

GSA Chief Gives Archivists a

By Thomas Grubisich
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After they recovered, the historians and scholars agreed yesterday that they had witnessed a bravura performance.

Rear Adm. Rowland G. Freeman III had told the learned men who run the National Archives that he knew their business as well as they did and he had a better way.

"I have a tremendous sense of history. I have helped make it," said Freeman, 57, the administrator of the General Services Administration, the house-keeping arm of the government. "I know where I'm coming from. I'm an expert in almost every area you work."

Freeman, seated at a table in the

Atlanta Woman Is Killed In Car Crash on I-95

A 51-year-old Atlanta woman was killed early yesterday when her car ran off the side of northbound I-95 and turned over near Fredericksburg in Stafford County, Virginia State Police reported.

The victim was identified as Carolyn Hines Harris. Police said her car ran off the road about 5:25 a.m. about two miles from the Rte. 17 exit.

chandeliered Archivist Reception Room, then told the assembled keepers of history he was not budging from his plan to save taxpayers money by shipping archival records from Washington to regional offices across the country.

The scholars didn't take it very well.

"That crazy bastard," muttered one high-ranking archivist. "I hope he doesn't shoot all his toes off," said another. A third said that at least Freeman had learned how to pronounce "archivist" correctly.

"The dispersal of records is the beginning of the end of the National Archives," complained Pulitzer Prize-winning historian John W. Toland, a member of the National Archives Advisory Council, the group Freeman addressed yesterday.

Freeman's decision to decentralize the Archives' records—which he says is part of President Carter's goal of "bringing government to the people"—has aroused widespread opposition in the research community. Even Freeman himself acknowledges there is a 50-50 split on the issue.

Freeman admonished his audience yesterday that he could not find anyone who could tell him what part of the office's budget went for records

preservation and what part went for records management.

Archives' Executive Director, John J. Landers, immediately handed Freeman a document giving just that breakdown. "He didn't ask me," Landers said, referring to the admiral's earlier complaint.

Differences between Freeman and the assembled historians emerged most dramatically when the admiral was told that one of his dispersal orders had been reversed by the acting chief archivist, James E. O'Neill.

O'Neill, responding to vociferous grumbling by historians and researchers, rescinded Freeman's order to send some Reconstruction area documents to Atlanta. O'Neill said yesterday that Freeman will understand when the issue is explained to him.

But Freeman displayed no willingness to compromise. "They're [the recorded] going to Atlanta," he said flatly.

In an apparent attempt to convince the intellectually high-powered group of scholars that he was their peer, Freeman said, "I'm a former college president." Before he was chosen by Carter to head GSA, Freeman was commandant of the Defense Systems Management College at Fort Belvoir.

Historian Toland argued yesterday that Freeman's plan to divvy up the

Geography Lesson

nation's historic records will raise havoc with serious historical research.

"If I'm working on a subject," Toland said, "it might encompass something happening in Boston, Philadelphia and New York. It's the subject that's important, not the place."

Splitting up the Reconstruction-era records, which are used by many researchers in the growing efforts to understand black life in the 19th century, "will make them almost unusable," said University of Maryland historian Ira Berlin.

"If this were done two years ago, we would not have been able to start our work," said Berlin, editor of all unfinished three-volume history of the post civil war period. "This [sending some records to Atlanta] will make our concluding work more difficult, if not impossible."

Berlin said the Reconstruction era records, from what was then known as the Freedmen's Bureau, should stay in Washington because they often require cross-checking with documents from other departments which are stored here.

Other researchers were concerned about the removal of other records. For example, Dr. Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, associate professor of history at Syracuse University and a

member of the Archives Advisory Council, said she was opposed to shipping Springfield Arsenal records to Springfield, aMss.

"If you're interested in how the Revolutionary Army was armed, its budget and the influence of other arsenals, you want the records in a central place," she said. "I would say three out of four historians recognize the value of having records in a central place," she said.

Freeman's aggressive style ("I am the head of the General Service Administration," he said yesterday. "The buck stops with me") has created widespread anxiety among Archives officials. They say they fear that Freeman's heavy emphasis on cost-efficient management could cause serious damage to the office, which stores everything from the Declaration of Independence to tax returns and handles 100,000 research visits and close to a million tourists annually.

"He's coming in with a meat ax, with a sledgehammer," said one policy-making official shaking his head in dismay.

The official cited Freeman's urging that the Archives put more documents on microfilm. "We have a lot of handwritten records, in different inks, on different kinds of paper and different sizes. This plays hob with photograph-

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Lobbyist Named Aide to Kirkland

Long-time labor lobbyist Kenneth Young has been appointed executive assistant to AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland.

Young, 52, has directed the federation's legislative department for the past year after having served as assistant director of the department since 1971 and as an AFL-CIO legislative representative since 1965.

Young will be succeeded as legislative director by his assistant, Ray Denison, 55.

ing. It's not always cost-effective. . . There are hundreds of thousands of chances of making mistakes, and have missing pages."

One Archives official consoling himself with a glass of chablis after Freeman's performance said bitterly. Here's a guy who runs a housekeeping agency, who's in charge of the toilet paper, furniture and cars, telling us how to run an archives.

"If it weren't so sad, it would be funny."