other frequently.

Decision Making Information, then, was made up of an interesting blend of different skill sets: Vince Breglio was a social psychologist; we referred to him as our “rat runner.” Paul was a speech major, in essence involved in understanding rhetoric and the development of communication philosophies. Dick had been an economist, and my background was in marketing. We were able to attract very bright young people into our group from a variety of disciplines, none of which had anything to do with political science. We probably had more impact on the electoral process than most other political scientists. In essence, we applied what they had been talking about, and brought an understanding as to the value of the many theories these bright people had developed. My job was to get that work effort applied to the reality of the political campaign.

There also is a value in learning how to do all this stuff in a political campaign. In a political campaign, the dates are very certain; you must deliver things on time, almost like the census. That practice honed us for our later endeavors: You had to learn to be practical in what you agreed to do. You had to learn to deal with the presentation of information in a form that those unskilled in the acquisition and analysis of information would find believable. That was a very helpful experience to all of us and it was also helpful to me, because I knew very little about survey research at that point. I knew about market research studies, but only from what I learned in school, but I knew a lot about the analysis of the census, demographic data, and electoral data. With Dick’s skills in the survey research area and my skills in the analysis of secondary data, we made quite a force. At that time, I did not know it, but it prepared me for the Census Bureau.

It became crystal clear when I was appointed to the Census Advisory Committee of the American Marketing Association in 1971. There, I received a far greater appreciation of the complexity of the Bureau. Like most other people, I always thought about it as related to the decennial census, not the other censuses. That was very helpful to me for several reasons; it gave me a sense of the breadth of activities of the Bureau, but more importantly, it gave me the appreciation of the quality of the people that were there and their commitment to doing something right. So, I think those two years in which I was involved with the advisory committee were very helpful, at least in having a sense of the people that were there. That theme will probably come up as we go through this conversation. Everyone thinks about the Census Bureau’s great resources; there is no question in my mind that it is the quality of the people that really makes the place go.

**Pemberton:** The AMA Committee has been a bit of a fertile recruiting grounds for the Bureau.

**Barabba:** Yes, yes.

**Milton:** Now that has nothing to do with you, has it, Vince?

**Barabba:** Well, actually I have had some influence there, some of which I am more proud of than others. In many ways, we used to joke about it. One of my favorite lines was that I was a “user” before I was a “pusher.” I think you are more likely to get somebody who is more appreciative of the use of Census information coming from a marketing organization than a statistical organization. Someone from the latter is more likely to be interested in the development of statistics.

**Milton:** I imagine that had some influence too, when you took the direction of the methods used in publishing census statistics.

**Barabba:** I’m just trying to think whether the influence of the marketing area—as distinguished from the statistical area—is real. George Hay Brown [Director, 1969-1973] was as much of a marketer as a statistician. Dick Scammon [Director, 1961-1965] was—you wouldn’t call him a big statistician—clearly in the political arena. J.C. Capt [Director, 1941-1949] was a bureaucrat, an administrator of government agencies. Ross Eckler [Director, 1965-1969] was the first real statistician. So, although most people think the Bureau is being run by statisticians, basically it hasn’t been. The reason, of course, is that there are so many good statisticians there that you don’t need a statistician running the place. It is a management function, which I don’t think many people really appreciated until they got into some of the things we will be talking about.

**Pemberton:** Do you know much about the process by which you first were appointed director of the Bureau?

**Barabba:** Yes, but first I will give you a little anecdote. Yesterday, Saturday, at the ASA board meeting, Kathy Wallman [Executive Director of the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS)] gave a report on her work in her organization. She was looking into trying to take advantage of the change in the law [the Paperwork Reduction Act] that allows someone in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to have the chief statistician’s job. That is up for renewal now, so Kathy was walking through how we should beef up the job of the chief statistician. Somebody said, “Well, why don’t we [the ASA] also say something about having a say about who the chief statistician ought to be?” Well, she got this incredible laughter, of course, from the more senior members of the board, and Lyle Calvin, who had been around a while, smiled at me and said, “We haven’t had very good luck at that!” So, I am reasonably familiar with that.

But you may know how it got started. During the first Nixon administration, Lance Tarrance worked in the Bureau's Congressional Relations Office and reported directly to George Hay Brown [the director]. [Vernon Lance Tarrance was "Special Assistant to the Director" from November 1969 to August 1973.] Lance and I had known each other in Republican Party political activities because at one point he was the research director at the Republican National Committee. One of the reasons I got on the AMA Advisory Committee [in 1971] was that Lance put my name on the list as one of the nominees. By 1973, at the beginning of the second Nixon Administration, they were looking for a new director because they had decided that George had served enough time, and my name among others—I don't know who the others were—got put on the list.

Then this very interesting process takes place: First, you say, "How can you possibly afford to take that job?" At this point, Dick and I were the sole proprietors of a growing company; I was fundamentally the seller of the services and Dick managed the internal activities. So, it was kind of a tough decision: If you want to do it, well, you had to think that over. Then, you didn't know if you were being seriously considered either. But we kind of fundamentally made the choice that it was hard to turn that down, particularly at that point in my career. At that time I would be the youngest director in modern history; there was one guy that was a little younger, as I recall. There were a lot of people in the Bureau who had been there a lot longer than I had lived.

**Milton:** **What were you—36 or 37?**

**Barabba:** Thirty-nine, still a child. I remember giving service awards for 40 and 45 years, and just knowing they had been there longer than I had been living. And so you get kind of into this thing and then you really want it. At that point, then, the Administration knows that it has you, and you hold out for a while to see if you can get something better.

**Pemberton:** **This should have been early in the second Nixon administration, in the reelection of 1972. You were appointed in May of 1973, so the feelers must have been coming to you after the second election.**

**Barabba:** I would say it was more like January or February. There had been a bit of rough handling as they attempted to get rid of people. It was pretty brutal, as they were developing their second administration.

**Pemberton:** **I think there was a fellow named Hickel [Walter J. Hickel, Secretary of the Interior, 1969-1971] who was run out in a rather perfunctory fashion.**

**Barabba:** It was a tough time, of course. I was a little twitchy about that, but sufficiently naive to not have thought it through as thoroughly as perhaps I should have. Anyway, there is an interesting anecdote related to this one letter that I kept. After they finally decide that they really are going to go with you, you get this letter. It has 20 questions, and the last one is, “Is there anything in your background or experience that, if it became public, would be an embarrassment to you or to the President of the United States?” My letter happened to be signed by John Dean. I got the letter on the day he was implicated in the Watergate scandal on the front page of the Los Angeles Times. My wife and I were reading the paper and the letter and said, “This could be quite an interesting answer.” So I said “no” to that question and felt very comfortable about doing it.

So, then I was announced as the director, and then entered into a very uncomfortable period. You have some other notes on SESA [Social and Economic Statistics Administration] and things of that nature. As I understand it—and I have my vision of this—in this interim period, there was Joe Wright [Joseph R. Wright, Jr.]....

**Milton:** **He became deputy director for a period of time [August 1971 to January 1972].**

**Barabba:** He had about five jobs....

**Milton:** **And then he became deputy administrator for SESA.**

**Barabba:** He was acting director of the Bureau at one time, too [January-March 1973]. He had about five jobs, all of which ran from the administrator of SESA down to the deputy director of the Bureau.

I would imagine at that time that there had been discussions within the Nixon administration about trying to get hold of sensitive statistical information. Now, I was not involved in those, but it has never been clear to me whether they were saying, “We have to handle this information more sensitively than it’s been handled before,” or “We’ve got to make it look good.” I don’t think it was the latter. I think it was more sensitive about what was collected and how it was distributed, because as pragmatic as those people were, they were not dumb. I think they would have a sense that you couldn’t hide that kind of stuff. So I would think the whole purpose of that was, in essence, to put sort of a “communication” clamp on the whole statistical system to make sure that you didn’t have people running around trying to embarrass the Administration. At that time, there would have been a perception that there was a very liberal influence within the statistical community that would do anything it could to



embarrass the Nixon Administration. And it would release numbers—if not incorrect numbers, then numbers out of context—and would leak them, and things of that nature. That is not without some truth, although I don't think it was done in any mischievous way. However, a lot of people who are very concerned about things are also naive about politics. While I'm sure they thought they had a reason to release the information, the way it was presented, sometimes taken out of context, would be an embarrassment to the President.

**Pemberton:** **Did you know if any of that had taken place at the Census Bureau prior to your arrival?**

**Barabba:** I don't think it ever happened at Census. The Bureau was dealing with poverty statistics and the definition of poverty. Sure, these are not statistical issues, they are political issues. Statisticians felt that they could do a good job of participating in deciding what the poverty level is, but there are big political consequences. I think the most obvious direct involvement with the Administration happened more at BLS [the Bureau of Labor Statistics], where I think the commissioner at that time held a press conference. He released some information without the Administration being aware of it and he was severely reprimanded. I always felt that probably was a marginal fault, but the statistical profession was up in arms. Nixon had this kind of environment of ill will between the professional community and the Administration. About that time, the Watergate thing was breaking out, and (as I recall) I was one of the handful of the last Nixon appointees. When the President is seen as vulnerable, then you are in a sense part of that vulnerability.

I served as acting director [May to August 1973] but not confirmed. It was a very tough time because you had to be very careful in what you did as acting director.


**Milton:** **You had a limited amount of authority, I believe, in running your job, and you were doing that while you were trying to be confirmed.**

**Pemberton:** **That brings up the issue of the ASA and your confirmation process, which I believe you referred to as something of a rough time.**

**Barabba:** Well, it was. In retrospect it was kind of interesting, but at the time it was a little bit rough, more on a personal basis for my family than it was rough in the sense of being abusive. It was kind of hard to explain to your wife why this is going on and she thought you were a pretty nice guy. Every once in a while there would be a little article, and the kids were young enough that they were not into that. In fact, they kind of chuckle when they read that now, because they can appreciate it a lot better. Personally, at some point you have to ask yourself, Can I be confirmed? From what we are seeing now, this is a more common practice—people not getting confirmed. At that time, to have been nominated and not confirmed as director of

the Census Bureau, would be kind of an interesting blot on your career. It can be a tough thing to explain.

**Milton:** **Wasn't there an editorial [about the confirmation] in the Washington Post?**

**Barabba:** The first social event that I went to, as I recall, was a retirement party for Joe Waksberg [Joseph Waksberg, Associate Director for Statistical Standards and Methodology, June 1972-June 1973], Tom Jabine [Thomas B. Jabine, chief of the Statistical Research Division, January 1969-June 1973], and Ben Tepping [Benjamin J. Tepping, principal researcher in that division], three incredibly talented and important people in the Census Bureau. My guess is that many would have preferred that the Administration brought the world's best statisticians into the Bureau because then people like Joe, Tom, and Ben would not have left. But the facts are that they would have retired anyway. They had every reason to retire because the Government wasn't paying them sufficient money. They all had very lucrative opportunities elsewhere. But that event just added fire to the predisposition of many that good statisticians leave when you bring in these political type people. 

Anyway, I had to go to this party at the Washington Navy Yard and they asked me to say a few words. I think I said, "You have to give me a chance to work out some of these problems and maybe we wouldn't have too many more parties like this." Most of the people in the room appreciated that I was sensitive to the problem.

The ASA, and not just the ASA by the way, the American Psychological Society, the American Economic Association, and three or four other professional organizations—all with a lot of misinformation and paranoia about Richard Nixon—all decided that they should oppose this nomination. At the time, Clifford Hildreth was the president of the American Statistical Association.

I remember the confirmation hearing very well. Prior to the hearing, some of my political experience paid off because one of the campaigns we worked in was for [Republican] Senator Cliff Hansen of Wyoming. The chairman of the Census oversight committee [Post Office and Civil Service] was Senator Gale McGee, the Democrat from Wyoming, really nice. I had asked Hansen, whom I knew reasonably well, to introduce me to Senator McGee, and so we went up to visit him. We had some Wyoming talk, because obviously I knew a little about the State. I was starting to explain to him the complexity of the confirmation, and I will never forget McGee's comment. He said, "Mr. Barabba, you have to understand that your relationship with me peaked when you walked in the door

with Senator Hansen. If Senator Hansen says you're a good man, then you are a good man. Nothing else you can tell me is going to make it any better." Being a little bit naive to the political process, I decided to pursue the subject, about how complex this was. He said, "You are a little bit lower than when you walked in the door. But you are going to learn a very important lesson here," he says. "You must remember that a United States Senator must have the last word. Whenever you appear at the hearing, please be benevolently brief." And that was probably the best advice I have ever received from anyone in Government.

I can't think of the aides at the time, but it was in the Post Office and Civil Service Committee, and they really went to work for me. So, Senator Hansen, without anybody's knowledge, probably did more to ease the process than anyone.

The other thing that was occurring was that I had grown up politically in California. If you do your politics well, you get to meet the other side—the other professional side—and I had some very good friends who ran Democratic political campaigns. At the time, some had worked for Senator Humphrey [Hubert Humphrey, Presidential candidate] and others, one of whom, Chuck Manatt, became the State chairman of the Democratic Party in California. So they went to work on the opposition senatorial side, and although they didn't convince many to come over, they neutralized a lot of them, including Senator Humphrey. His speech was a classic: There was nothing wrong with Mr. Barabba, he is a good man, it's this environment, and that got debated for about an hour. That really broke me up. If you read that whole history, there is very little about me. It was an attack on the climate and on the President.

Senator Proxmire [William Proxmire, D.-Wis.] was the attack person. He was very good at that; he was really ready for going for it all. A very interesting thing happened at the confirmation hearing. When he showed up, he wanted to give his talk before I gave my opening statement because he had to go to some other hearing. Senator McGee, who was chairing the hearing, said, "Senator, I really appreciate how important it is where you have to go but it would be inappropriate for you [to speak now]. I know you are going to oppose Mr. Barabba, but how can you know what you are going to oppose if you don't hear from Mr. Barabba first?"

Since I had time to prepare my opening statement, I was responsive to all the criticisms in the newspapers, editorials and all this other stuff, so I gave what I

thought was a pretty good opening statement. As I was giving it, Senator Proxmire was scratching out things, because I had pretty much anticipated all of the claims he would make. Just as I finished, Senator Hansen walked in. Senator McGee found time to acknowledge Senator Hansen and then Senator Proxmire gave his talk. One of my favorite pictures is of Senator Proxmire, with myself sitting at the witness table as he is examining me. So we got through that and after that it was relatively straightforward in the committee. There were two or three votes against the confirmation. The chairman supported it, which always makes it a lot easier. I think it was two or three weeks after the hearing that they finally got it up on the Senate floor, and debated on it for an hour. I think there were about 15 senators who voted against it, something like that, including what you might identify as the most liberal of the Senators—[Edward] Kennedy, [Hubert] Humphrey, and a few others. That was about it; in retrospect, it was kind of fun.

Just another little anecdote: When I walked into the confirmation hearing room, at the back of the room was this friend of mine, John Hambor, whom I had not seen since I finished undergraduate school in the 1960's. Well, I had not seen him for about 5 or 6 years. I said, Why was Johnny here? One statistics course I took and got a C in; if it hadn't been for him, I probably would have gotten a D. Somehow those dirty guys found that out and got John to come up and testify that I really wasn't a very good statistician. Why is he doing that? I thought we were friends! So I was really upset, you know, and then you get up and you forget about all that stuff and go through this whole thing. After it was over, it was clear that it was a fairly successful hearing. I was walking out and Johnny came up to me. I got mad at him again; I said, "What the hell are you doing here?" He said, "Why, I work at the Social Security Administration and I saw your name and I thought I'd come to say hello, but if you are going to be a horse's ass...." So I explained to him what I thought. He said, "I thought about that. I couldn't believe you were even nominated, much less that you were in front of this group! You didn't know anything about statistics."

Anyway, it was kind of an interesting time. The people weren't all wrong, because SESA was in place. Ed Failor [the SESA administrator] clearly was a political operative, and there was real concern about what the role of the administrator was, relative to the director of the Bureau. Because, in fact, they couldn't get the administrator confirmed, they didn't make that a Presidential

appointment. So here you have the director of the Census Bureau, a Senate-confirmed position with an incredible history associated with it, reporting to an administrator who had a Schedule C appointment. Of course, that didn't make any sense, so there was real concern about what that meant, and to that extent the professional community was correct. It took us, I don't know how long, to solve that problem. [SESA was abolished in July 1975.]

**Pemberton:** **Were you instrumental, or did you have a role in—what shall we say—freeing the Census Bureau from the existence of SESA?**

**Barabba:** For history, I would say that I had a role in demonstrating that you didn't need SESA and its concept unless you were going to bring all of the statistical agencies under SESA. However, the notion of taking the administrative heart of the Census Bureau, pulling it out and putting it in a super agency, and then have that sit over the Bureau of Economic Analysis (which was smaller than most departments in the Census Bureau) and the Census Bureau didn't make a lot of sense. I think there was this vision of all statistics, like BLS [Bureau of Labor Statistics], Agriculture, etc., falling under this administration.

**Milton:** **Well, but you yourself believed in centralized statistics.**

**Barabba:** No; I believed in a centralized coordination of statistics, but you can't expect the head of the statistical agency not to control its own budget, administrative, and personnel processes; that's crazy. When it became clear that would not occur, then it was easier—it was never easy—to change that. Now the big help in that was the appointment of Sid Jones, the [Commerce] Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs. Sid saw through that in a minute and a half and was a strong voice for the change down at the department. Then, the Ford Administration came in, with Rogers Morton [Secretary, 1975-1976] and Elliot Richardson [Secretary, 1976-1977], who were political savvy people. Then it just took a little bit of advice and counsel on my part to contribute to the realization that this was an apparent misallocation of resources, and SESA was no more. There were little things where SESA posed petty annoyances, such as a conference room for advisory committees so that the people from the Bureau could come in and watch the advisory committees. To get the room built, we had to go through this big hassle to get authorization. When we had it finished, we all walked into it one day and there was a big sign that said "SESA Conference Room." That kind of just "sat," a little bit of grit in the teeth. I remember Jim Turbitt [James W. Turbitt, Associate Director for Administrative Services], the day that SESA was eliminated, ripped the sign off the door and placed it over my private bathroom door. I thought that was nicely handled.

**Pemberton:** **It still took a little bit of time before SESA was eliminated.**

**Barabba:** There was some roughness in there as well. I would say about 6 months before SESA was eliminated, I was at the Commerce Department and got a phone call from a reporter for the Federal Times. This was right after the Nixon expose in the Washington Post, and investigative reporting was the “in” thing. He said, “I’m an investigative reporter, and I have this document which could be very damaging to your career. Do you want to discuss it?” I said, “I’m at the Department right now; why don’t you come out to the Bureau and we will talk about it?” I didn’t want to hide anything so I invited Bob Hagan, who was then the deputy director, to join us. Well, what this fellow had was a alleged copy of a White House document written for Don Rumsfeld, whose congressional campaign was one of the first I worked on. Now, Don was chief of staff at the White House. This was a memorandum purportedly written to him which listed 15 or 17 violations of law that I had done—all the way from having somebody finish a basement room in my house in Maryland to forcing the University of Southern California to have me teach a course out there, and having tools made for me, and a bunch of other stuff. When you looked at it, there were typos and it wasn’t in White House format. This was clearly an inside-the-Bureau job, and so I said, “Why don’t you give us a few days and we’ll give you the answer to each of these allegations?”

In a traditional way, the Bureau circled the wagons around the director and everybody really went to work, so when he arrived on Monday morning, I thought we had reasonable documentation on all of these things that showed that they were false. He took them and came back and called up and said, “Well, it’s clear some of them are weak, but there is enough of them to warrant my suspicions, so I’m going to publish this article.” This occurred only in the Federal Times, with a headline something like “Nixon Pollster Under Investigation.” Other newspapers were also sent the same documents; they rejected them just on their face validity.

So we explained the whole thing to Pat Schroeder [Patricia Schroeder, D.-Colo.], who then chaired the Bureau’s oversight subcommittee in the House, and she said, “Well, I appreciate all that, but I will have to do this investigation through the GAO [General Accounting Office].” For the wrong reason, she did me a giant favor, which I did not appreciate until later.

When the investigation was completed, I’d done two things wrong: I shouldn’t have gone on a trip to southern California, because the University of Southern California paid for part of my wife’s expenses there. Then it was this business of going to the Soviet Union, in that Sperry-Rand [the Bureau’s computers were UNIVAC] contributed to it. Anyway, the General Counsel at the time told me,

“Come over to my office and I’ll slap your hand, and then we will be all over with this.” At that point he said, “I’m also going to let you look at a couple of documents.” Some of this was the investigation that was done by SESA in their review of these allegations, and they drew an entirely different conclusion. That kind of upset the Secretary, because it was clear then that there was really some malice in their activity. I think that contributed to the demise of SESA more than anything else. When you read their evaluation, it was almost as biased as the original set of allegations.

**Pemberton:** **May I take it, then, that you think the leak originated at SESA?**

**Barabba:** I think it originated at the Census Bureau, but it was somewhat supported at SESA. The interesting part, however, was that the GAO investigator said at the time, “You are going to find it very uncomfortable. We are going to talk to all of your friends, and they are going to wonder why we are talking to them. But someday you are going to appreciate the thoroughness of the job that we are going to do. Assuming that all these claims are false, you will be pleased.” Some four years later, I came up for confirmation again, and there is this question again, “Is there anything you have ever done, which if it became public would be an embarrassment either to the President or to you ?” So I said, “The only thing I’ve done was reviewed by the GAO report.” I’ve always tried to find that person, he was very prophetic; at the time, I thought it was a waste of time. I’ve kept that, because every once in a while it surfaces, and somebody will find an old headline or whatever it is, read the GAO report and it is all over with.

**Pemberton:** **Perhaps we could move on to the activities of the Bureau during your tenure. We got you into the Bureau now, and we dealt a little bit with some of getting there, and some of the difficulties with dealing with one or two of the outside agencies. What did you find at the Bureau when you got there? What was the condition of the agency, and what priorities did you establish for it?**

**Barabba:** The morale was—I wouldn’t say “bad”—but it wasn’t “good.” The Bureau had been beat up during the 1970 census. Little did they know what really getting beat up was, but at the time they were very resentful of the notion that they willingly undercounted people. Staff members like David Kaplan [the Decennial Census Coordinator] and others, who were fairly—in a positive sense—liberal persons, were just incensed with the notion that people thought they were not doing as professional job as could be done. At one meeting with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), when Ben Hooks [Benjamin Hooks, NAACP executive director, 1977-1992] was there, they came in and they made some outlandish claims. It was my first or second week at the Bureau, and David said,

“How dare you make that kind of charge! You don’t even know anything about me, what my beliefs are, and I’m member of your organization....” This went on and on... “We are professional people; we want to do the best job possible; you’ve got to understand just how complex the job is.” That gave you a sense of the passion that existed for the people about their job. I would say that the staff were nervous. They had lost a lot of good people. They had just released the results of the under-coverage evaluation, as they had in the past. I think they were a little bit resentful of the fact that they had gone through the whole process of revealing the weaknesses of the data for the purposes of understanding how to do it better, and then had people take this incredible evaluation they had done and throw it in their faces, saying, “See what a bad job you have done!” Reasonable people would have said capturing 97.5 percent of the population in a free society like ours is a significant feat.

So there was this tension: Maybe we shouldn’t do this kind of stuff if it comes back to haunt us—this incredible built-in belief system that you have to do it because it is the professional thing to do. So that was one of the big tensions in the Bureau, between the professional statistical community, which saw this as the way to improve things, and the “applied” side of the house that was saying, “Ahhh, we get beat up every time we do this stuff. Why don’t they go look at the other agencies? Here we are, probably doing the best job possible; the other places are disaster areas and nobody goes and looks at them!” It was true. We tried to turn that around a little bit, but it was an acceptable level of tension.

The issue that I felt quite strongly about was the fact that we really never had demonstrated the same level of effort to make our information as usable as we were in making it correct. If you had to pick the one thing that I contributed to, it would have been at least this user focus. While I was there, there was an interesting discussion that took place with the executive staff about how to do this. There was a strong position held that we should create an associate director position for data use. I guess I kind of leaned in that direction; frankly, it was an easy way to demonstrate my commitment. But there was a series of voices that were wiser than that, and I came to understand relatively quickly that you can’t have a staff position without having the line organization still feel accountable for data use. In fact, they can point to that staff position and say, “That is your job.” The test we had—this is one of many things I learned from Shirley Kallek [Associate Director for Economic Fields]—was a discussion we had with her division chiefs about this. These are people who, if anybody had ever lined them up and said, “Give me your background and characteristics, and your interests,” and asked,



“What is the likelihood that they’d ever have a focus on use of their data?” you would have said the likelihood would be zero. We had this session, and I will never forget it, because it was almost at that session that I made the decision not to have an associate director because they were kind of liking that idea. They said, “A census use staff is where a user can go to blame rather than pick on me.” At that point, we had a relatively candid conversation, and I said, “You are going to be held accountable for the use of your data, and in a certain period of time I would like to see how you are going to do that. And you can be as creative as you would like to be.”

**Pemberton:** Was that also Shirley Kallek’s position?

**Barabba:** I would say that was Shirley’s position as well, and I’m not sure for the right reasons, because Shirley didn’t like anybody messing in her area. And if her area was going to do something, she wanted control, so I would say she supported me for the wrong reason, but she strongly supported it. You didn’t always have to be right, but if you were the director, that’s the way it got done with Shirley. As long as she had her shot at you, she explained to you why you were wrong, and if you saw fit not to accept her advice, that was all you had to do, because you were still the director. You would never have known that she had ever disagreed with the director, outside of that room. Personally, however, she would find a way to remind you.

Some people came back with a list of suggestions. One was to have sandwich boards at ASA meetings: we’d all walk around with these sandwich boards, listing the things that we did. I think that got a chuckle—“Well, fine, then we will do that. Which one of you is going to sign up?” We were just trying to make a point. Anyway, they really came up with some excellent ideas about how to do this, and at the core of it was the economic census users’ conferences. They went out and they put on a show that was incredible. They would go in to a community and I think they still do.

**Milton:** They do; I think they just started the latest series about a month ago.

**Barabba:** The thing that I always enjoyed most about those was when they came back, they would say, “Do you realize that people don’t understand what it is we do?” They would be very upset that people didn’t understand all the things they had done. I would say, “Are they dumb or are we dumb? Why don’t they understand? Have you ever done anything to help them?” I think as they got more of this direct feedback—they went around all over the country—it got to the point where we teased them. I’d say, “I’m not sure this is such a good idea! I never find you in the Bureau anymore; you are out there traveling around, and the travel budget is getting out of line!”

That fundamentally turned around the economic area, and it was interesting to see how pervasive it was. One time there was a big concern in Shirley's mind that their younger statisticians really didn't see value in staying with the Bureau, and she was concerned that we would lose a lot of them. Then they started taking the younger statisticians to these conferences and to the associations that might benefit from census information. Then she brought in the executive director of the American Shoe Association. The young statistician who was compiling all this data wondered what it meant to get this data right about shoes, and this guy would point out the impact of imports, and why the data had to be reliable because it was going to be a part of legislation, and things of that nature. They all got a sense of the importance of their activities; that was very helpful.

**Pemberton:** **On the data use side, it seems that you turned around the economic side first.**

**Barabba:** Oh yes, but the demographic side always had a community, and to me there was only one census. Until I got there, I had little sense of it relative to the advisory committee, but it isn't until you get in and sit in on those meetings that you realize the importance of the economic side of the Bureau. It seemed that you could turn it around faster, and make more dramatic improvement in the economic side. I had to introduce the Data Users Services group, at that time under Mike Garland [Michael G. Garland, chief of the Data Access and Use Laboratory, later chief of the Data User Services Division (DUSD)] to the economic staff. They didn't really know each other very well, and after a year or so of traveling, they got to know each other very well. I think the data use group found out that there was a whole new resource that they could tie into that was as much value to society as the demographic side.

**Pemberton:** **They are still exploring that discovery. Within the last 2-1/2 years, DUSD has had what is called the business and industry data center (BIDC) initiative, where they take the State data centers and say, "You people have had demographic data for the last 10 or 20 years. Look at all this economic data you don't have and haven't been using. Maybe we can get you this too and maybe help you figure out ways to get the economic and demographic data together. You can do a better job, and this will help us too." They are still doing that.**

**Barabba:** There was some interesting thought about that. I remember we ended up giving two kinds of talks. One talk was referred to as "The Other Nine Years." That was the more general thing about what the economic side of the house was, and the other things we did from the demographic point of view. The other thing was the "Take Your Accountant to Lunch" speech, because as much heat as the Bureau used to get about the lack of timeliness in the economic data, the root cause was that the

responses never came in on time. There also was a high degree of nonresponse in a lot of the studies, which forced the Bureau to go back and call people up to extract this information, make all kinds of adjustment procedures, and things of that nature. When you got into it, you would find out that the people filling the forms out saw it as a cost, and the people who wanted the data were a different group of people. To them, it was an asset, but they never explained the value of the information to the people who had a different budget as to filling out the form. So we then started trying to help large companies internally to understand that what was a debit in one column was a credit in another. That really got the staff more involved, particularly with the large corporations, because they were so critical to the quality of this data.

Then the computer started helping when we started custom-making the form for the respondents. When you got into large companies, for example like General Motors or others, you just couldn't make a printed form. There would be so many skip patterns in it that you would have a headache. So then at the front end of the questionnaire, there was a report of the industry that they were part of as well as the answers they gave the last time. So now the accountant gets all that and can do a little comparison about how well the firm does against how the industry does. Now he could have done that by buying a census book, but he might not likely find it. Shirley [Kallek] really did some very innovative things to ease the way the form was filled out, and to demonstrate the value of the information that they were providing.

**Pemberton:** **So you say one of the key things that your first session at the Census Bureau did was essentially to smooth relations and extend relations between the Census Bureau and the large number of particularly significant companies that were providing much of the data—the raw materials which are turned into products that certain components of these companies can use.**

**Barabba:** In the economic censuses, the response rate is much more critical than it is in the demographic ones. In the demographic ones, we understand those response rates very well and know how to deal with that level of nonresponse; we use the “A word,” adjustment, and then sometimes the “I word,” imputation. If you had a certain kind of nonresponse, you knew how to deal with it. But because of the variable nature of the size of respondent and the effect it had on the total, the response rate was so important in the economic censuses, so you spent a disproportionate amount of time on demonstrating the value. Shirley used to always remind me that even if you make it a law that you have to fill it out, that doesn't help her if they take their time and we spend a lot of time in court. The data will not get in the economic censuses, because people want the results; they don't want to wait till everybody de-

cides they are going to fill it out, so you have to really demonstrate the value to the respondent.

**Pemberton:** **Just what I was going to ask you. Did you have a feeling on the mandatory vs. voluntary surveys, on either the economic or the demographic side? Did you have a —position—did you feel it had to be on a one-on-one basis, or did you have a general position—one way or the other?**

**Barabba:** I think we felt that in the economic surveys, that it was important but not essential, because we felt we could really could make a case there. We always went for mandatory if we could do it that way, because it also made it easier for the firm to make the decision. One of the things that could happen was that these persons each got 55 forms from the Government; our guess was that they sorted them out by “had to,” “nice to do,” and “stick it.” So, if you made it into the first pile, you were better off. On the demographic side, particularly in the census, we really felt that losing the mandatory nature was not as critical from the standpoint of how it was done, but you certainly didn’t want to make it easy for somebody to decide not to participate in the census. Therefore, you create a ground swell: it is a lot easier for people to join something that is not in violation of the law than something that is in violation. So we always thought the mandatory nature was important. I think we heartily joined in legislation that was constructive insofar as reducing the penalty. You were incarcerated in the old law; now it is just a fine. We took the position that incarceration was not necessary.

**Milton:** **I believe we did that, but part of the compromise was the fine. They even talked about doing away with the fine.**

**Barabba:** Yes; we said that the fine was important, but the incarceration wasn’t necessary.

**Pemberton:** **There are several other things I thought I might mention, and you may have some that you may like to mention. One of them was the notion of the middecade census. That has been coming up regularly since the 1870’s, but you were here one of the times that it came up.**

**Barabba:** I was here the time it got signed into law. I have the signed bill hanging on my wall, but the trouble was that they never put any money with it. We thought it was an important event. It would have helped the Bureau do a better job in the decennial [census] if we could in essence spread some of this activity over 5 years rather than every 10, and I thought all the merits of it certainly outweighed the demerits, including the cost. We ran a very successful campaign to get the bill passed, and then the Government hit hard times, and it was ignored.

**Pemberton:** **It was passed [October 1976] to gear up for 1985.**

**Barabba:** They said, “We’ve got to do it now, so you can prepare for it.”

**Milton:** You are correct. It didn't start to gear up; it became a money problem—funding.

**Barabba:** OMB would never allow you to budget for it, which I think is not smart, but there are other things that show up in the budget. This was put as a lower priority by the Government.

**Pemberton:** You argued then—I take it, unsuccessfully—that this was a significant thing that had a substantial benefits, and its benefits—from the point of view of this agency—warranted the cost.

**Barabba:** We were half successful: We got the bill, but not the money.

**Pemberton:** Was it was more of a question of OMB opposition, or opposition inside Commerce? Did you get it through Commerce and to OMB or ...?

**Barabba:** I don't know how you distinguish between those two; they talk to each other so much.

**Milton:** It went through the department to OMB, and OMB cut it out. The second time that we tried to get it through, the department cut it out, because they already knew that OMB wouldn't support it.

**Why don't you tell us about the Year 2000 Project, like what Bruce Johnson is doing now on the 21st Century Staff.**

**Barabba:** One of the first ASA Census Advisory Committee meetings right after I was confirmed was kind of interesting. Russell Ackoff was a member of the committee and was one of the pioneers in prospective planning practices. He made a comment—it was not directed at me, by any means—that in his mind, the Bureau had never demonstrated the ability to plan; they were primarily reactors to situations. That made sense to me; I suggested that maybe he should help us learn to how to plan. He took that well, but that was kind of a dilemma for him personally. As a member of the advisory committee, he couldn't benefit from our hiring him. He took up the suggestion, but he said, "Let me see if I can find some other people to help you." He gave us two or three names, and it wasn't very successful. He brought in Herman Kahn and others. The more we tried, the more unsuccessful we were in trying to get out ahead of ourselves. Then he said, "There is this fellow out at Pittsburgh, Ian Mitroff, who studied with one of my original colleagues."

So, Jim O'Brien [James L. O'Brien, Assistant Chief, Statistical Research Division] was sent on a mission to find out who this Mitroff was. He came back and said he sounded kind of interesting, so we then retained Ian to help us work on the Year 2000 Project. We picked the census in 2000, because one of the examples Russ gave us was Paris in 2000, a project he had worked on. An

example he used was that if he had ever walked into a Parisian environment and said, “One of the reasons you are no longer the center of the universe is that your language gets in the way,” they would have thrown him out. But if you talked about the world in the year 2000—this is back in the late 70’s, looking 30 years ahead—it meant that people could at least think about it. There were a lot of other things going on; notions of a more universal language were more tolerable, because you weren’t going to change French overnight.

So, we said we should pick a date 20 years in advance, so it will be the 2000 census. Ian came in and helped us form the process, which was fundamentally trying to uncover the underlying assumptions of the belief systems. You had to accept the fact that there were different belief systems out there. If you didn’t understand the underlying assumptions of those different belief systems, then you would miss the boat and [not know] why people rejected your ideas. If you understood the differences, you might be able to create something that was a synthesis of those different belief systems rather than a compromise of them.

So, we started on this activity. You learn a lot about the Bureau when you do one of these things. First, I said that the executive staff will not participate, because I want to get young people involved in this, and I don’t want them to feel that they are going to be inhibited in any way. If they want to be critical of the Bureau, then they should be able to do that because they don’t have to worry about their boss’s boss’s boss being in the room. I thought that was pretty smart on my part. About two or three weeks into the activity, people started saying, “Well, this clearly isn’t very important, because there isn’t anyone from the executive staff involved. Why would anybody believe us if no one from the executive staff was involved?” So, we finally worked out a way in which they could report to the executive staff. But that was kind of a error, because my guess is that it would have been easier to overcome the openness of the conversation with the executive staff in there than it would this incredible cultural bias that says if the executive staff doesn’t play, it isn’t a big game. So we learned that.

We created several different teams. I can’t remember them all, but one team was more concerned with the quality of the statistics, another was on the use of the census, and another one dealt with the technology that might be available. These were real belief systems that these people came together on, and so we let each of them kind of focus on their ideal census in the year 2000. Then we brought them together to find out where the differences were. It was a kind of a different

exercise. We rolled that result out to each of the advisory committees and asked them to comment. One of the interesting things that came out of the team effort was a call for a “University of the Census,” which in some ways we started doing. That led to conferences, such as the Annual Research Conference, which is perceived as one of the finer things the Bureau does.

**Pemberton: Is the ASA fellowship program related to the this?**

**Barabba:** No; the ASA program was before that. We had been discussing that forever, it was independent. Now, once it got started, then I think there was a lot of discussion as to how our values fitted in.

[Our earlier discussion of Senator McGee] reminded me of another thing he did. When Cliff Hildreth gave his testimony [at the confirmation hearing], his first statement was, “I am not speaking on behalf of the American Statistical Association,” and Senator McGee said, “Who are you representing?” He said, “I am representing myself, and I am the president.” McGee said, “Are you, or are you not, representing the statistical association?” He said, “No, I am representing myself.” McGee said, “I just wanted to make that clear.” Then Hildreth started saying some things, and McGee interrupted; he said, “I used to be a professor, too.” He had been a professor of history at the University of Chicago, and he said, “Sometimes we professors really are not as concerned with the management of things as we are with the background of things.” He just really did a nice job of politely saying, “I don’t know what you are saying, but it’s having little impact here.” And he did it so nicely and effectively that I’ve always had a warm spot in my heart for him. He was one of the few Democrats that I was very disappointed didn’t get reelected.

So, we were talking about the census for 2000. I think that Russ [Ackoff] was right, because then parts of the Bureau started thinking about the future, but it started the thinking about underlying assumptions. Now, the most profound effect this had was the establishment of the relationship with Mitroff, because as we got into 1980, that came back as a really critical part of the whole adjustment process. We will talk about that when we get to that point in time. So I would say that Russ made a major contribution in getting us to think about things.

At that point, we set Ted Clemence [Theodore G. Clemence, Program and Policy Officer] up as kind of our forward thinker, and we tried not to encumber him with the day-to-day activities, although he always got sucked in when you really needed him. His job was to kind of sit back and think about the Bureau, so we

would always have somebody with a more forward or more balanced view always sitting in the room and saying, “Why are you guys doing it that way? Isn’t there another way of thinking about it?” He was a little bit more sharp than the way I just described it; he could say, “This is dumb,” and I could say, “What are you talking about?” Most directors used him that way, too—not all as much as they should have, but the ones that had most impact used him properly.

**Milton:** **I don’t think it was so much that way towards the end....he enjoyed being in that role.**

**Barabba:** Most people didn’t figure out that he was a philosophy major; he didn’t know anything about statistics.

**Pemberton:** **After reading your book, I wouldn’t been surprised if you had a few philosophy courses.**

**Barabba:** That’s more Mitroff than me.

**Pemberton:** **Bobby [Milton] mentioned Bruce Johnson, essentially the 21st century project. Another thing that came up several years ago, obviously after you left, was the notion of “issues awareness”—certain people in the Bureau trying to essentially anticipate the kinds of problems that the agency is likely to have to face, not necessarily the specific problems, but the types of problems. I believe that is an ongoing process. The third thing that seems to have stemmed from the same time or either the same mindset or, in fact, the mindset that you implanted, was “strategic planning.” One of your successors, John Keane [director, March 1984-November 1988] came up with “Strategic Plan I” and then worked out certain portions of it. Some of them were implemented and, I suspect, some were not, but then there was “Strategic Plan II.” This forward-thinking notion was—and hopefully you will be pleased with this—to some extent institutionalized in the 1980’s.**

**Barabba:** I think it was, but what I like about it is that there are different ways of doing it. There is not a way of doing it; you can expect that. Directors are going to bring their own style, and that is fine as long as it’s being done. That’s an important thing, and I would credit Russ Ackoff for bringing it to our attention.

**Pemberton:** **You brought kind of a dual sensitivity, with areas of overlap: One is the sensitivity to the fact that the audience for the Census Bureau’s products, to some extent wasn’t aware of all the variety of products it can use. To some extent, this is the agency’s fault and it should make it its business to go out and essentially explain itself to people. [VB: That’s right.] Secondly, internally, the Bureau shouldn’t be entirely**



**reactive, but should be proactive. Part of being proactive is to go out and explain itself to people. These kind of relate to one another as the internal focus and the external focus.**

**One problem that came up, very early in your tenure, was the 1974 agricultural census. There was a bit of a difficulty; it was postponed. It was then planned somewhat hastily and there were some substantial data quality problems, I believe, in that some significant farms, ranches, etc., were missed. How did all that come about? Were you involved at that point?**

**Barabba:** Regarding this whole issue of responsibility for outreach, the fundamental reason why you should do this, besides being responsive, is that it is in your self interest. If you look at the way society is going, the margin of error that is constantly narrowing the kinds of decisions we can make, and the limited resources that are becoming more and more apparent as we move into a global competitive environment in our society, people are going to ask, “What should I invest in, from a societal point of view, that is going to give society a payoff?” If statistics or census-type data do not provide a value, people aren’t going to do it for tradition’s sake. They want to say, “What do I get for this thing?” and if we don’t have a community of users out there who see value, then you don’t deserve the budgetary support. So it’s in the Bureau’s self-interest to take the time out; that is what you’ve got to do. When we first laid it on the economic division directors, they said, “Wait! We’re so busy; we haven’t got time to do this!” I said, “Well, you may have more time on your hands than you think, if there is not a value in this thing.” In fact, they found time, and they came back with a better product. I think most people would agree that the economic censuses are much more meaningful today and probably a better reflection of reality than they ever were.

That kind of leads into the census of agriculture thing. I have to remember a little bit of history here, but I think the decision to cancel the census of agriculture was set up in the budget the year prior to my arriving. It was as bizarre as an OMB budget director, being told, “You’ve got to reduce the budget,” looking down the list, finding the right number of dollars, and scratching out the census of agriculture. It might have been a little more sophisticated than that, but (I have a feeling) not much. Now, that OMB budget examiner was not aware that the census was a requirement of Title 13 of the U.S. Code. [He/she] was not aware that this was an activity that the Bureau primarily did for the Department of Agriculture, and all the people outside of the Bureau were not sensitive to that, and so this thing sailed through. Obviously, if you were at the Department of Agriculture, you would say, “Why would we ever allow an activity as important

as that be outside of our budgetary control?” If the Bureau had anything to say about that, it would never have been offered up as an alternative; that was done outside of the Bureau. Now, you had to go and explain it to the Department of Agriculture, to which they had a very simple reply, “Our budget examiner would never have done that!” And they were correct.

So, then you got into this hassle about who should do the census of agriculture. Now, I think most reasonable people felt that the Bureau should continue to do it, but were very concerned about the care that the Bureau had in protecting the census of agriculture. But they had evidence to say, “You guys don’t care enough,” because somebody had written it off. Now Senator Humphrey, who grew up with the National Farmers Organization, which was the core of his political career in Minnesota, and the Democrat-Farmer-Labor Party, the DFL, decided this was going to be his cause, because he just couldn’t believe that somebody would do that to the farmers of America. And so the Bureau really found itself virtually in the untenable position of having been perceived as a part of this dastardly deed. When I woke up one day, I found I was part of this, too. I said, “This is crazy! First of all, I am going to violate the law by not doing this thing!” But by the time we got this all straightened out, time had passed by and there was no way we could do it in the time frame. [Tape 1, side B, ends here.]

We were 1 year behind. [Funds for the 1974 Census of Agriculture were suspended for 12 months, being released finally in September 1973, so there could be a combined pretest and dress rehearsal in January 1974. The economic censuses were taken for the years ending in “2” and “7.” In 1976, Congress enacted Public Law 94-229, requiring agriculture censuses for 1978, 1982, and every fifth year thereafter, making them concurrent (for 1982 and after) with the economic censuses.] The next year we would have it [the agriculture census] right on target with the economic censuses.

It was during this debate that I met Jim Bonnen [James T. Bonnen, professor of agricultural economics at Michigan State University; later director of President Carter’s Federal Statistical System Project], who to me was the most constructive and sophisticated critic of not only the Federal statistical system but of the Census Bureau that the Lord has ever provided. He is the most knowledgeable guy about these problems that I have ever met, and he doesn’t mind putting the amount of effort in to really be constructive in his criticism. As much as he beat us up for the things we have done, he really brought terrific understanding to the problem.

The thing I never really understood is that the census of agriculture, as a separate entity, had very little value to understanding what was going on in agriculture. It was really the census of agriculture in concert with all the other economic censuses, because it was the processing of protein that was more important. There was much more value added or cost associated with getting the protein from the farm to the shelf to the person's table, and [you couldn't] do one without understanding the other across the multidisciplinary nature of that activity. Bonnen said, "You would be crazy to take it out of the Census Bureau, because you are more likely to get a more integrated analysis there." He gave some talks on that, and they were just so clear that I began to understand what he was talking about. I assume that we have done that; there is a much stronger relationship with the census of agriculture as an economic census. I don't know the answer to that, but I am assuming that is true.

**Milton:** **They certainly aren't handled together. They have an assistant director [for economic and agriculture censuses; since April 1992, for economic programs] and an office [the Agriculture Division] that handled the collection and coordinates the release of the stuff.**

**Pemberton:** **I do believe there is still something of a criticism that essentially says you cannot clearly take a side of beef from a farm, and follow it all the way through an economy until it is distributed at retail.**

**Barabba:** And I'm not sure you ever will be able to, but I think you probably understand that better today than you could at that time. To me, that was the real lesson learned in the Bureau: First of all, you had as much of an obligation to protect somebody else's interest as your own. You should fight as hard for the census of agriculture as you fight for the decennial census. If you are going to represent the statistical interest of the Government, you have to keep that in mind. I think that was a little lesson for Commerce as well. I don't know how well it stuck or not, but they really were embarrassed. I think that knowing this history is helpful when somebody gets cute with the Census Bureau's budget [and suggests] how Commerce is going to save money by knocking off some other department's activities. That is an ongoing battle; I remember every time we had to cut something, it was always related to HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare] or whatever it was. I think the Bureau now can make a much stronger case based on that experience.

One of my current bosses at GM [General Motors] was giving a talk on decision-making, and he made the comment, "You move up on the learning curve higher and faster on the basis of your mistakes than on the basis of your successes." I think that was a critical mistake, but the Bureau learned an incredible lesson. The

good thing is that I really learned to respect Jim Bonnen, and he and I became very close friends. That led to what is not on your list, the whole activity of reducing the whole statistical system in the Carter Administration, which I think I'll be able to outline when we talk about how I got back [as Census Bureau director] the second time.

**Pemberton:** I only have one more question to ask you about your first administration, and that would be about adjustment research. Much of your book, in fact, deals with the specific problem of adjusting the 1980 census. Was adjusting the census considered during the first time you came to the Bureau, as opposed to when it was raised as a legal issue?

**Barabba:** It was more likely thought of as an interesting statistical problem.

**Pemberton:** A research project?

**Barabba:** Oh yes, much more a research project, but also more in the traditional sense of what the Bureau would do within the census. You might have a range of statistics that could be improved, like economic data. You might find a way of using a “hot deck” or something like that to take care of the item nonresponse, so I would say it was more related to how to make the total data set better. There were groups within the Bureau who obviously, because of the diverse nature of that incredible staff, were thinking about it. It was talked about, but I don't know when it started. Well, no; I have to say it was discussed, because it was part of the plans. The PES [post-enumeration survey after the census] and different techniques were being built into the 1980 census budget when I was there, as I recall. I am not sure whether it was designed to better understand and be precise about the undercoverage as much as it was to have somebody say, “And by the way, if you don't do it right, then we can adjust the number.” I would say that the primary emphasis was more on “we really have to understand the problem better” than on really believing that you would ever adjust. Now that doesn't mean that there weren't people in the Bureau of thinking of adjusting it. As far as the rationale for the budget request was concerned, it was to understand why there was undercoverage, much more so than “we need that much money so we can adjust it.”

I would say that was up until the mid-1970's. And I have to be a little careful there because things will be a little bit blurry at times, but I don't remember big discussions of adjustment. But then we had people like Bob Hill [Robert B. Hill, Research Director, National Urban League], who was raising the issue with the minority advisory committees. I would say it was being surfaced, but I think people in the Bureau were saying, “Nice discussion, something we should be

concerned about, but it's not realistic." So we were being sensitized to the political nature of it.

**Milton:** **Perhaps as a result of our announcement of the fact that there was an undercount in the 1970 census, this was looked at as a way to correct it.**

**Barabba:** Those were simplistic answers, and I don't mean by "simplistic" that these Bureau people were naive. Bob Hill just walked them through the political nature of it. (He was on one of our advisory committees—a very knowledgeable person.) He said, "Look, you guys get worried about how complex and sophisticated it has to be, but there are people suffering from your inability to count everybody. I'm not saying that you can count them; in fact, if I thought you could, I'd yell at you for different reasons, but since you can't count everybody, we have to fix this thing, and here is one way to fix it." Then we would argue about how it would get you further from the truth and towards the truth. I don't think anybody believed we could do it, but you could get better at understanding it.

**Pemberton:** **So it was primarily a coverage evaluation mechanism?**

**Barabba:** Yes, but if Dave Kaplan were still alive, it would be interesting to ask him how he felt at the time, but I doubt if David would have been thinking of actually adjusting.

**Milton:** **It doesn't fit with his character. His character was, "If there was something wrong with the census, then we will fix the census."**

**Barabba:** I would say it was more to understand. Diagnostics, I guess.

**Pemberton:** **On the other hand, the advisory committee in a sense could be seen as serving an appropriate committee function by sensitizing the Bureau to the fact that this may not be the only consideration.**

**Barabba:** Well, but the issue surfaced in the advisory committee in my first term, because that is when it got started. There are some interesting anecdotes as well. At the end of the Nixon Administration, under Secretary Dent [Frederick B. Dent, Secretary of Commerce, February 1973-March 1975], everybody was really worried about what was going on in government, rather than at the Census Bureau. We took advantage of the time [to organize minority advisory committees for the 1980 census], but it was clear to me if we got a group of Blacks in there that were not reflective of the Black community, this would be of little value. My purpose in initiating that committee was more to get them to appreciate the importance of being counted, and to have a vocal force that could go out to the Black community that could say, "It is important to be counted." The only way that they would ever do that and be credible was to understand why the census did what it did and what the value would be. So it was very important that we would get a credible group. We started out with

the Black community, and got some really good contacts there. Some of them became Census Bureau people. One who stayed was Sam Johnson in the outreach program [Samuel H. Johnson, chief of the Community Services Staff] and also [J.] Jack Ingram, who is in Mexico now. I talked with them at great length, and they said, “Well, this is going to be tough because a credible Black is never going to be a part of this, will not be able to get into it.” And I said, “Well, on the other hand, if they are not ready to take a little risk, then they are not going to be able to do anything for their population.” So they understood that, and said, “We will try, but they won’t come unless you invite the right people.”

So, kind of on our own, we said, “Let’s ask the right people.” We really had some good people there, including Bobby Seale [a leader of the Black Panther Party]. That was when Bobbie Milton had to perform some miracles with Al Tella [Alfred J. Tella, Special Adviser to the Director and coordinator of the Bureau’s public advisory committees]. Bobby Seale said, “I will come, but you have to pay for my bodyguard,” so we had to figure a way of having this “special consultant” attend this meeting at a hotel right by the airport. It was a real group; it was probably worth getting those names. We couldn’t have gotten a better group of people together, in a Government agency, to talk about the census and the Black population.

They just went at us; as a group, we were not getting together. Bobby Seale was not saying a word for most of the morning, but finally, he interjected, “I think we need to have a caucus.” I said, “What does that mean?” He said, “All you Census people have to get out of the room.” Then someone reminded me that this was a federally sponsored meeting, that you couldn’t have anything substantive done without somebody from the Government there. I said, “We want to be cooperative, but I’ve got a little bit of a problem here.” He said, “Aren’t we allowed to have breaks?” and I said yes. He said, “Why don’t you guys break out there and we’ll break in here.” And I said, “That sounds reasonable.” They kept us cooling our heels for probably an hour, I would say, and I don’t know exactly what happened in the room, but I got some feedback on it. But, fundamentally, he gave a fairly straightforward speech that said, “Either we are going to trust this guy or we’re not. Are the rewards worth the risk that we are going to take? We should build some checks on this guy, and if he delivers, then we stay with him. If he doesn’t, then we will embarrass him.” They apparently argued about that for some time, but I think his point of view prevailed. Whether he called on his

bodyguard to help him, I'm not sure, but they had some pretty strong people in the room.

So they invited us in after the break, and said, "We'll work with you for now, but we are really going to watch you. The first signal will be who gets selected to be on this committee. We think all of us should be." Of course, that would have been too many, and I said, "All of you will be considered, but I'm not sure I can get all of you on. There may be some other people who weren't able to come today, but we'll do our best to give you a list that you will be proud to be associated with." So we went back to work, and we actually sent a list with Bobby Seale's name on it and got it approved. At the last minute, he called up and said, "I really appreciate what you have done but I have to go 'underground'—for a variety of reasons. So I can't participate." You can imagine the likelihood, in a Nixon Administration not under attack, of getting Bobby Seale approved for an advisory committee!

**Milton:** You wonder why some on us look at Vince [Barabba] as a miracle worker; he did things that normal people just couldn't do.

**Pemberton:** Actually this is not a bad transition. I was going to ask you a little bit about your intercensal career, but for the purpose of this interview, we are really interested in your periods as director. In setting up the minority advisory committees, of which of there were several, Blacks were not the only one; there were Hispanics and Asians/Pacific Islanders. When you came back in July 1979, you had a chance to be present at a point that the results of all this planning were, in fact, at the data-collection period. One of the questions might be, Did you feel the outreach that you did in the minority community or communities, in fact paid off for 1980?

**Barabba:** I did; not everyone in the Bureau did.

**Pemberton:** How did that lineup kind of go, and why?

**Barabba:** I had a much higher tolerance of pain than my colleagues. Danny Levine [Daniel B. Levine, Associate Director for Demographic Fields, later deputy director and at times acting director] said, "I can hardly wait for the first minority meeting; then you are going to see who throws rocks at the Bureau!" By the way, he was a strong supporter of the concept. There was this pain level that I think was very hard for the Bureau to accept, because these advisory committee members operated on a different emotional level than the Bureau did, but it was important for the Bureau to understand that.

In my first term, we had the first minority committee meetings outside of the Bureau. They said, “You guys have got to demonstrate that you’re serious,” so we went to Chicago, and had first the Black Committee [session there]. We went some place on the south side of Chicago; it was really tough, but it was one of the best meetings I attended. I’m sitting up on a dais with Lonnie [Abdul Alim] Shabazz from the Moslems, Althea Simmons, George Riddick from Operation PUSH. Anyway, it was one of the most rewarding experiences I’ve ever been through, because I did not have to answer the questions. One lady got up and said, “If you are really serious about counting, then why are you asking all these personal questions [in the census]?” I’m about ready to respond when this Black legislator gets up in the middle of the room. He said, “The reason they ask those questions is that they are important. I passed legislation that demonstrated that a telephone was an essential instrument in every home so that people could communicate, and it should be taken off their listed assets, as well as a television set. I was able to use Bureau statistics that say that a telephone is not a luxury item for a family to have, it’s a form of communication. If I had not had the Bureau statistics, I couldn’t have built it into my legislation.” That was a lot more impartial than anything I would have said.

Then the next day, we went to the Hispanic Advisory Committee, in another part of Chicago, and they really had set us up. They had this big group come in and picket: They wanted us to use the city of Chicago as the test area for the 1980 census. Well, that [would be] a pretty big test. I was trying to explain to them why [this would not be] feasible, but they didn’t [want to] hear about it, so we finally closed the meeting off. While we were getting on the bus back to the hotel, we noticed that Meyer Zitter had taken one of the signs that said “Chicago for a test site” and changed it to “Chicago for an atomic test site.” We all had a good laugh.

I would say that it was interesting, when you think about all the lawsuits that we have, that the only time a minority organization showed up in the suits that went through was sometimes as a friend of the court, or as added to a municipal lawsuit, but I don’t think any of the minority communities instituted a suit.

**Milton:** **There was SER [Service Employment Redevelopment; SER—Jobs for Progress National, Inc.], a Spanish coalition for jobs.**

**Barabba:** Yes, but that was under the jobs part of it, wasn’t it? Let me put it this way: If you would have listed all of the people that were going to line up and have lawsuits



against the Bureau in 1980, you would have had all of the minority communities at the front of the list. Now, where it broke down was with the municipal leaders, the elected officials. But I would say that in many ways the minority people were really sophisticated. They had a lot to say about who was working on the census. If we had a census tract [with errors in the data] showing up, we fixed it while they were there. They were sworn in as Bureau agents during the test in Austin [Travis County, TX, 1976], and they came back and reported about what they learned once they knew that we weren't hiding anything. Then they knew we were doing a pretty thorough job, so you had a strong leadership community.

I think most of them were, I'd say, very professional in how they handled themselves. They would yell and scream at you. Vilma Martinez [member of the 1980 Hispanic Advisory Committee from the Mexican American Defense and Education Fund], God bless her, I mean when you got through that meeting, you knew you had been through a meeting, but on the other hand, you could call her up and say, "This group over there is about to take us to court for the wrong reason," and she would go explain to them. She would do it very quietly. She had her own political environment to maintain, but they did a lot of quiet diplomacy for us.

More importantly, and that was their main objective, they really helped us in the outreach program to demonstrate the value of the census to those communities, so the communities themselves at the local level would have an active program of participation. That is why we had the census use activity early, in the latter part of the 1970's, so people would know what to do with the 1980 data when they got to the data. They knew what the limitations were. They would say [about the 1970 data], "That is wrong," so you say, "Well, here is how you fix it in 1980: you make sure you get counted." That part, I think, all worked out very well. Some of my colleagues say it was very helpful, but it was very painful. On balance, if I had to list the very helpful things in the 1980 census, that would be one.

We will get into this with the adjustment issue in the second tour, and that was one lesson I learned as I listened to what happened in 1970, and how the Bureau won the court case then. I read the judge's decision; he said the Bureau had been neither arbitrary nor capricious in its approach to the census, because the [staff] couldn't have been expected to anticipate all these things. It became very clear that you couldn't use that excuse again. You now have to expect all these things. The judge said that they [the Bureau] got caught in a transition, and they were

neither arbitrary or capricious on how they dealt with that transition. Now, you knew it was a problem; you had better demonstrate that you were sensitive to it and that you were going to do something about it, and not just ice the cake. You really had to make a new cake. [Later,] whenever we would document to the courts all of the steps that we took, that was the one that was always toward the top. I think the judges—at least the reasonable ones—all understood that we were very serious about that.

**Pemberton:** You had a fairly detailed explanation about how you got appointed the first time; is there a shorter version for your appointment the second time? I guess this would have been under Juanita Kreps [Secretary of Commerce, January 1977-October 1979]?

**Barabba:** Well, I mentioned that I met Jim Bonnen. Probably one of the unique things, that most people are not aware of, is that I was a close friend to the pollsters of both Ronald Reagan and James Earl Carter. I left the Bureau before the elections in 1976. After the elections, Pat [Patrick Cadell] gave me a call, and said, “I’m really concerned what we do with the Census Bureau. I was kind of pleased with what you did while you were there.” He knew Dick Wirthlin, and said, “I would like to talk to you about that.” So we had a long chat. I demonstrated to him that you couldn’t look at the Bureau as an independent entity; you have to think about the whole statistical system. He was close friends with Wayne Granquist, who was OMB’s associate director for administrative management, under which this OIRA [Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs] organization fell. Wayne and I kind of hit it off pretty good and we entered into the Statistical Reorganization Project, under an umbrella of governmental reorganization in the Carter Administration, and developed some legislation for it. In doing so, we decided we would use Jim Bonnen as the executive director of that, so we had to persuade Jim to take a leave of absence from Michigan State University. Then we kind of formed this quadumvirate of people—Pat, Wayne, Jim, and myself—who kind of headed up a lot of discussions, and talked about the system and how it might be organized. I say “organized” rather than “reorganized,” because “reorganized” did not apply; it had not been organized yet.

Toward the end of that activity, it was pretty clear that my successor at the Bureau, Manny Plotkin [Manuel D. Plotkin, director, April 1977-March 1979], was having some difficulty with the Administration and the Congress. At that point, Pat said, “Vince, we are going to have to find another director,” and I said, “I will be happy to help you.” He said, “We were thinking that you might want to consider it.” I explained to him that that would be impossible to do, because I couldn’t possibly figure out how to leave Xerox without taking a real “bath,” not

only monetarily but from a career point of view. So he said, "If we were able to handle that, would you consider it?" I said, "Well, I can't imagine that I could handle it, but you are more than welcome to try."

I was not aware of it, but C. Peter McColough, who was the CEO [chief executive officer] of Xerox, was a close personal friend of the Vice-President [Walter Mondale], and the Vice-President called him. C. Peter McColough gave it to David Kearns, who was the [Xerox] president, and said "We ought to find a way of working it out." It was a lot more complex than either of them thought, because once you take a Government job, you cannot have a relationship with an existing entity. So, I got trapped a little bit, because I thought we could work out some nice arrangements, like housing and transportation back home, and all this other stuff. All I got was the promise that there would be a job when I got back, and they would try to take into consideration what I had learned while I was in Government when I got my reentry, with no promises, because making a promise would have been a violation of the law.

So, in essence, that is how it all happened. It was this kind of involvement with this statistical organization effort that kind of opened up the door for Pat to even consider bringing a Republican in, because he knew Wayne Granquist was supportive. Arnie Miller was in charge of the personnel office, and I really became close friends with him. Arnie was about as liberal a Democrat as you could possibly be, and when we were introduced, he said, "This is going to be so painful for me. I know you, but my family will disown me." And they came close to doing it, by the way. When [my appointment] was announced, he was in New York with his family on a family occasion, and he said, "My sister physically attacked me!" But he was very helpful in many ways.

Had it not happened that way, I am not sure we could have pulled it off, because the Carter Administration really felt they were in trouble. They knew they needed somebody who knew the Bureau; more importantly, they needed somebody whom the Bureau knew and who would not have to come up to speed on the problems. At that point, there weren't too many people around that kind of met those criteria. If I had not been through it before, I wouldn't know what to ask for. So I fundamentally said, "Look, this is going to be a tough assignment." I had known Juanita Kreps professionally for other reasons. She knew she was in trouble, so we fundamentally laid down some working rules that said, "I will report to the department on all the traditional things that the director is supposed

to report on—budget and all that kind of stuff. But as it relates to the decennial census, like hiring, relationships with the Congress, and legal issues, I had to have a contact in the White House to deal with the political issues.” They designated that person as Wayne Granquist. It was his job, when I was in trouble any place, to go help me find a solution to it without going through the all the steps of working within the Department of Commerce. I think that agreement probably helped more than anything in getting the job done in the amount of time that we had to do it.

**Pemberton:** I'm glad you explained that, because we have a new director [Barbara Bryant] coming in, and in the back of one's head one has to hope that she will have at least some of the same kinds of entree that you did. I don't want to imply that there are any troubles, because I don't think there are troubles, to the extent that I know of them, that there were in the late 1970's. On the other hand, there is a great deal of crisis management that takes place, I suspect, when you are in the middle of a decennial census, and whoever sits in that chair is going to have to be a crisis manager. Of course, you know that that chair is vacant. So, essentially, you came in because the Administration recognized that it had a difficulty. You were acceptable to both sides in some way. "Both sides" also means the Congress; did you have any trouble with the confirmation?

**Barabba:** That was the most fun part of the whole thing. Senator Glenn [John Glenn, D.-Ohio], God bless his heart, was the new chairman [of the Senate Committee on Post Office and Civil Service's Subcommittee on Energy, Nuclear Proliferation, and Federal Services]. Somebody wrote me a note after that and said mine was the first nomination hearing where the discussion was about how we were going to conduct the census. Nothing to do with who the director was going to be. The whole dialogue was on what the next steps would be. Assuming that, they never talked about whether I would be confirmed or not. Now, it is a lot easier coming in as a nominee of the President of the party that controls the Senate. Dick Scammon [Director, May 1961-January 1965] pointed that out to me earlier, and he was absolutely right. That was quite different, but the crisis nature really opened up a lot of doors, plus—although it was unstated—I think it was appreciated by both parties that they couldn't afford me walking out. I had never played that hand, but I never had to, either.

After Secretary Kreps left, [there was] Secretary Klutznick [Philip M. Klutznick, January 1980-January 1981]. You just could not have had a better secretary, relative to the problems we faced. He fundamentally said, "You need to manage

these issues. I know what your relationship is with the White House; if they are not helping you, you get to me and I will go get them to help you. So, he virtually opened the door; Under Secretary Hodges [Luther Hodges, Jr., Deputy Secretary of Commerce] just couldn't have been better.

Courtenay Slater [the Department of Commerce's chief economist, to whom the Bureau director reported] was as sensitive to the reporting issue as she could possibly be. We fundamentally set up an exercise within the Bureau where I said, "No matter what I do and when I do it, you make sure Courtenay knows about it as soon you can possibly get the message to her." She was very tolerant of that. Once in a while, she reminded us where the reporting relationship was, but it was never done in a destructive way.

**Pemberton:** **Some of the working relationship with the Department of Commerce was quite good.**

**Barabba:** Well, they were in trouble.

**Milton:** **You had this direct line to the White House; you couldn't see [Commerce] breaking it.**

**Barabba:** They [Commerce] were seeing progress on solving this incredibly big embarrassment in front of them.

**Pemberton:** **Would you characterize briefly how the White House and/or Commerce saw the situation in 1979, when you came in? What were they afraid of?**

**Barabba:** There were several things. First of all, there were big questions about whether we were actually going to do the census. I mean terrible problems in the Geography Division, maps were not being done. There is an anecdote about the computer system I will tell you in just a minute. The political aspect of things was a disaster: They made false starts on the hiring—whether it would be the normal referral system or whether we would go through civil service. All those were major potential embarrassments to the Administration, and it was one of those few times when the incumbent President was up for reelection during a census period. So, they were ready to do anything to minimize the chance of embarrassment. I have to give them credit that they were politically astute, but they did not let the heat being generated within their own party by bringing a Republican in get in the way of finding the person who they thought could get the job accomplished.

**Pemberton:** **Was Stuart Eizenstat [Assistant to the President [Carter] for Domestic Affairs and Policy] involved with this at all?**

**Barabba:** Yes, we had a couple of meetings. I think he was not involved in the decision to do it, but when we got into some of the substantive issues, there was another fellow

that worked there who was more of a political operative. He was really good too; he had a keen political sense. It took him about three minutes to understand what the problem was. I remember one time I had to go to a meeting with Coleman Young [mayor] in Detroit. I was getting this lesson in practical civics, and he said, “You are going to have to do this, or I’m going to have to call the White House.” I said, “Well, before I left I checked with—I can’t think of the gentleman’s name—and we kind of anticipated what you are going to ask. Here is what we can do for you. I think you want more than that; if so, you are going to have to call this person and I think he will tell you that as much as they would like to satisfy you, given your position within the President’s reelection campaign, that it would be virtually impossible to do.” There was this long pause, and he had known I had done my homework. So with a few expletives added, he said, “Well, you had better find a way of doing it.” I said, “We will do our best, but I think we’ve gone as far as we can go.” This guy was capable of knowing the kind of tolerance level of certain politicians, and that was very helpful. And Wayne Granquist just could not have been better; he had a sense of timing relative to what to do and what not to do—really very helpful.

**Pemberton:** **If it was apparent in main Commerce and at the White House that there was difficulty getting the preparations for the 1980 census under way, obviously there was an awareness inside the Census Bureau that there was a similar problem. How did you deal with that?**

**Barabba:** Well, one of the values of bringing me back was that I knew who the people were, and also they knew me. Danny [Levine], who was deputy director at the time, took about a day to bring me up to speed on what was going on. He didn’t have to pull any punches, he knew what things I would keep confidential, and he didn’t have to explain a lot to me. He would say “so and so” and I knew exactly what he was talking about. We knew we needed some major personnel overhaul, including bringing in a person to oversee the taking of the decennial census. We had a significant conversation about that, and it was a tossup between Meyer Zitter (then chief of the Population Division), for whom many of us had a lot of respect, and George Hall [George E. Hall, deputy director of the Department’s Office of Federal Statistical Policy and Standards]. I went through this fairly complex, pluses-and-minuses evaluation on each individual relative to what I thought needed to be done, and it virtually ended up in a slightly favoring choice. We had this incredible meeting with all the major Bureau people in attendance: I said, “George is the czar of the census [i.e., Associate Director for Demographic Fields]”; they said, “What is your role?” and I said, “I am El Supremo. The czar can handle most everything, and when he can’t, he can come and talk to me about it.”

Now there was one thing that we preceded that with. I had Jim Turbitt [James W. Turbitt, formerly Associate Director for Administration and Field Operations], who had retired, work with a friend of mine from General Motors [GM]—this was even before I had a job at GM. Bob Breeden was the manager of manufacturing for the Buick Motor Car Division. He and I had become friends during the first political campaign I ever worked outside of California, in Flint, Michigan, back in 1966. I had always admired him because he had this incredibly great sense of organization. From time to time, I would visit him in Flint; the last time I went there, he showed me this structure he had put together for the manufacturing of vehicles, and also how he was working on the “people” side of it. His whole point was that the people side is what gets the job done, not the organization side. So I said “Bob, from what I understand, the census is a process of taking raw material and coming out at the end of it with these numbers. I would like you to come in and look at our process, and give me your advice and counsel as somebody who developed his own process. So we retained Jim [Turbitt] to come in and be the eyes and ears for Bob, who came in for about a week and gave us a report: He identified what he considered to be the problems, the primary problem being there was nobody accountable. He said, “Vince, you just cannot find who is responsible for the decisions for this activity.” That was the most important finding. The second point he made was, “As I understand it, the essence of this whole activity is around these maps, and from what I can gather, you are not going to have them. You have two things you had better solve. If you get past those two, you have a chance of pulling it off.” That was kind of a sobering discussion; about that time I was wondering if they would take me back at Xerox.

Anyway, we had this session with Danny and two others and we accepted Bob’s findings. We had to decide to put somebody over the census, and then decide whether to use an insider or bring somebody in from outside, and we opted for George. That was a wise decision.

**Pemberton:** He filled a role that previously had been filled by Dave Kaplan [Assistant Director for Demographic Censuses, November 1974-January 1979]?

**Barabba:** He had a broader role than Dave; David would...

**Milton:** [Kaplan] was made an assistant director at the time of the 1970 census, when he was just called the coordinator for the census. Until just before he retired, he was the assistant director for the census,

**reporting to the associate director. George came in as the associate director.**

**Barabba:** I said, “George, there are a lot of other things going on in that area [Demographic Fields] but the decennial census, as far as you are concerned, is the only one. Whatever you need, let us know and we will try to get it for you. Remember, there is an external aspect of this. I will handle most of the external part, but I cannot do it by myself, so you lean to me on the external stuff and you lean to Danny [Levine] on the internal stuff. We do not want people coming to us; we’ve got other things to do; your job is to make sure the census gets dealt with.” George got a real education in a hurry and I think he did an incredible job.

The second issue that Bob pointed out—and this is one of the untold stories of the census—was the maps. As we were talking about it in the executive staff, you could kind of see Shirley’s [Shirley Kallek, Associate Director for Economic Fields] mind, and before it was over, it was clear that she was going to take that job over in addition to her own. So, we said, “Shirley, go clean it up.” There are a lot of people that still don’t believe that; how could you possibly put somebody that didn’t know anything about the decennial census over J’ville [the Bureau’s Data Preparation Division in Jeffersonville, IN] where people felt like they knew how to do everything right? Well, the answer was that they were in deep trouble, and the fixes they had identified were not working. You needed somebody who knew how to change things and come up with the best possible solution at a given date. There is nobody better than Shirley, still today. It was really kind of a nervous time but interesting to watch.

When she came back, she made one of the greatest errors of her life: We were talking about something and she said, “Well, the maps for the census...,” and I said, “The census?”—and not the decennial census, to distinguish it from her economic censuses. “Damn it!” she says. “You have no caring for me! You don’t care about me at all! You are going to make me live with this statement for the rest of my life! I work my heart out for you, and now you are going to catch me on one little slip of the tongue!” Anyway, she cleaned that up.

Now, if there was a problem with the 1980 census in all the heat we took, it was the maps. You could imagine what it could be like if we had not done something; everyone was afraid to make a decision. Also, there was the history of J’ville: they had always been by themselves, and they didn’t know how to work in a team environment. When the time came for them to be a key player, they were in trouble. Plus, our Geography Division, which was distant from J’ville,



probably had a grander set of expectations than what was warranted. They made the thing more sophisticated than it needed to be. Until they gave up on some of the straightforward stuff that they knew how to do, they found themselves never wanting to admit there was a failure; they just kept hiding it. When it was too late, they started being honest about it. It was really bad. Anyway, we had faith that Shirley would do it, and she delivered. There were probably a couple of bodies buried in J'ville that no one knows about—in unmarked graves, but the job got done.

That was the fundamental step. There were a bunch of steps relative to how we handled the hiring, but we were fortunate. We got a pretty good political operative whom Pat Cadell and Wayne Granquist found for us. There are some interesting stories about meetings that we had with some of the Senators who couldn't quite believe that the President was about to take over the hiring. It was the domain of the Congress, as far as hiring these people, but there was this giant debate between Senator [Edward] Kennedy and the Carter forces. Here we were, with a President running for reelection, but probably the first time he was being challenged in the primaries, and this happened to be the year they were taking the census. Whose people were going to get hired? Mike Miller was super; he had a tough job. He and I went to some meetings at which I used to have to remind those guys, "I don't want to hear this whole story; I'm from the other party!" But they would give me all these lessons in civics about what my responsibilities were, "You know better, because when you guys used to do it, the Congress used to do it," and so on.

**Milton:** **Wasn't there some thought given to that before? How about that lovely little anecdote regarding Tip O'Neill [Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr., D.-Mass., then Speaker of the House]?**

**Barabba:** That wasn't so much about the way to do it; it was who was going to do it. Michael [Miller] and I went to this meeting at the Speaker's Office. We had worked out this formula, which we thought was a reasonable compromise about who gets to appoint what, and the role of the Congress, and all that stuff. Tip O'Neill asked Mike how old he was—something to that effect, and said, "You were not born yet, but when Speaker Rayburn [Sam Rayburn, D.-Tex., Speaker, 1940-1947 and 1949-1953] used to have my job, he went to Congressman Kennedy [John Fitzgerald Kennedy, D.-Mass., 1947-1953] and he said, 'Jack, you get this many jobs.' Then Congressman Kennedy came to me, as a member of the State legislature, and said, 'Tip, you've got that many jobs.' Now I'm the Speaker, and I want to do it the same way."

I can't exactly remember the story because I wasn't there, but at a baseball game in Baltimore, I think, the President [Carter] and the Speaker were in the box and they had resolved their differences. I do not know how true that is. It seems odd to me that with all the things going on in society, that the President and the Speaker had to get together and resolve this difference. There also was Senator [Ernest W.] Hollings [D.] of South Carolina. We walked into his office and we were explaining the compromise. He said, "You explain to the President that I will determine who will conduct the census in South Carolina. If anybody else tries to do it, [that person] probably will not be capable of doing it. This is the way it has been done, and this is the way it will be done. Now, do you want to explain it to the President, or do you want me to?" He stood up when he said it, and he looked like he was 10 feet tall.

It was kind of fascinating for me, as a Republican, to go to all these kind of "crunchy" meetings. I got invited to a meeting of the California delegation. Here are all the guys I worked against all my life, and it was just kind of fun. Michael [Miller] did a nice job of orchestrating that, I thought. If we had any more problems than we had had in previous censuses in that area, it worked out reasonably well. Hiring was not as much of a problem as it could have been.

We got through the hiring and got started. As good a job as Shirley did, we got off to a bad start because not all the maps were right. That got us into a little trouble on the local review issue. At that point, I lost a lot of respect for some of the elected officials, because we had explained to them what we were trying to do, and that it was a really impressive effort on the Bureau's part. When we found we were in trouble, we explained how we were going to try to adjust the process, and they just took that and beat us up with it something fierce. In essence, they were saying, "Look here, the Bureau is this far off," while, in fact, we were giving them the numbers to help us get them right. Now, a lot of communities worked with us. Overall, I feel that the program was a plus, but it led to some of the criticism early, for the wrong reasons. They took our preliminary [housing] unit counts and demonstrated how deficient they were, using our own system to do it. I thought that was really a very inappropriate political maneuver on their part.

**Pemberton:** We originally envisioned, I believe, a two-stage review process for 1980 and wound up actual having a one-stage process.

**Milton:** We didn't have the maps for the precensus stage.

**Barabba:** We had to make a pragmatic decision to solve that problem.

**Pemberton:** **Then you took flak for having canceled the first stage, the precensus local review.**

**Barabba:** “You guys can’t be trusted,” and so on. In a sense, that was true, but we explained to them why we had offered the plan, a plan that never existed before, and some people were very good about it. It really led to some, I think, dramatic improvements in the count. But then we went on our merry way, and Bobby [Milton] used to keep a log for me, called the “Wednesday Special.” Danny and I used to have this arrangement: If we could get out before 5 o’clock, we could solve a lot of court cases, because they all started at 5:05. When the phone rang after 5, it was some judge or some U.S. Attorney in some God-forsaken place, “We’re about to get sued, and I assume you got a copy.” This is just a reflection of the complexity....

**Pemberton:** **By the way, if he [Barabba] doesn’t mind and if you [Milton] don’t mind, if nothing else, the next director should take a look at this [log]. I don’t know if I would show it to him beforehand.**

**Barabba:** I don’t have any trouble with that. I have no idea who the next director will be, but I think there would be some benefits.

**Milton:** **It gives a sample of the type of things you had to handle at your level when the census got going, trouble-shooting that kept you hopping 14 or 16 hours a day.**

**Pemberton:** **[Milton] read me that, Wednesday, it was judge this, attorney general that, FBI this, ....**

**Barabba:** I got the FBI director up in the middle of the night....

**Milton:** **No, he was at a cocktail party.**

**Barabba:** It was incredible; you are in essence touching every aspect of human life in this country in a very intense period of time. Because the Detroit suit started it off, it kind of created a little snowball effect among municipal elected officials. Frankly, I would have to admit that if I were an elected official, you would probably have taken some risk in not joining in. People would say, “Detroit is suing; why aren’t we?” and that probably led to a lot of it.

I won’t go into all the legal things; those are fairly well documented in the book [Ian Mitroff, Richard Mason, and Vincent Barabba, The 1980 Census: Policymaking Amid Turbulence (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1983)]. I think the example between Judge Gilmore [Hon. Horace W. Gilmore, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, Southern Division, in Coleman A. Young, et al. v. Philip M. Klutznick, et al.] and the judge from

Philadelphia, Bechtle [Hon. Louis C. Bechtle, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, in City of Philadelphia, et al. v. Philip M. Klutznick, et al.], is the classic distinction in the philosophy of law. If the first suit had been in Philadelphia, I think we would not have had the other suits, because Judge Bechtle set the groundwork so that any reasonable lawyer would have said, “You aren’t going to beat these guys.” Gilmore opened up the door, and there was this judge in New York [Hon. Henry F. Werker, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, in Hugh Carey, et al. v. Philip M. Klutznick, et al.]. All of his decisions got overruled by the appellate courts.

That was kind of the “luck of the draw,” the kind of thing you just can’t anticipate. As it is stated in the book [see above], we had some early warnings that we didn’t take into consideration when we did our assumption-surfacing activity. One of the things we asked was, “Where would you get information to reduce your uncertainty about some of these assumptions? What policy would the courts take? What philosophy would be dominant?” “Well,” we said, “we should do some moot court cases, and have people from different schools represent different judicial opinions.” If we had done that, we would have found out the difference between a Gilmore and a Bechtle, and that might have helped prepare us for the kinds of things we walked into. We thought we were communicating with Gilmore at the time of the court hearing, but we spoke an entirely different language. We operated out of a completely different belief system than he had. He was talking to us, and we did not know what he was saying. We thought he was incompetent because he didn’t hear us and talk back to us in our language. All he did was believe things differently than we did.

**Pemberton:** I think the Census Bureau is going through some of these kinds of things now. From my position, I can’t tell if the Bureau has learned the lesson that you set out in your book or not, but we will have a chance to see.

**Barabba:** The Bureau did. I think the Commerce Department didn’t, and I told them so. The decision not to adjust, and the manner in which they made their decision, negated all of the precedents that we set in 1980. I was sensitized to the need to be neither capricious nor arbitrary; they were both. They gave the plaintiffs standing because they made it very clear they would not adjust, and the issue that always caught the other guys was, “How do you know you are going to be hurting?” We [the Bureau] always said, “We may adjust,” because we had every reason to adjust if we couldn’t do it. We always felt very strongly about that. Now they say, “No matter what happens, we are going to count everybody. We’re not going to adjust.” Well, that just

provides the plaintiffs with standing, and standing is the most critical part of this process. Then they were both arbitrary and capricious in how they did it. You couldn't win that quickly. I told that to a lot of people, and I think they came to that conclusion, unfortunately, kind of late in the game. A lot of pain, a lot of wasted time. My guess is that they are still going to suffer under that initial decision before they get through.

By the way, I would argue that the conferences that we held on the census undercount, using the procedures that we initially developed for the census year 2000 project, weighed heavily in winning the appeals court case in New York. If you read that judge's findings, he surfaced that in several places; in essence, he got back to the original philosophy that we have to demonstrate that we are neither arbitrary nor capricious. The whole process we went through was designed to make sure that we made a nonarbitrary and noncapricious decision. That would have been fully understood by anybody who would take the time to understand why we made that decision. It was public and open, and if you read Judge Bechtel's decision, it was that the courts should not impose their will on an agency of government when it is doing its best to fulfill the requirements of the law. And I think any person who looked at that in a reasonably objective way would say we were doing our best. It was that whole exercise, then, unbeknownst to us, that we started to do for the census in the year 2000, that provided us a process to deal with it.

You wanted to know what happened between 1976 to 1979. Well, in 1976, when I went to Xerox, I said, "Some of the problems that you have sound familiar." So we brought Ian [Mitroff] in at that time, with Dick Mason, and started doing some of these assumption-surfacing techniques at the Xerox Corporation, so that we kind of refined what we started at the Bureau. So then, when I got the call to go back to the Bureau, there was no question in my mind how I would approach the adjustment decision, which now was clearly going to be a decision. I think this was helpful to the Department, where the question bothering Secretary Kreps at the time was, "How are you going to deal with this?" I said, "Here is the approach I'm going to use," and it made sense to her. We were able to forestall a lot of activity and a lot of decisions by saying, "No, we are going to do this in a systematic way, and so for all of you who want to make a decision tomorrow without the right kind of information, we are not going to do it that way, but we are going to do it. We will make a decision once we have all the facts, but I want

you to know how we are going to make that decision.” Those events all kind of contributed, I think, to a successful position that we took.

**Pemberton:** **The adjustment decision was made at the Census Bureau, rather than at the Department of Commerce?**

**Barabba:** Absolutely.

**Milton:** ... in 1980.

**Barabba:** Phil Klutznick [Secretary of Commerce] was very helpful.

**Milton:** **it did change, as you know, between 1980 and 1990.**

**Barabba:** I can't speak for that.

**Milton:** **No, I am not asking you to. I'm going to ask you a general question.**

**Barabba:** When I got back in 1979, it was very clear that the decision should be made by the Bureau. I've got some notes for a talk I gave at the PAA [Population Association of America] which outlined a little of this history, which I can make available to you. I think it might be helpful to organize these thoughts a little better. We had long discussions with the Secretary and with Courtenay [Courtenay Slater, the chief economist]. I listed the assumptions as to why the decision should be made by the Bureau. It was all a matter of perception. One of our assumptions (if you read that book) was that the reputation of the Bureau would have great weight in the eyes of the public—that this was an objective decision that was made for statistical reasons, not political reasons. We felt very strongly about that. It was very clear to the Secretary, who said, “Well, if it's that important, then you should make the decision.” So he wrote a very nice letter to that effect (drafted inside the Bureau), which showed up in the discovery, as I recall. But, God bless him, he understood it, he authorized it, he ran it past Courtenay Slater: the decision will be made by the director. That solved a lot of problems, but that whole history had no impact on the subsequent Administration, and a giant error in my mind on their part.

At that time Nathan Keyfitz had written a very important article about the different scenarios for making the decision. There were three of them, and we made a fourth, which was “no decision not to adjust.” Nathan's position was that we should choose one of those now, and we said, “No, those are worth thinking about.” So we created these four groups, with the three scenarios Nathan had plus that group that took no adjustment at all, and then we argued from those different perspectives. That is how that whole process got started, but Nathan's article was very helpful in framing the problem.

**Milton:** **In the light of what you went through with different Administrations, how does an apolitical agency operate, and the work they do?**

**Barabba:** You've got to be politically astute and apprise the political entities of the consequences of their decisions before they get locked in. That is one of the reasons the director should be a manager with some political sensitivity, rather than a great statistician. Now, if he is a great statistician and is politically sensitive, that is good too, but being a great statistician is not dealing with Bobbie's question.

**Milton:** **You need the political sensitivity.**

**Barabba:** The census is one of the most political things we do. They don't like to use that word, but it is a political event. In my mind, there is nothing wrong with these political decisions, but it started as a political event, it dealt with political issues when it was initially created, and to somehow say, "We are going to get rid of all that," is naive. You have to find a way to deal with it in the political arena. Now, you want to do it as objectively and honestly as you know how, but I would argue that there are a lot of my predecessors who made decisions about how they were going to report out the census, and how they were going to conduct it, that were far more blatant than some of the things that were dreamed up by the Nixon administration.

**Milton:** **When Atlanta filed suit, the mayor of Atlanta [Maynard Jackson] talked about the census. My recollection is that he said, "There are two important things—power and money.**

**Barabba:** "Three itty bitty things—money, money, and money," I think it was. It was at a congressional hearing; I think Ian quoted it in one of the chapters.

We went through that; the data came in. It was clear that most of the assumptions that would allow you to adjust proved to be untrue. The work we had done to improve the count of the undocumented population virtually destroyed any potential of using administrative records to come up with an expected count versus the actual count, because if we had done that we would have had significant overcounts throughout the Southwest. The quality of our post-enumeration survey and matching procedures did not meet our expectations. We went right down that list—all identified in the book—and we called into the Census Bureau conference room, fundamentally, all the key people who should have something to say about that decision. Not only the senior guys, but Chuck [Charles] Cowan was there—he was kind of young, and Bob Fay. They were the people who would have to live by that decision. We put up the assumptions and articulated what I thought I heard them tell me the facts were. I said, "Every one of you has had an opportunity to state your point of view; this is your last chance. We are going to make the decision." Silence. The decision was not to adjust. They all nodded their heads. Some were disappointed, but I think they all felt

they'd had a opportunity to get their points of view across. In my mind, the case was overwhelming not to adjust. That is the last we heard of it from the professional community.

There were still a lot of people out there with these incredibly complex formulas that were going to solve everybody's problems, which even the courts, even in their naiveness, were able to see through. Fundamentally, it was a relatively easy decision.

**Pemberton:** Was there an identifiable lineup inside the Bureau of people who were for or against it? Was there any obvious or delineatable decision?

**Barabba:** No. There were people who supported the decision, but I wouldn't say there was an "armed camp," because there was such an open process. Even at the last minute, we brought in a group of experts that we asked the ASA [American Statistical Association] to identify for us. These were real good people to whom we said, "Here are our assumptions and the facts as we now know them." The counts were in about that time—at least an approximation of the counts. Nathan Keyfitz, Harry Roberts [University of Chicago], Ivan Fellegi [Statistics Canada], and a few others said, "Vince, it is pretty clear that you are not going to get closer to the truth given what you are telling us. Now, if there is a change in what you are telling us, we might want to change our minds, but all the traditional procedures that you used in the past are fundamentally destroyed because you did a better job; you did it disproportionately. With one of the minority groups, you did a better job than you ever did before, but we don't know how well you did because we don't know how many of them there are. You might have gotten 10 percent of them, but there were so many of them then that you confounded the traditional ways of making the assessment.

So, the openness stopped it from being internecine warfare. I don't think there were any secrets at that point; everybody had a shot at what we were going to do, what we were going to say, and it was a meaningful experience. I found it to be one of the more enlightening things I had ever done or participated in. Although I made the decision, I really felt quite comfortable in speaking for the Bureau, because I knew that I had identified all the reasons why we should have done it as well as all the reasons why we shouldn't, and it was so overwhelming that we shouldn't [adjust]. Obviously, that is different from where we are today.

**Pemberton:** The key thing in your mind is the process by which the decision was reached and the fact that the people inside the Bureau—the technical people, whatever—had the chance to make their arguments, and the fact that the decision was made at the Bureau in 1980.



**Barabba:** Absolutely. And there is no way they are going to overcome that in the current environment unless they reverse that decision. All the outside panels in this world are not going to solve that problem.

**Pemberton:** **Well, as someone had pointed out to me, if you read the Washington Post, you could almost come to the conclusion that the case in fact has been resolved. As Bobby [Milton] pointed out to me, it hasn't been resolved; it has been placed on hold.**

**Barabba:** And they have a set of rules that can be very difficult to live with. Did you get all the points you want to cover?

**Pemberton:** **The bulk of the points. Did you have any sort of final reflection on your tenure—things you did that you are proud of, or things you might have liked to change that you did not get a chance to?**

**Barabba:** I remember I was invited to one of the first 1980 review meetings where they were talking about 1990. I think it dealt with some of the advisory committee meetings, and they asked me to come and give a talk. The Bureau always had a philosophy of having backup systems: If something failed, there was a fallback [position]; if that failed, there was another fallback. Sometimes we were always three or four deep on fallback positions. When I went out to industry, particularly Eastman Kodak, we had brought in some quality consultants. Their point was, "Do it right the first time. Make sure you understand what 'right' is and commit [yourself] to doing it right the first time. All these backup systems—get rid of them." Therefore, you know you have to do it right the first time. I thought about that, having just gone through this other approach with the census. In many ways, I think because of our backup systems, the Bureau has a tendency to say, "Well, if you don't get it done on time, we'll pick it up in the next wave." I think that is an error. I think most people who now understand why systems fail accept the fact that you have to have a process in which you "do it right the first time." My guess is there are several backup systems in the census that are geared up to take over because somebody fails, rather than designing a system that precludes failure. That was hard for my colleagues to accept at the time. They said, "There are certain things you can do in business: you can miss deadlines, but in a census, you can't." "Tell me about that!" I said. "You guys do it all the time! I don't think you can do this right with all these backup systems. You really should commit to doing it right the first time." In retrospect, I wish I had understood that better going through the Bureau the first time, because it might have been a more significant contribution. I was impressed by the backup system; it is a nice pacifier, an anxiety reliever.

**Pemberton:** **So the analog of the Bureau obviously is not to something like an airplane or a NASA rocket, where they do build in redundant systems.**

**Barabba:** I agree; that is not a good analogy. When you are developing a process that has certain activities that need to be done, if you know you can miss the quality by some acceptable margin, then the motivation to be within that margin is minimized. You will start finding ways to work to that target. You will start rationalizing, “Well, we’ll work an extra hour today, and tomorrow we can get back up. So we miss it; we’ll pick it up the next week.” You’ve got to accept the fact that you can’t miss it, and find a way to get there.

I think if Ed Deming [W. Edwards Deming] was in the room, and Brian Joiner, Tom Boardman—any of these statisticians who now help major corporations do better, they would say, “You have a backup system. Show me your process for doing it right the first time!” That is coming from our own profession, and yet I would imagine that the redundancy in the 1990 census is incredible.

**Pemberton:** **So it is not a process for getting it done that you’re saying the Bureau needs; it’s rather a process for making sure it is done the right way the first time?**

**Barabba:** The first time; and have a quality ethic in every aspect of doing it. The quality gurus will tell you everybody has a customer. That means you can be sure the data processing people have a customer inside the Bureau, the demographics section has a customer, statistical methods has a customer. You are supposed to say, “What are the needs of my customers? What do they want? What are their requirements for getting it?” As a supplier, what do I need to know, and what are my requirements for delivering? If you get that captured, which I don’t think you do very well—and not just the Bureau, by the way—then you could design a much more efficient system that probably requires less redundancy. That is a hard concept for the Bureau to comprehend, but I think it’s an important one.

**Pemberton:** **Do you think that is one of the marks that a future director might be able to leave? It sounds like a battle, a campaign that is going to take some time.**

**Barabba:** Yes; and I think they will appreciate it after 1990.

\* \* \* \* \*

The following refers to Mr Barabba's remarks on page 9 regarding the departures of Thomas Jabine and Joseph Waksberg in 1973.

**Barabba:** *Subsequent correspondence with Tom Jabine and Joe Waksberg has led me to insert this correction to my initial comments on the reasons for their leaving the Census Bureau.*

Tom, who was too young to retire, left the Census Bureau to take the position as Chief Mathematical Statistician at the Social Security Administration. In part he left the Bureau because of several personal experiences, of which I was not aware, that led him to believe the Nixon Administration was attempting to politicize the Census Bureau.

Although eligible for retirement, Joe Waksberg also indicated that the political atmosphere was an important reason behind his decision to leave. In his case, his retirement was strongly influenced by his concern that some highly respected senior Census employees had been encouraged to leave.

In fact both indicated that they would have preferred to stay at the Bureau with Joe expressing a desire to have participated in the planning for the 1980 Census that was just getting underway. Having gotten to know them and their capabilities, I wish I had been fully aware of their concerns and had been able to convince them to stay. We could have used their considerable talents.