Longtime ASA member and former U.S. Census Bureau Director Charles Louis Kincannon passed away on December 14.

Kincannon was born an only child in Waco, Texas, in December of 1940, right on the cusp of World War II. His father traveled often due to his work for a company that owned furniture stores. As a result, Kincannon’s family moved frequently when he was a child. He was enrolled in three schools each year from first through third grades, which made it challenging for him to form friendships.

When Kincannon was in the fourth grade, his family moved to Corpus Christi, Texas, where they remained through Kincannon’s senior year of high school. He graduated in 1959 and went on to major in economics at The University of Texas at Austin.

In December of 1962, during his senior year of college, Kincannon received a telegram from Don Fay, then chief of the personnel division of the employee relations branch. In the telegram, Fay asked him if he would be interested in a job in economic statistics or computer programming. Kincannon, who had never taken a statistics class before, took classes in both subjects during his last semester and found he preferred statistics to computer science.

In June of 1963, Kincannon packed his bags and moved to Washington, DC, a city he had never visited before his move.

After a few years as a statistician in the industry division, Kincannon was encouraged by Bob Nealon to sign up for an internship offered by the U.S. Census Bureau. He interviewed with a panel of executives and was then placed on an assignment in the population division, where Max Shor advised and mentored him.

During his internship, he had an assignment in the Office of Business Economics near Dupont Circle, where he worked on input/output tables from the 1963 business census. After his internship ended in the early 1970s, he returned to the industry division, then the population division, before joining the staff of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 1975. While at OMB, he worked on statistical and regulatory policy during the Ford Administration and then served as the statistical liaison to Vice President Nelson Rockefeller’s office.

In September of 1981, Kincannon returned to the Census Bureau and was appointed deputy director and chief operating officer in January of 1982 by Bruce Chapman, President Reagan’s first director of the bureau. Kincannon also served as acting director from July 1983 to March 1984 and again in 1989. During that time, he directed the final preparations for the 1990 census.

In 1992, Kincannon and his wife, Claire, moved to Paris after he was appointed as the first chief statistician in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
Kincannon applied for the directorship in the spring of 2001 and went through many interviews with Congress and the White House. The process was delayed after the 9/11 terrorist attacks occurred. The Senate confirmed him unanimously on March 13, 2002, and he served as the director of the Census Bureau until his retirement in January of 2008. He served the longest of any director since the Eisenhower administration.

Of all his accomplishments during his career, Kincannon once said he was most proud of his work on the American Community Survey.

“\textquote{We had done planning and good formal testing of the ACS by the time I was named director,}” he said. “\textquote{I knew about the program and thought it was the most sensible thing to stop sending out the long form of the census when people are distracted by so many things. \ldots{} I was convinced of its utility and was convinced it would be a miraculous improvement to have data for smaller areas once a year instead of just every decade.”}”

During his long career at the Census Bureau, Kincannon was honored with numerous awards, including the Presidential Rank Award of Meritorious Executive, the Special Award for Excellence of the Interagency Committee on Information Resources Management, and the Commerce Department’s highest civil service honor, the Gold Medal.

To learn more about Kincannon’s career, you can read an \href{oral history}{oral history} given by Kincannon in 1992.