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Blue Ridge Parkway Oral History Project

Tape Index Sheet

General Topic of Interview: Mr. Sam Bushnell, His experiences as an engineer during the construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway
 Date: June, 18, 1996
 Place: Asheville, NC
 Length: 60 min.

Personal Data:

Narrator
 Name Sam Bushnell
 Address 29 Westridge Dr.
Asheville, NC 28803

Birthplace Waynesville, NC
 Birthdate April 30, 1914
 Occupations(s) Engineer
/ Contractor

Interviewer
 Name Jarah Ramirez
 Address P.O. Box 5945 MHC
431 Hill, NC 28754
 Title: Research Assistant / Interviewer
 What was the occasion of the interview?
Oral History Project
experiences of those who were
involved with the Parkway's construction.

Interview Data:

Side 1

Side 2

Estimated time on tape:

3 min.

5 min.

5 min.

5 min.

5 min.

~7 min.

10 min.

5 min.

5 min

Subjects covered, in approximate order (please spell out names of persons & places mentioned)

Education, Beginning work, Highway Dept.,
Background to Parkway Construction, Early 30's
North Carolina Background (Parkway Construction)

Camps, Mt. Mitchell Area, Contractors - Tyre Company
Access - teams, building + construction, People, Highway
Dept. More Information on Progress - his position / Job description
More-specific Explanation of Work - Locating, his
work ~~equipment~~ - Highway Dept., Roads, schedule
People, Workers, Equipment, Mitchell County
12 years total Highway Dept. - engineer, Life After
Working on Parkway

Use back of sheet if necessary

SIDE A

Mr. Bushnell showed me a map

SIDE B

INTERVIEW LOG SHEET

Depositor: (Interviewer) Sarah Ramirez
(Narrator) Sam Bushnell

Permanent address: Mr. Bushnell - 29 Westridge Drive, Asheville, NC 28803

Sarah Ramirez - P.O. Box 5945 Marshall College Marshall, NC 28754

Field Work Locations (state and town)

Asheville, North Carolina

Description of Interviews:

The Experiences of Mr. Sam Bushnell
as an engineer working on the construction of the
Blue Ridge Parkway in Western North Carolina

Tapes (number): 1

Accession number:

Other material donated(specify): none

Interviewer Agreement signed: yes

Release obtained: yes

Special restrictions: no

Catalog prepared:

Catalog number:

Remarks:

ARCHIVES WORK

Donor folder prepared:

Donor card prepared:

Tape copied:

Transcription completed:

May 13, 1999

Sam Bushnell
29 Westridge Drive
Asheville, NC 28803

Dear Mr. Bushnell:

Enclosed is a copy of the 1996 interview about your experiences on the Blue Ridge Parkway. This copy is for you to keep. The original transcription and tapes are being inventoried and stored in the Blue Ridge Parkway archives collection where they can be used by park staff and the public for future research.

I want to thank you for your participation in the Parkway Oral History Project and helping us to preserve the history of the Blue Ridge Parkway.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (828) 271-4779, ext. 243.

Again, thank you for your contribution to this very important project.

Sincerely,

Jackie Holt
Park Curator

enclosure

Interview with Mr. Sam Bushnell 6/18/96 Asheville, N.C.
(Interviewed by Sarah Ramirez)

SIDE ONE

SR: OK. All right. Um, first, what did you work, what was your position, when you started working on the Parkway?

SB: Well, you'd have to go back a hundred years or so, to 1931. I went to school at Chapel Hill, and left and came home. I was born and raised in Waynesville, North Carolina. Born on April the 30th, 1914. Graduated from high school when I was 16 years old. Went to Chapel Hill two years. Went to summer school at Duke University, at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. Four semesters, four quarters, at that time. And I went to work for the State Highway Department, on January the first, nineteen hundred and thirty two. I worked for the Highway Department for six and a half years. During that time, someone conceived the Blue Ridge Parkway. Who conceived it originally, I do not know. See, Roosevelt was looking for something to do with the people; he started the CCC. And that was— took care of a lot of young people, but it really didn't prime the pump. The economic pump. So the conception of the Parkway primarily was for the purpose of putting people to work. And Roosevelt, of course, went into office in 1932, as President. Thinking he was going to be able to complete the Parkway, during his term in office. Nobody really had the conception of the magnitude of such a construction. At that time, it was to have run from Front Royal, Virginia, to Soco Gap, North Carolina. The two people that I was to— Well, in the first place, I owed my job in the Highway Department to a commissioner, who was named Frank Miller, who lived in Waynesville, North Carolina. At that time, the Highway Department only had five divisions. At the present time, there are sixteen divisions. Each division has a commissioner. Mr. Miller, Harry Miller, was a commissioner. The man I was working for at that time, named Byron Marsh, he was from, oh, maybe New York. He was a graduate of MIT. And he was probably one of the better highway engineers that's ever been. Somewhere along the line, whoever in North Carolina decided they wanted— well, let me go back a minute. North Carolina and Tennessee were at odds as to which way the Parkway was going. North Carolina wanted it to go from Mount— I mean, North Carolina wanted it to go from Mount Mitchell all through the places it is now built. Tennessee, of course, wanted it to go over to Kingman's Dome. And of course, North Carolina won the battle. Mr. Miller and Mr. Marsh— Mr. Miller had a great big house in Waynesville, he lived there as a— he was alone, he never was married. And he had a large boarding house, which was not in use at that time. And so they stretched out a bunch of tables, in the dining room, and took Coast and Geodetic survey maps, where they were in existence. And selected the gaps, that the Parkway was to transverse. Through the State of North Carolina. Who did it in Virginia, I do not know. Anyhow, due to the terrain, and the inaccessibility of the location of the mountains— of course, the vista was the main object, and they had to get high to get it, and the way to get to the heights, in some instances, posed quite a problem. As long as you— you had to enter where there was an existing road, or some sort of a logging road, or mining road, or whatever. In North Carolina, from Wagon Road Gap, which is between Brevard and Waynesville. Was the last major road that was in existence, at the time the Parkway was built. There was one other road that was— it's now Route 15, going through Hardy Gap. That, from Hardy Gap, 215 runs from Rosmond to Canton. And the gap was Hardy Gap, that was between those two places. The next gap, the next major entrance was at Balsam Gap. And the next

SB: (Continued) entrance was at Soco Gap. So, probably the most difficult problem they had in access to begin the building, between Wagon Road Gap and Soco Gap. Soco to Balsam was the most difficult because it was highest, and had almost no access. The major accesses— go back a minute and start over, over at, say, Spruce Pine. From Spruce Pine to Asheville, you had several access roads that made it possible to build a large portion of it. But in the section around Mount Mitchell, there were two camps, of contractors, successful bidders on the contracts between Mount Mitchell and Oteen. Two of the contractors built camps, on the site, which required quite a bit of— in the first place, it was too far to transport a person and equipment. You had to have some kind of a place, camp ground. I lived at a camp for two years. I was working for Nello L. Teer company, from Durham. Who built several sections of the Parkway. I'm getting a little off—

SR: What was the name of that camp?

SB: Well, the number of the contract was 2N2, if that means anything to you.

SR: Well, it will mean something to the Parkway.

SB: It started— well, the Park— it was just— there was no name. I mean, you were in the mountains. There were some— for instance, that job started about a mile north of the entrance to Mount Mitchell, from the Parkway, now. And it was about five and nine tenths miles long. What they— the construction of the Parkway, as I say, was necessitated by accessibility. In almost every instance, during the first several years of construction, and actually on to World War Two. When World War Two began, of course, all the construction was terminated, was stopped. At whatever point, it was... (Pause) Anyhow, from Spruce Pine on to Oteen, we had the two inaccessible sections of about ten miles each, which required camps. Teer had one camp, and a firm Basilio and Rogan, from Roanoke, Virginia, had another, second camp. Closer to Oteen. Oteen.

SR: Oh, and the first one was from Durham?

SB: Nello Teer, from Durham. T-Double E- R. When I first went to work for Teer, they had finished, or they had either finished, or were close to finishing, three sections of the Blue Ridge Parkway, between Grandmother Gap, which is just North of Grandfather Mountain, and Mount Mitchell. The Bureau of Public Roads decided that the people that were workin' for 'em had to be under Civil Service. When they took the examinations, the people that were working and aware of problems, on-site problems, did not pass the exam, so, they had people right out of school that were aware of what they learned from books but they had no idea about what construction entailed. So when they got ready to cross-section, the finished product, they didn't know how to do, Teer hired me to do, go behind them. To check on whether or not he was getting paid for what he'd done.

SR: And what was your, I guess, your position?

SB: I was called engineer, and the time I got through workin' with him, which was twelve years later, I was chief engineer. They'd started ground roots and worked into one of the largest— probably the largest grading highway contractor in the United States.

SR: These questions are mostly for CCCs, or Park employees. So really, you've told me, you know, just anything you have to say. (laughs)

SB: Well, lemme just look at my notes here.

SR: OK, that's fine. I'll stop the tape. (TAPE OFF, THEN ON AGAIN)

SB: And Mr. Miller, realized that they were not politically astute enough, or had enough political power to sell this thing, to anyone. What selling needed to be done, I'm not aware of. But the man who was head of the Location Department was also quite a politician, was named R. Getty, G-E-T-T-Y, Brownie.

SB: (Continued) He was Chief Location Engineer for the Highway Department. The man who was Chief Engineer for the Bureau of Public Roads at that time was named... Spellman. S-P-E-L-L-M-A-N. Spellman. 'Course, Marsh and Miller sold the idea to the Highway Department here, and he in turn sold Mr. Spellman on the location. I guess, I get it mixed up a little bit in my train of thought. But anyhow, the Parkway had a greater impact on the Highway construction industry than any other thing for one reason. In the first place, in most states, and this state, particularly, there was no Highway Department until 1932. They think that's when it was started, I haven't been able to run it down. But in any event, before that the Counties built the roads. At the time, the Highway Commission began taking bids on construction of the Highways. Every yard of material that was moved was called Classified Material. You bid on rock and earth. Rock was determined by anything you couldn't plow with a plow. Well, most of the contractors would load the bid to their best interests, if they thought there was more rock, they'd bid the rock high. If they thought there was more dirt, they'd bid the dirt high. So, anyhow, in that instance, that became a Classified Bid. When the Parkway was let. In other words, if you were bidding on a job from here to Asheville, if it was Classified, you didn't have to worry about how much rock. You just bid it, so much rock and so much dirt. When the Parkway was let, all of the Parkway in North Carolina was let Unclassified. So the contractor had to walk every foot of the job he was bidding on, to try to determine how much rock was there. See, you didn't want the dirt, you could move, push and pull, and whatever they had to get—

SR: So they had to survey it?

SB: They didn't survey it. They had the plans, showing the depth of the cuts. But in no instance, at that time, did they make the— the Park Service or the Bureau of Public Roads, make any effort to determine the amount of rock or dirt. So it was the contractor's responsibility. And that became, in later years, most all of the states, went to Unclassified excavation. Now, it's just the rock is determined by sonar, all sorts of different methods. But at that time, it was the contractor's responsibility. Another thing, at the time it was conceived, the Parkway was determined by the engineers. The percent of grade that would be adequate for a car at that time. And it was determined that most cars would not operate efficiently at grades steeper than eight percent. Which is eight feet per a hundred feet. And then, where you had a real steep curve, of course, your grade was on the centerline of the road. And if you had a steep curve, the inside of that curve got considerably steeper. So they used what they call a compensating grade factor. Any curve steeper than a ten percent, you had to take one percent of the grade off, for each two degrees of the curve. Mountain. Anyhow, they— (TAPE OFF, THEN ON AGAIN)

SB: --job that was on the Parkway, and I had to be there when he wasn't mostly. The drills, that you used, to drill the holes, and where you put the dynamite to do the blasting, were, you had to— if you can conceive a five thousand foot high mountain, with no access, and up and down, and straight— some of 'em almost vertical. These drills weighed about— they were called Wagon Drills, they had steel wheels, and steel frames that supported the drill that ran up and down on a boom. The boom could be— it could be plumbed up. In other words, it would rotate, back and forth, in all four directions. To get that drill on top of the cut, you've got maybe five or six men in the drill crew. Say you had two drills, which is what we had at the time, we had two drills, two old ingersoll round drills that weighed fifteen hundred pounds

SB: (Continued) apiece. Two air-compressors. And two air-compressors would run four drills. So you had two, two crews. To get that drill up, of course, you had to just, you had all the chainsaws and come alongs, and you pulled it up from tree to tree, rock to rock, and you finally got it up there. And when you started drilling a hole, you'd drill a few feet, or a few inches, and then blow the hole out in order to get the chips out. Dirt and dust. If you hit water, which you did a lot of times, even at higher elevations, the water would splash up and get all over the men, and in the winter-time, their clothes would freeze on 'em. People were hangin' on the bank wantin' to go to work, so they had to keep working. (Laughs)

SR: I can't— I can't conceive of that. (Laughs)

SB: Well— (TAPE OFF, THEN BACK ON AGAIN)

SR: Yeah, that was one of my questions, what was the most difficult. You're answering all of my questions (laughs).

SB: Well, the most difficult part, of course, was, you couldn't take a 'dozer, or a shovel, power shovel, into the areas because they were too inaccessible. You could take a 'dozer and push the rocks off that were loose. But when you started up and it was all hard, you had to shoot your way up, literally. In some instances, you just drilled a short hole, and just make a bench for the dozer to get to, to get the overburden off. But to clear it, you had to, in some instances, you had to tie the people by a rope, to keep them from falling off the side of the mountain, to get the trees out of the way.

SR: Were there any accidents?

SB: Oh, yes. Numbers. Oh, so much. Fortunately, this job that we had, we had— I worked actually on four sections of the Parkway in North Carolina.

SR: Any of the workers die?

SB: We never lost anyone. Mr. Teer's brother was killed on a job in Southern Virginia, I can't remember. But that was before I went to work for him.

SR: That was dangerous, too. (Laughs)

SB: Well, in the first place, the units that you used to haul the material, the dirt, or rock, whatever, you could push— the cuts and the fills were so close together, you could usually push the dirt. But you wanted to save it, to come on top of the rocks, so you could get it smooth. So you had to push it somewhere, and leave it up in the hole, so you wouldn't have to move it again. But the old hauling units were called athey, A-T-H-E-Y, athey wagons. They were, they were on tracks. They were pulled by tractor. Hydraulic tractor. Those units, right under the center of these wagons, was a hydraulic lift. That would lift the wagon up and dump it. Well you had your clavisers on either side of it, so it would dump— if you had to close the clavisers on this side, and raise it on this side, to dump this way. To dump the other way you had to go the other way. Lots and lots of times, when they got ready to change the side, they'd forget to close the clavisers, and the wagon would go off over the hill. See, it wasn't attached to anything (Laughs) you had to get— we had to go out, we'd just have to go down and lug 'em, you know, and pull 'em back up. (TAPE OFF, THEN ON AGAIN)

SR: What were some of the people you worked with like? Did you enjoy workin' with them?

SB: Well, you know, lemme go back just a minute, I started with the inception of this thing.

SR: Ok. Wherever, yeah.

SB: Well, the way, the way the Parkway, after it was conceived, where it was goin', the Park Service had an engineer, with was what they called an abney level,

SB: (Continued) A-B-N-E-Y, abney level. That level had a bubble on it. You could set that bubble, that abney, on any percent grade that you wanted to. In this instance, when we're talkin' about the eight percent maximum. In order to compensate, he would set that abney on seven percent. And he'd start at each gap. And have a man with him, and as far as he could see, as long as that bubble was in the right place, this guy in front of him would blaze the trees. From the gap to wherever. The Highway Department of North Carolina, after that was blazed, you had two things you had to determine: you had to determine the elevation of the starting point, if you had a bench-mark somewhere that was— Most of the benchmarks, a lot of it in this part of the country were already established by the Coast and Geodetic crew. I worked one summer, into the fall, I worked from Wagon Road Gap, by Mount Pisgah, down to the French Broad River, I had a crew of six men. We would go by— we got an elevation, a bench-mark, at Wagon Road Gap--

SR: Now who would you say, um, put those benchmarks up there?

SB: The Coast and Geodetic Surveying Crew. Just a minute, cut that thing off.

SR: OK. (TAPE OFF, THEN ON AGAIN)

Uh, you were telling me about, Oh, OK, about the work that you were doing with the six-man crew. (TAPE OFF, THEN ON AGAIN)

How long did you live, you said, two years, in the camp? In those two camps?

SB: Well, by that time, everybody— well, lemme go back again.

SR: OK. All right.

SB: The Highway construction industry, was, the people had had— there was so little work goin' on, practically every major construction Highway contractor in the South, just the financial problem was severe. When the Parkway started, it was let in such small increments, that the competition was terrific. Because all these people had equipment stock, and I don't suppose there was a single project that I know of, that a great amount of money was made, 'except on the job from Balsam, the first job between Balsam Gap and Soco Gap, and that was a long time after the thing started. When they started— it's hard to keep this thing in sequence. But when they started letting the contracts at gaps, they would only go as far as they had the money, let's say, to bill on. And most of 'em, in this part, in Virginia, and part of North Carolina, they could let ten and twelve miles for jobs, because they were less severe in their terrain, and they had more dirt, which was moved at a lot cheaper price. But once that was done, it worked out that Roosevelt said, as I say, he was gonna build the thing during his tenureship, and actually it was started then, and wasn't finished 'till the late '80s. 'Course, most of it was, before then. But anyhow, how each ensuing President had something to sell. We've got these little stretches of road, stuck out here, and we've got to go to get 'em together. Well, (laughs) so they let another section, and then another section. Well, I got to consult my notes.

SR: OK. All right. (TAPE OFF, THEN ON AGAIN)

SB: One of the persons that I know, that was still, that was active in the, he had a, name was Clarence E. Boone. B-O-O-N-E. Boone.

SR: And you're telling me uh—

SB: Someone you might want to talk to.

SR: Yeah. And where does he live?

SB: He lives in Spruce Pine. His father started a small, had a hardware store in Spruce Pine. 'Course in Spruce Pine, there was a lot of feldspar and mica. One of the things that happened good in the Parkway, when they came along building this thing, they had people right there that were familiar with drilling and shooting rock. Which made it nice for the contractor. But anyhow, Mitchell Distributing Company is the name of this company. The main

SB: (Continued) finally get— lots of places, (indistinguishable). But to get the direction right, we didn't have— our instruments were mountain girley transits, which didn't weigh ten pounds, you know, they had to, couldn't weigh very— but to do that, in the daytime, you had to have a theodolite because you couldn't see—

SR: What's that?

SB: A theodolite is what the ships used to use to determine the direction. It's a heavy transit. But it's too heavy to carry around in the woods, and in the first place you can't got any place to set it up. So anyhow, usin' a mountain girley, you had to just— from your little books that you had, you could determine the polaris, it's an elliptical movement. It has to be right at the top or the bottom of the ellipse. You could determine the time— you could get the time of day or night, in which it reaches— What we'd have to do, we would take our— when we came to a gap, and we needed to check our direction, we would take the transit, and from the line that we were on, we would turn due North. With our compass, which was not very accurate. (END OF SIDE ONE)

SIDE TWO

SB: --From whatever direction it might be, we would turn due North. And on that line, say, we'd be at a top of the ridge, or somewhere where you could see the North Star. And we'd set two stakes about twenty feet apart, with a tack in one of 'em. We would have to get in the morning, and we would have to get at night. Sometime when it reached the ellipse. So that we could see it. We were workin' on the Wagon Road Gap section, we made eight trips in the morning, like, it was ellipsing somewhere between three and four o'clock, it changes every day. And we'd get up there, and leave Waynesville, where we were staying, and get up there and it'd be foggy, and we couldn't see, so we'd have to go back. (Laughs) If we couldn't see that small transit, we couldn't see it in daytime. So we had to keep doing that. (Laughs)

SR: (Laughs) So you hoped it wouldn't be foggy or cloudy. Oh, my.

SB: That's right.

SR: That's wild. Um, where were you living when you were doing that work? In Waynesville?

SB: Let me see. When I went to work with the Highway Department— we're gettin' away from the Parkway— I worked with the Location Department for six years. And during that time I guess most of the major roads, West of Asheville, were located. For instance, there was no road from Balsam Gap to Silva, except the Pig Trail. There was no road from Soco Gap to Cherokee, but a Pig Trail. Bear trails, we'll say. (Laughs) We located most of the roads when I went to work with Teer. And then later I was in business with a firm here in Asheville, Asheville Contracting Company, which I was Vice President of, then later I started my own business, in 1955.

SR: What was that called?

SB: Blue Ridge Structure Company. We built concrete structures. Bridges, dams, whatever. But anyhow, (pause).

SR: Uh, well you were saying that most of the roads, like from—

SB: Oh yes. Well, I was very fortunate, when I went to work with Teer, a large portion of the work that we did in North Carolina, I had located roads. For instance, all the way from Mars Hill to Sam's Gap. We located that road. Then went back and built it.

SR: Oh. I'm a student at Mars Hill.

SB: Oh you are? So you've used that. (Laughs)

SR: I just wanted to— I wasn't sure if I reminded you (laughs). Yeah, tell me, tell me a little bit more about some of the people that you worked with.

SB: Well, 'course—

SR: Were they from this area?

SB: Well, not many.

SR: Not many.

SB: Well, all of them dealers, all the labor, you could just go pick up hundreds of people, anywhere you were. You know, you had people standing— The camp that we had, that we built, it was— we sawed balsam timber, on the job, to build the camp. We built six, let's see, we had three, two-room cottages. For the Superintendent. One for me. And then we had two for the Bureau of Public Roads employees. Anyhow, then we had a large mess hall, and a sleepin' place for the operators. The laborers got there the best way they could. I mean, they would go, maybe there would be eight or ten of them, and they would have two or three big old pick-up trucks.

SR: Yeah. I've spoken to a laborer that worked up at Rock Creek Gap. And he had said that, yeah, that involved getting up at three in the morning, and walking to a certain point, and then someone with a truck would take him up, and that'd be another hour's drive.

SB: Well, I can tell you a little story, talkin' about Teer and people going broke. I got married in 1940, at that time—

SR: M-hm. I was going to ask you if you were married.

SB: Well, I lost my first wife, but I married again. Anyhow, Mr. Teer— I was living in the camp. I got married and my wife was in Hendersonville, she was still at home. He called me one time, and told me that he didn't have enough money to operate very long. And he wasn't gonna owe anybody any money, so he wanted me to call him every night, to be sure he had enough money to pay the employees. And I had to get somewhere where there was a phone. So I moved to Spruce Pine. And my wife and I rented a cottage up there. And I'd drive back and forth. 'Course, after about just a few months, he got back on his feet, to some degree, and--

SR: He didn't need to be called every night. (Laughs)

SB: Well, I didn't actually call every day.

SR: Yeah. Huh. What did your wife do, during the day?

SB: Well, she got up at four o'clock in the morning, and fixed my breakfast. I would eat lunch at the camp. And then I'd leave home, at four, or four thirty, and I'd get back home at 'bout quarter of eight. She'd have supper on the table. (Laughs) And I'd walk through to bed and go back to work. (Laughs)

SR: Oh, my. But you had your weekends off? No?

SB: Worked six days a week. And I had to work seven days a week, 'cause I was— By the time we checked the two men that I hired to work with me, to help measure the quantities on the jobs that were completed, when we started this job, see, the only thing we were really interested in was the amount of material being moved out of the cuts, the excavated, we didn't give a darn where it went. So we only had to take cross-sections, and reference points. In other words, we were taking sections behind the Bureau of Roads. Well, the Bureau of Roads decided we knew more about it than they did, so they sent somebody along and they would copy the notes, that we were making. So that worked.

SR: Oh, OK. Huh. And, let's see, you told me you know, where you were born, and that kind of thing. Uh, any favorite stories, or anything that you-- anything especially memorable? Everything's memorable (laughs) but um...

SB: Well, 'course, it's all really hard to think of my favorite story. We were talkin' about the people, I'll go back a little bit. The man who was Superintendent on the job, that I was workin' with, was named John Wilkinson.

SB: (Continued) And he was from Sarasea, North Carolina, which is down where the tulips are raised. And he just died, a few years ago, his name was John Wilkinson. And they had a drill foreman there, was named Cooke. And we had to have a powderman, his name was Jerry. Lot of the operators that I knew, 'course— At that time, the construction workers were really kind of a thing apart. I mean, they were not high class people. Most of 'em liked to drink, and most of 'em liked to not work unless they had to. But working the way we were working, and if they were in a camp, 'course, they were more or less destined to stay there till they got their first check or two. But in later years, of course, the employees, as a group changed, remarkably, between the Parkway construction days, and after war. Then you got into the people that'd been in the CB's. Or people that were educated to a greater degree. For instance, when I left the Parkway, when we finished that job, we had a whole bunch of old trucks on that job. We had what they called "quarry skips." We had a truck with a boom on the back of it. And the man would break— you'd drill and shoot the rock in the quarry, we had to do the crush for the stone on top of the— And then you'd throw the rock in these quarry skips, and they had hooks on 'em. The truck would back up and it had two cables that picked up this thing and took it over and backed up the ramp and dumped it into the crusher. Well these old skip trucks, we had, we were making one tractor out of two, because we didn't have enough money to buy the bars. When we took all that stuff back in to Durham, it looked like a Salvation Army pick-up truck. (Laughs) We went from there, we would move, and we would do well to move. We had a yard and a half North West shovel. All the excavating, it was a gasoline shovel, not diesel. We would move, if we moved a thousand yards a day, we were doing real well. If you're talkin' about going from one extreme to the other, when we moved, we built the Marine Air Base at Cherry Point, and we would move a thousand cubic yards an hour, with the equipment we had down there.

SR: And so you said you worked twelve years?

SB: Well, I worked twelve years, then I came back to Waynesville and started a little business of my own, and I decided I didn't— I sold it, somebody came along and wanted it worse than I did, so I went back to work with 'em again, and I worked— I'm one of the few people, I guess, the last job I worked with Teer, I did most of the bidding. He had a son who was in school that I was at the same time, in Cherry Point, he was Nello Junior, that just died, just recently. Mr. Teer had work all over the Eastern United States, and I took everything North of the Mason-Dixon line, and Nello had everything South.

SR: Oh. So where were you living then?

SB: In Durham, primarily, but I was gone most of the time. I traveled. I averaged about a hundred and forty thousand miles a year traveling. We had an airplane, we had— I guess, the only contractor I know that's built a road in Cuba.

SR: This is especially interesting to me. OK.

SB: I built a road in Cuba in 1951, just prior to the Batistas, and I can't even remember the name of the President, he was only President it seemed to me, three years. But it was in Camaguay province, which is in the center, about four hundred miles east of Havana. See, I'd fly down to Key West, and fly over, to Cuba. And I had to stop in Havana and pay off the engineers. Literally. And then go on out to the job, and stay there three or four days. The town was— I can't remember the name of the town, anyhow, it was fifty five thousand people, and one automobile in town.

SR: (Laughs) M-hm. Huh. I'm from Maryland, I was wondering about the Mason Dixon line, where you were.

SB: Turn that thing off.

SR: OK. (TAPE OFF, THEN ON AGAIN) Let's see. Anything else that you'd like to

SR: (Continued) tell me about your experience? You've answered all my questions.
(Laughs) (TAPE OFF, THEN ON AGAIN) OK.

SB: The Balsam Mountains which were so inaccessible and higher-- they had no roads on 'em, but in the Mitchell County Area, and around Spruce Pine, the location was fortunate in that the people there had been in micah and feldspar business, they were familiar with the drills, and accessing very difficult places. Out in the Haywood and Jackson County areas, you had two extremely large logging companies, lumber companies. There was one company, Sun Crest Lumber Company, had a large sawmill at Lake Logan, which is below this gap. And it burned-- the mountains burned above that, and got so hot, that the mill itself burned. And part of that old mill is in, still in the bottom of Lake Logan. The other thing that was pretty nice, at the other mill, they had dug, cut out roads, and laid part of the ties, crossties, up to Soco Gap back East. Or North, through the Balsams. And above Waynesville. On Balsam Gap. Part of that had been-- they had some logging roads, which made it accessible to a better degree than it would have. Most of that area of the Parkway was built from that section, they had a camp. I'm not as familiar with the section from Balsam Gap back as I am from back to Wagon Run, 'cause the rest of it I worked on practically all of it in some way.

SR: Yeah. Right.

SB: When I left Teer and went to work with Black International Contractors, I mean, we built several sections, in later days, it was one of the sections from Soco over to Cherokee. And I don't know, we did a lot of small work around Roanoke. But the man that's probably the most interesting person that I ever ran across was a man named Troitina. He did most of the masonry work that was done on the Parkway, Troitina.

SR: Yeah. Everyone has mentioned that name.

SB: It was Smith and Troitina to begin with, and then Smith and Troitina got unhappy and separated. And Brown, it became Troitina and Brown. Brown had been an inspector on the Parkway.

SR: Oh. M-hm. Now these were the Italian stone masons?

SB: A lot of those masons were-- Joe Troitina and I were real close forever. He never did learn how to speak good, but he could break your head with his hands when he was 85 years old, he was still hard as a rock. But he snuck people in, on the New Jersey coast, masons came in illegally. During the period of time, after he'd been here four years, then, when they put rock work in front of the House of Representatives, those illegal immigrants did the rock stone work, on that (laughs)--

SR: Oh that's funny. (Laughs)

SB: So when they got ready to get-- Joe just gave 'em social security numbers.

SR: Right.

SB: They had no social security numbers. So when they got ready to retire, they had to pass a law. They had to go through all this rigamarole. I think there was about eight or ten of 'em that were involved with that. For their children, particularly.

SR: Right, right. Huh. That's interesting. (Laughs)

SB: They lived in a cabin, ten of 'em. Right at the gap where the Parkway turns, where you turn off to go to-- they had a little old gasoline stove in there-- Hey, Susan, how are you? (TAPE OFF, THEN ON AGAIN)

SR: OK. But Mr. Troitina was a good friend?

SB: Yes.

SR: That's nice to know.

SB: They would walk in there, I don't think they ever changed clothes. And they'd

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SB: (Continued) been working up here and get grease, and black, and then it froze, and then they'd come in there and that old oil stove, you know. They didn't cook. I don't--it's awful, unbelievable. But they--but they knew how to do the rockwork.

SR: That's right. I've heard about that. Well, thank you so much.

SB: You're sure welcome. As I say, I have a problem thinking about what happened yesterday, but thirty years ago (laughs) is a long, long time ago.

SR: It's been, yeah. Thank you. (END OF INTERVIEW)

... FIRST GENERATION OF BUSHNELLS IN AMERICA

Francis Bushnell, b. Thatcham, co. Berks, Eng. abt. 1580, first appears of record at Horsham, co. Sussex, Eng. on the date of his 1st marriage and for twenty-seven years, he or his children are mentioned in the Church Register, after which the name disappears for some forty years. All the Bushnell records during this period pertain to him, his children, or his grand-children, with the exception of two entries which we have failed to identify, viz: Peter Bushnell, "a childe," bur. 21 Feb. 1622/3, and Mary, "wid." bur. 22 Feb. 1624/5.

In 1635, his five living sons left their native shore bound for America, and four years later he followed with his two daughters, Sarah and Rebecca, in the company of Rev. Henry Whitfield, aboard the St. John. After they had been at sea about ten days, the company formulated a covenant, sometimes called the "Guilford Covenant" or "The Plantation Covenant," upon which his name appears third, while that of the Rev. John Hoadley, who married his daughter Sarah, appears ninth. The company landed at Fair Haven, Connecticut between the 10th and 15th of July 1639 and two months later the deed was signed for their new settlement at Menunkatuck, purchased of the Quinipiac Indians, which they named Guilfords after the shire town in Surrey from which some of the emigrants came.

He does not seem to have been very active in the affairs of the colony, although his home lot of about three and one-half acres, on the N.E. corner of the roads now known as Fair and Broad Streets, was one of the choice locations. When his son of the northwest corner lot, on Fair Street, while the Rev. John Hoadley had a lot on the south side of Broad Street between Fair and River Streets.

Here he resided until his death in 1646, and his will, attested to by Mr. Henry Whitfield, the first minister, and William Leete, the first Governor, at a session of the Plantation Court, held 13 Oct. 1646, was the first document of its kind to be probated there. Both Mr. Whitfield and Mr. Leete, as well as the Rev. John Hoadley, were "Pillars" of the First Church of Guilford. ...

...from the Bushnell Genealogy Book by George E. Bushnell, 1945.

More Bushnells came over from England through-out the years. We hope to link everyone together.

The Bushnell Genealogy Book is a MUST HAVE!! Reply to the Bushnell get-together for information on where to order this wonderful book.