Bernard Elias Interview Log
Location: UNC-Asheville Library
Date: 6/24/03
Interview by Philip (Ted) Coyle
Log by Tonya Teague

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Date: 6/24/03
Transcribed by Tonya Teague
Checked by Philip Coyle

I first heard about Bernard Elias while on a hike at Old Bald Ridge, just off the Parkway near Richland Balsam. There was a Carolina Mountain Club crew working on the Mountains-to-the-Sea trail and they told me that I should interview Elias, "the oldest living member of the Carolina Mountain Club." I then got his telephone number from Peter Steurer, the club's historian. We met at the UNCA library. Elias, still quite spry at 85 (though having suffered a recent injury), greeted me wearing his trademark red hat. He has been a fixture in Asheville for a long time, once owning Ball Photo, and his family has deep roots in the area. The Carolina Mountain Club is important because it helped to begin the Appalachian Trail and because it works closely with the Blue Ridge Parkway on maintaining trails, particularly the Mountain-to-the-Sea trail. At the end of the interview, Mr. Elias promised to send me a copy of a video that the club had recently produced about one of its founders, George Masa ("The Mystery of Masa").

(001) PC: My name is Philip Coyle, I'm called Ted Coyle, it's June 24th, 2003 and I'm at the Ramsey Library of UNC-Asheville with Bernard Elias. And would you spell your name?

BE: My last name, Elias: E-L-I-A-S.

(004) PC: And when were you born?

BE: December 20th, 1918.

PC: And where were you born?

BE: Here, at Asheville.

(006) PC: All right, now. We were talking about your background and how you went to Duke University. Now, how did you end up going to Duke University?

BE: It had been a family tradition. All my ancestors and everybody had been a part of Duke. Like my grandfather was on the board of trustees, and, well, my father went to Duke, my three uncles, my aunt... Everybody went to Duke. In fact, my Uncle Kope married the president's daughter. He was in agriculture, that's what he studied and got into. He was working in Charlotte, for the town, on agriculture jobs.

PC: Now who was your grandfather?

BE: His name was Kope. K-O-P-E Elias. And he came from Charleston up to Franklin, North Carolina, and he married one of the pioneer families there, the Siler's. They dominate Franklin still because they were the pioneers and the earliest residents there. And he built a house there on a hill, which is now occupied by Angel Hospital. It's the most prominent place in town, so that's where my father grew up, and his brothers and sister and everything.

PC: And so then your father, what was his story?

BE: What was my father's what?

PC: Story. What did he... how did he get to Asheville and...?

BE: Well, he went to Trinity College, which was the founding college for Duke University. You know, Mr. Washington Duke gave money to the school on the provision they'd change the name of it from Trinity to Duke University. My Aunt Isabelle was the first woman to graduate from Trinity, or Duke. She was the first one to graduate before Trinity became Duke. So she got accolades on that basis that she was the golden girl because it was she that graduated just at the time Mr. Duke gave all the money to build the university.

PC: Now what did your father do?

BE: He was in business. He started here in the clothing business, then he got into the fuel business, coal and oil. And also, he built an ice plant here and things like that. But after electric refrigerators took over, he sold the ice plant just in time, and then he just let the fuel business take care of his income.

(038) PC: And so then you went to Duke, and then you were telling me...now you studied, you said, economics at Duke, is that right?

BE: Correct.

PC: And yet didn't immediately get into the field of economics, I guess.

BE: But while I was there, I delved a little into the science courses, and I took a one-semester course in photography in the Physics department. And it was just...I got enough background in photography so when I got into the navy, I was a storekeeper because of the economics background. But one day I was sitting in the barracks at the Norfolk Naval Air Station and they came in and said, "Gosh, they need a storekeeper over at the photo lab." Well, I just happened to be present when someone called that out across the barracks, and I said, "Oh, I've been in photography. Let me go over and talk to them." So they immediately assigned me there, and then I did the storekeeping for the photo lab. And then I changed my rating to photography. Well this was a good move for me because the man that ran the photo lab was the manager of Kodak's Hollywood processing plant for color films and color pictures. And so we started working together, and it was then I

got a commission with his help. And it was agreed that we'd keep on working together, and I transferred from the Norfolk Air Station to the Main Navy Filter Center in Washington at...actually, at Anacostia just on the outskirts of Washington. And the place was just filled with Kodak employees because they had all been pulled into the navy to work at the photo center because of the World War II activities. I got to know them all, so when the war ended, the manager of the Hollywood plant said, "Let's keep working together," so I went with him to Hollywood. And then while I was in Hollywood, I was still in contact with some of the officers I had met in Washington at Anacostia. So a group of them was forming a company and they had a contract to make documentary movies in India. So I left Kodak and went with them over to India, which was a three month job, but after the job ended, I spent another three months just enjoying India and learning about it, because I would have been there long enough to appreciate and understand the country. The average tourist is not too well attracted to India; they can't tolerate the poverty and the unsanitary conditions and the hardships. In fact, the hardships were there – this was in 1951 – and they paid you well just so that you could live comfortably in a hardship country. So it was a great job. And then I stayed on over there and went to all the great places of India, like the Taj Mahal, which was the highlight of my travels; it's just the greatest man-made site in the world. I stayed there a week and came back later for another week. And then I eventually got other jobs filming in Scandinavia and Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. And then, I came back home after the job ended in Sweden, and I hung around a while because there was another man from the photo lab in Washington that was getting documentary jobs in Indonesia. So I waited for a while, but he didn't get the contract and he lost it at the last minute, and so, then I went back to Kodak and they took me at Rochester at the home office, in color print and film processing still. So I don't know how much...

PC: So was that your...did you continue on there for a long time?

BE: Yeah. But eventually, they closed out my job because of the government interference; they claimed Kodak had a monopoly on film processing, and our department was really knocked for a loop because Kodak lost the suit from the government on an antitrust basis. I thought they shouldn't have, because they created the film and they just had to do the processing themselves; it was complicated films. So they weren't really in competition. They were just creating a finished picture, you know, by selling the film and then developing it because nobody else could develop it. But anyway, they lost the antitrust suit, and so they started closing out a lot of our facilities at Kodak.

(100) PC: How did you end up back here in Asheville?

BE: Because it was my home, and I just wanted to come back, and it was just the logical place to come after they... it wasn't practical for me to stay on at Kodak because I'd gotten into a position high enough that it was hard to transfer me into another department. Another department couldn't take me as a green person very well and pay me the kind of salary I was getting when the antitrust suit took over.

PC: So what did you do for a job when you came back to Asheville?

BE: I did some freelance advertising photography, and then I went into the retail business in photography. A camera store.

PC: Which camera store?

BE: Ball Photo. Which is still in existence on a different basis. They used to have three or four stores and now they've just got the one at the Innsbrook Mall.

(112) PC: I've been there, looked for cameras there. Let me ask you a question, which is... do you consider yourself an environmentalist?

BE: Oh, yeah. Fundamentally. I've been important in the environment and conservation. Like I organized the local group of the Sierra Club here. And I was a part of it...well, still am today. But I was really active in scheduling all programs and meetings and everything. Because I was a founder and I just felt attached to it; there were three or four others, but I'm the only one that's still around of the original formation group.

PC: Well, I guess that's an obvious question, but I wanted to just get it in your own words, but where do you think that your environmentalism comes from? What is it that inspires it?

BE: Well, I guess I could say Boy Scouts because the Scouts introduced me to the outdoors, and I just began to appreciate so much because I was deeply involved in scouting at the camp and all facilities of the scout movement here in Asheville. And I managed... because of my interest and, I guess, diligence, I became an Eagle Scout and got extra palms and all. So I really feel that when I look over my background that that's what got me interested in the outdoors.

PC: Do you remember...did you have an Eagle Scout project?

BE: In those days, it was not required. You just got twenty-one merit badges, and that qualifies you for Eagle, as long as you passed the merit badges successfully.

(137) PC: Well, now, I should mention explicitly that one of the reasons we're here is that you are the oldest living member of the Carolina Mountain Club, which has a long history in this area. How did you get involved with the Carolina Mountain Club?

BE: I guess I got involved just by seeing the announcements about their hikes in the newspaper. And so I just decided I would start hiking, because I wasn't doing anything else at the moment, just having gotten out of college and all. That means, for outside activities, well, I was working then at Acusta and all. But I just got into the Carolina Mountain Club in 1941.

(148) PC: Now, you mentioned Acusta because were talking about that before I turned the tape deck on, but you might mention what you did for Acusta.

BE: Oh, at Acusta? Yeah, that was... I worked with my father for a little while in the fuel business, but then this opening came up out at Acusta. The J. E. Serene Engineering Company were the engineers for the expansion of the Acousta paper plant--they were doubling the size of the plant--and they needed a rivet inspector and a rod man to help the engineers. So that was fine enough for me, it just sounded like a pretty good job, even though I wasn't trained or had any contact in the past with engineering or construction. But I went over, and the first day, they had me walking the steel beams high in the air to check the rivets that were being driven by the riveters. You're not popular with the riveters, because if they don't put the rivets in right, they're ineffective, then you have to make them chop them out, which didn't exactly suit them too well, to have me condemn their work. But anyway, they knew it was part of the job. It was a dangerous job, I mean, walking those steel beams fifty feet in the air, wind blowing or the rain or the ice on the beams, and they were wobbly anyway, since they weren't anchored, most of them. That's what I was there for, to see the anchoring.

(169) PC: And so, to get back to the Carolina Mountain Club, you joined in 1941. And I wonder if you can put yourself back, you know, now, sixty some years, and describe one of those hikes. Do you remember any of the hikes that you went on that first year?

BE: Oh yeah. We went over to the Smokies, one that's very distinctive in my mind. We had a camping trip over there, and we hiked from where our base camp was. And I can remember going to places like Andrew's Bald, and camping out at somewhere...I don't remember exactly where we camped, but anyway, it was...we went to places like Andrew's Bald.

(179) PC: Now, this was in the day, when I first got into hiking was sort of in the golden age, or of...well, I don't know what you'd call it. But in the 1970's when backpacking really started and became a popular thing in the United States...But in the 1940's, was it popular? Who were the group of people that comprised the club, and what motivated you all?

BE: Well, actually, I guess I did more hiking with the Boy Scouts and camping at that time, but from that, as I got older and all, I just shifted. And when I got out of college, I just shifted to the Carolina Mountain Club, because I wasn't active in scouting except as a scoutmaster. But that was only a limited time. Glad to get into the navy.

PC: Did you...I mean, I'm wondering about your setup. What kind of equipment did you use back then?

BE: It was really primitive. One problem, of course, was taking food, because back in those days in...let's see...that was...I must have been about fourteen or fifteen. In those days, canned food was about the only thing you could take, and boy, that was heavy. And we just had these simple, old canvas knapsacks that had no framework to them or anything. And we'd try to carry it by getting a pole, and two or three of us would carry the pole over our shoulders and put the knapsacks on the pole so we could all share the

weight, but the were so heavy, they'd usually break the pole. And we had just army blankets, you know, we didn't have nylon sleeping bags or anything. So we just had to take three or for army blankets. So all of that was really a load. And pup tents, canvas, which was heavy, a lot heavier than nylon. So we really trudged along. It's a wonder, I can't see now how we did it. Just as boys.

PC: I guess, from my perspective as a hiker, the best invention has been bug screens, you know? No-See-Um bug screens. Did you have bug screens on your pup tents back then?

BE: No, I don't remember insects being a problem at all. Skunks and mice were more of a problem. I can remember up on Pisgah, which is... we were camped up right there where the Parkway is now, up at Pisgah, and I can remember getting up in the middle of the night and looking out in the moonlight out of the pup tent and seeing five or six skunks on our eating table. And mice, they'd run all over your blankets or slide down your tent, field mice.

(224) PC: Now, if it was in forty-one, was the parkway through Asheville by that time, or was it being constructed, or what was the state of the Parkway then? That you can remember...

BE: It was just under construction, that's what I remember. But I don't...I know it was under construction in this area, here, but I don't know where the construction started or how long of a run had been constructed when I became aware of all the construction going on. But I did go up and see where they'd been blasting rocks and creating the road. In fact, I took pictures of it those days.

PC: Oh, wow...I wonder what became of those.

BE: And somehow, in that time, I met Sam Weems, as mentioned to you, who was the first superintendent of the Parkway.

(238) PC: Tell me about that; how did you meet him?

BE: I can't remember whether I met him first in his office or whether I met him on the Parkway. I just...because various times, I'd get involved with these engineers for some reason or other, and they'd explain to me how the tunnels weren't flat, they're all on an incline so that the exhaust would naturally go out. If they'd built them with the road just level and not on an incline, the smoke would have been trapped in the long tunnels. And so some of the engineers explained why they had an incline in each tunnel and things like that. And then Sam Weems...I didn't see a lot of him, because our paths just didn't cross much, but somehow I got to know him a little. And he told me, as I mentioned to you on the phone, that the biggest mistake he made was tearing down George Vanderbilt's handsome hunting lodge up there, right on the top of Pisgah. When I say, on the top, it wasn't the very top where the broadcast towers are now, but just... Today, you start the trail on the Parkway and go up to the top of Pisgah, there's a parking lot right there before you climb to the very pinnacle. And, so...

PC: So you said that that was one of his...he's told you that that was one of his big mistakes was tearing that down.

BE: Yeah, he said that his biggest mistake that he ever made was tearing down that hunting lodge, and he couldn't really explain why, but I didn't push him on it. But anyway, I guess he was just trying to open the area and make it just all-natural beauty with no homes. But still, he left that old inn there; he didn't tear that down. You know, they had a small inn just where the dining room is and everything now on Mt. Pisgah. You know, where they have the souvenir shop and all that. Well, just beside it, there used to be this small building which was an inn. They served meals and they had a few rooms where you could spend the night. And you know, in those old days, to get up to Pisgah, you had to go up a dirt road where it was all controlled. Cars would go up in the morning and come down in the afternoon. They had a certain, fixed time when you could go up or come down.

PC: Was that because they were doing...was that on the Parkway that you would go up or was it a different road?

BE: It was...I guess it was what is now Highway 151. I haven't kept up with all the history of it, but that must have been the way we went up, because that puts you pretty close to Pisgah. And then the road went on up to a campground up there. We would actually camp up there; we would hike on the Shut-In Trail, which still exists, we'd hike on the Shut-In Trail and go up there and camp at the campground.

PC: How would you describe Sam Weems as a person? What kind of person was he?

BE: Well, he was friendly enough, and he was easy to talk to. But I didn't have enough visits with him to think too much one way or the other, whether he was unusual, or routine, or what.

(299) PC: But now, you said that Granville Liles was actually a friend of yours. And so maybe you could talk about how that friendship developed.

BE: One of my earliest memories of Granville Liles...We got the Carolina Mountain Club – thanks to Mike Frome, who was a great conservation writer – he got us nominated for a trophy from "Holiday" Magazine for our efforts to protect the Smokies, because there was a threat of building a road from Bryson City to Townsend, Tennessee to supplement the Newfound Gap road, which we have today. And so we protested vigorously. And in those days, then Carolina Mountain Club was very active in defending the environment, and just active in conservation and everything like opposing the tunnel through Beaucatcher Mountain, here in Asheville, and things like that. And, anyway, "Holiday" Magazine sent one of their representatives; you know, that was a publication of the Curtis Publishing Company. Today, it's published by Reader's Digest. But anyway, they recognized us in a full-page announcement in "Holiday" Magazine, and they sent one of their representatives here to present the trophy to us. Well, we invited

Granville to come to the meeting when they presented the trophy. And so that's my earliest memory of him, when I got to know him as the Blue Ridge Parkway superintendent and all. Then I continued working with him in various ways, like the Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association; I was on the early board of that. And Granville Liles had worked in the Great Smokies as an assistant – I guess he was the assistant superintendent. And so he knew the Smokies well, and so when George Stevens got me on the board of the Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association, I was in a position, and Granville was still with the Parkway, as I recall, and I invited him to be on the board. And so I got to know him; we'd go to our meetings together and everything. So we got to know each other. And I know a... I gave eulogies of a sort from time to time, like at the meeting of the Natural History Association, where I'd get up and reminisce about him and tell, just a tribute. Because I knew him well enough to...And we're just like... When Gary Everhardt took over when Granville retired from the Parkway, when Gary took over, he worked closely with Granville to make the transition. And I'd see him; and Mike Frome would show up too, and they'd all get together and have huddles, and I'd be aware of them or part of them.

PC: Well, if you were going to give Granville Liles a tribute now, what are some of the things that you would say about him?

BE: Well, I guess, as I've mentioned, his greatest accomplishment...Well, he had some favorite assignments while he was with the Department of the Interior. I mean, he was stationed in Mammoth Cave and Yosemite, various, Rocky Mountain National Park, I believe that's the name of it. Maybe it's Estes National Park, I can't remember for sure. It's not far from Colorado Springs. But he was there. But he really liked this area. I think his favorite was really Yosemite because it's so massive. And Death Valley, he was a superintendent there, too.

PC: Have you been to Yosemite?

BE: I haven't been to Yosemite. I've spent a lot of time in Death Valley, but...

PC: Really? Now why Death Valley?

BE: It just fascinates me. And I like Furnace Creek Inn there, and the ranch and everything. Well, I got involved with some people from Beverly Hills, California that went there each year at Easter, and I started going with them there just as a friend, and I just kept on going, just because it intrigues me. So I got to know it fairly well, bed, water, and all the views from there and everything else.

(393) PC: Well, you were starting to talk about Granville Liles' work with Hugh Morton.

BE: Oh...yeah. I think Granville considered it his greatest accomplishment...because the construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway was at a stalemate because of the section around Grandfather Mountain. It was pretty well completed for its other sections all the way up to Shenandoah. But Hugh Morton was objecting to the Parkway, which wanted to go over

his mountain or around it or cut into it one way or another. I was never quite sure what route they selected to go over Grandfather Mountain or around it, or whatever they were doing. But it would have meant chopping into the mountain, and Hugh Morton, who was the owner of the whole mountain, having inherited it from his family, he refused – and went to court and everything – to protest any construction on his mountain. And so there was a long time there in courts, and contacts with the Department of the Interior, and everybody else; it just stopped. Nothing could be done. But Granville Liles, being the diplomatic type...(424)

Side Two, Tape One

(B001) PC: This is the beginning of Side Two, Tape One. You were saying that Granville Liles was a smooth and likable type?

BE: Oh yeah, so he got together with Hugh Morton, in one of their periods of negotiation and they concocted the idea of putting a bridge around Grandfather Mountain. So they built the Linn Cove Viaduct. And that enabled the Blue Ridge Parkway to be completed from its entire length from the Smokies to the Shenandoah. I can remember, we had a meeting up there at Grandfather Mountain, and I can't remember if whether it was...I guess it was a big gathering, a big celebration, for the completion of the Parkway, and one person that might give you some good information about the Parkway... at that time, Randy Pope was superintendent of the Smokies and I remember, he was up there at that celebration for the completion of the Parkway. And he may know background about it all that I just don't know, because he was a very desirable superintendent of the Smokies. In fact, Elizabeth Dole was even there at that celebration, who is now a representative to the Senate from North Carolina.

PC: Then representing the Department of Transportation, I believe.

BE: Yeah. That's right. That's how she happened to be invited and be there. In fact, I have pictures of her and Granville at the rostrum.

(B020) PC: I'm interested in the transition in the Carolina Mountain Club from a political advocacy group to just a trail maintenance club. Maybe you could talk about that. Why do you think that happened, and is that a good or a bad thing?

BE: Well, I think it's something that just happened gradually. I guess with change of officers of the club and some of the older people passing on, and somehow our efforts along the political lines and protection and conservation, and lines like that, somehow we eased away from it. I guess it's just change of officers and approaches. And then there was a big demand, of course, for trail maintenance and trail construction. And so I guess, without my being sure, I guess they just started emphasizing construction and maintenance and pure hiking, and they just... And then, too, we got a lot of new people here that didn't have the political contacts or the local contacts to really protest and agitate and try to protect the Smokies and everywhere else, just like we didn't want to build the cut through Beaucatcher Mountain here at Asheville, things like that. But we

old timers wanted to defend it all, but the new people didn't have the contacts or the background and they more or less just graduated into hiking, pure hiking, and lots of hikes. I mean, we still have three hikes every week of the year. And then camping trips and things, canoe trips. And just somehow, it all just eased into no conservation or work along those lines.

(B043) PC: Well, I guess the Mountains to the Sea Trail is a pretty heroic undertaking to both build and maintain that. Are you all the primary people behind that, or what's the relationship between the Carolina Mountain Club and the Mountains to the Sea Trail?

BE: Well, Arch Nichols, who was a former president and extremely active member of the Carolina Mountain Club, he worked for the Forest Service, so he had a lot of good contacts. And he got an idea on his own; he just knew the Forest Service property and all the peaks and ridges and streams; well, he just knew it. And particularly, he was active in the Appalachian Trail, which of course, runs through this area. Anyway, he could see the idea of having a trail going from the Smokies to Mount Mitchell. And that was sort of the groundwork where the state sort of took it over. You know, the Mountains to the Sea Trail is a state supervised and maintained trail. It's purely a state trail, although I don't think most people realize it because it primarily, in this area, goes over federal property. But that's just because by putting it on federal property, they didn't have to get easements or buy land or anything. They could just work with the Department of the Interior and Forest Service just to where they put the trail. And a lot of it is just existing trails that have been linked together. They were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, and just early people that sort of...from using and going into the mountains, they just made trails of their own, following old animal paths and things.

PC: Or old logging roads that have been reclaimed.

BE: Yeah. But basically, the Mountains to the Sea Trail doesn't go on--in this mountain area--doesn't go on the old roads to my knowledge. Primarily, it's strictly a trail. Maybe there are some places that was using old roads, but now, they have to get into old roads when they get out of the mountains and get into the piedmont because there's not much federal land down there. In fact, I've even heard some talk that they think the Mountains to the Sea Trail can't go all the way to the sea because it's such a problem getting permission or buying the land to run it all the way to Jockey Ridge State Park on the coast. So there's some point of...they think they might have it just a bicycle trail starting in the piedmont or take advantages of canoeing in certain spots. So it's still up in the air, because they don't really have the exact paths worked out or thought about to get all the way to Jockey Ridge State Park. They're dabbling at it, trying to see what route they can work out, but now that people have claimed that... There are only three people I know of that have made the entire trip from Clingman's Dome to Jockey Ridge State Park, and they mostly have just, after they left the mountains, have gone on old roads and things like that.

(B085) PC: You have a long history working in the environmental movement for conservation issues. What are some areas that you would like to see people working on in this region over the next fifty years?

BE: Meaning creating something new?

PC: Or just things that you see that you might not have time to work on, but that people should work on in the future.

BE: Let me see...I haven't to happen of thought of anything right off hand...

PC: Here, I'm going to pause the tape deck and give you time to think. [*paused*] So I paused the tape to give you a little bit of time, and we're on again. We're recording again, yeah. Yes, we're recording.

BE: Is it coming through well?

PC: Yes, it is. Here we have the dials here that can show it; this is mine, and this is yours. And so I was asking you about...if you could set an agenda for the environmental movement both regionally, but also nationally or internationally, what are some ideas and... And you mentioned our current President.

BE: Well, I have concerns about the threat of drilling oil in the National Parks and having all these snowmobiles, like in Yellowstone, that are a real problem. They disturb the animals so seriously; they heavily pollute the Park so badly that the rangers and others in the wintertime, when the snowmobiles are there, they have to use special breathing equipment in order to survive when they're in their ticket booths and things like that. And all this upsets me because, like, the present administration will condemn the snowmobiles, but under the Democrats of Clinton and all, they ruled them out. But then the snowmobile industry sued the Park Service, and so Bush and his cronies backed down and just let the snowmobiles continue going in there. But it's just bad. It's not necessarily they're...if people have got to have snowmobiles, they can go somewhere besides the National Park where they all congregate by the hundreds on certain days. You know, they're just bumper to bumper. And so things like that worry me, and drilling oil, and then they keep trying to take over certain areas for development rather than leaving them as National Parks or protected areas. In fact, we had this threat some years ago when James Watt was head of the Department of the Interior. Well, Bush is just as bad or worse than James Watt was. And his whole administration is that way; the present head of the Department of the Interior and all of them think in terms of sort of commercializing it, or not protecting the animals or anything. Just to think purely in terms of commercialism. I guess... I guess that pretty well shows my attitude.

(B128) PC: Well you were, I mean, in that regard I guess, the Blue Ridge Parkway also has... On the hand, you like it. On the one hand, you don't. Maybe you could talk about that.

BE: Oh, you mean my concern about the fact that the Parkway goes across some of our main mountains and cuts through them and all? Well, I just worry...I like the idea of the Parkway that it makes so many trails accessible, because a lot of them we just couldn't get to easily without camping out or something. But now it's opened up a great new opportunity for hikers and visitors to get on the trails and really learn about our woods and our forests. So in that way it's good, but all I really am concerned about is the traffic on the Parkway where automobiles drip oil and gasoline and antifreeze, and this all washes down into protected areas like the Asheville Water Shed. And so I have that concern; sure, they have these rules about you can't stop at certain places because they don't want the water shed polluted or other damage. So I have two approaches. But I must confess and admit that the Parkway certainly has made hiking a bigger thing with so many people that can hike, get to trails easily, and the trails aren't...It just makes a new trailhead for lots of them, that's what it amounts to.

PC: I guess I just find it ironic that on the one hand, there's maybe more people hiking and even more people maintaining trails, but then on the other hand, there's not really the political focus that there was twenty years ago, thirty years ago, or forty or even fifty years ago, you know, when you started with the Carolina Mountain Club. More people on the trails, but less in their heads about the environment for some reason. I don't know why. Maybe you could tell me about your hat. [*laughing*]

(B158) BE: Well, it's just my red hat that, one day...well, I was beginning to get these keratosis spots on my scalp, which can turn into cancer. And so I decided I'd better start wearing a hat. So I went to Diamond Brand, the only hat that seemed acceptable that had a brim and everything to protect my head and my ears and nose and everything. And they only had one hat that seemed suitable, and it happened to be a red one. And so I said, well I'll just take that, and I started wearing it and it was successful, and inexpensive, and effective. And, so, this is years and years ago. I can't remember exactly when it all started. But it became a tradition, everybody expects...I can go to the barbershop or anywhere now, and if I don't have it on, people want to know, "Where's your hat?" Or go into any store, "Why don't you have your hat on?" And for some reason, I guess, it's just a part of me, and it seems to be an acceptable appearance so I don't wear it just for hiking any more, I just wear it everywhere because I'm so visible to everybody. But it's funny; complete strangers, little girls sitting on benches, they all say, "I like your hat!" And it's incredible. They don't know me or anything. Go to a cafeteria, people will, if I still have it on, "Gosh, I like that hat!" It's universal; I just can't... So I just persist and keep wearing it.

PC: Well, for the record, I should say that it's an F and M, one hundred percent wool crusher, and you were saying that the Diamond Brand did stop carrying it at some point because they went towards baseball caps, and then you just started buying it directly from the supplier.

BE: Yeah, I get them five at a time from the factory. I save a lot of money, and then I have them on hand when I need a new one because dry cleaners won't touch them. Well, they're inexpensive; I only pay five or six dollars or something like that. That's for a

whole batch of them. I don't know; I used to wear a baseball cap in the Navy on carriers and all. That's where I first saw baseball caps, was on aircraft carriers. I don't know how they ever happened to choose it. I don't know whether it's more effective in the blast of wind and takeoff exhaust, or what, but anyway, aircraft carriers were the first place I ever saw baseball caps, other than on baseball diamonds.

PC: On this hat you have some pins. Maybe you could describe the pins.

BE: Well, they're just pins that...I had a close friend who was a scholar in Austria, and this is a pin from Gratz in Austria. And the same girl went to Turkey, and she brought me this one, which is from the Turkish flag. And the other is just, a woman went to Scotland and just brought me this one of a hiker. Just because it was appropriate for me.

PC: Who was your friend?

BE: They were the Squire family, Squires family. They lived here, now they live in Wrightsville. So Jeanette was the one that was the scholar in Austria. She was the one I was closest to because she had back surgery, and it was pretty serious, because she had scoliosis and it was corrective surgery. And so every day, while she was convalescing for weeks and weeks in her home near me, in Biltmore Forest, I would go take her for a walk, just for exercise and just help speed the healing. So we just became close friends. In fact, we took a trip together for three weeks to Scandinavia, since I had worked there in filming. And I wanted to go back, and she had never been there, so we took a three week trip together while she was still studying and working in Austria.

(B219) PC: Now, you are a resident of Biltmore Forest, so I have to ask the question about the deer in Biltmore Forest.

BE: Well, we moved to Biltmore Forest in 1923. My father built a house, and that's when it was completed and we moved in. And even in those days, one of my joys was looking out the upstairs window and seeing deer cross our property. So they've always been in Biltmore Forest, so I've accepted them and enjoyed them. But they've become more prevalent lately because they've come over from the Biltmore Estate where they're basically protected, although they have to thin out the herd from time to time with organized hunting, because it gets just too much. For all their grape harvest and everything, it's a problem for them if they get too many. So...I don't have any. I started living near Hendersonville Road, and the deer just don't come over. The ones that are close to the estate, they come out of the estate, and there's no real barrier. The Biltmore Estate has a barbwire fence, but it's not enough to keep the deer out. It's just three strands about three feet high, so that's more of a marker than it is effective fence. So the deer, in all their glory, just come around the fence or over it, where it breaks down or they have openings. But they can jump it anyway, so... A lot of residents, particularly newer residents, enjoy all their expensive plants and flowers, and that's fair game for the deer. They eat them all up. I don't care whether it's roses with all the thorns and everything. But the deer just come, and the people just can't have any flowers or anything. All of them try different methods. There's certain sprays you can buy so the deer won't eat the

plants, but nothing seems effective. My recommendation has been that the town put up a fence right close to the Biltmore Estate fence, a chain link fence, because that's what the North Carolina Arboretum over here at Asheville...they have to keep the bear and deer out of there, or otherwise, they just couldn't operate because they'd gobble up all their expensive plants and beautiful gardens. So I would like to see the town put up a fence like that, but some residents that live by the estate object to the idea of a fence. They say it will interfere with the value of their property, that a fence back there would make their property less desirable. But there's a fence there already, the little one from the Biltmore Estate, and they could paint any chain link fence black and you would hardly know it was there. Well, there's no objection around the Arboretum, so I've recommended it at town's meetings and a lot of people subscribe to it. But it would be an expense and some people question the effectiveness of it. They think the deer could find a way anyway, but I think it would work. It sure works for the Arboretum.

(B274) PC: Now Biltmore Forest is also right along the Blue Ridge Parkway, and have you been involved with issues between the Blue Ridge Parkway and the village of Biltmore Forest?

BE: I haven't heard any objections or protests. Never. Never even when the Parkway was just being constructed or anything.

(B282) PC: Well, let me see, I wanted to ask you what it was about the Taj Mahal that was so impressive to you? That you would go back after a week, two full weeks.

BE: Yeah, well, it was just one of the great experiences of my life, and I think what contributed to it... I had heard that the best way to see the Taj Mahal was on the night of the full moon. And so I planned my first visit there to go on the night of the full moon. So when I got to Agra, which is the city in which the Taj Mahal is located, I stayed around the hotel watching the bird trainers and snake charmers and the rest of them until dark. And then I went out to... the Taj Mahal is only three or four miles outside of town. But you can't see it very well because it's surrounded by a brick wall. Most people may not realize that, but you have to go through an opening in the wall, a door...

PC: A gate?

BE: What I did...I just didn't see the Taj Mahal at all until I got out to the brick wall and started through the wall in the opening. And then, all of a sudden it just pops out of the night, and you see it; you're just stopped in your tracks, you're just overwhelmed. And everybody around you seems to have the same feeling about it. You feel close to God, or you feel closer to the people you love. A tingle goes up your spine. It's just an amazing experience, and people just stand there aghast because it's so beautifully designed and it's white marble and it just...or maybe it's a little off color, maybe it's slightly cream colored because of time. But anyway, it's just the experience, and it's all there in its own solitude. And I know, the night I was there, Frank Capra, the movie director was there, and he was just as overwhelmed as I. And I tried taking pictures of it; it takes a long exposure, like thirty minutes. But what happens then, all the stars make...when you open

the camera for thirty minutes, the stars make arcs in all directions. So the best pictures are in the daytime. Otherwise, the sky sort of takes your eyes off the Taj Mahal just a little.

(B332) PC: Now, have you taken a lot of pictures around here?

BE: Oh yeah, on hikes...

PC: Oh, I almost forgot to ask you, too. Where are some of your favorite places to take pictures around here?

BE: Well, of course, Tuckasegee Gorge, which is close to you at Cullowhee. It's my favorite place, I guess. You know, it's a difficult place to go through. You have to engineer your way through, crawling around rocks, through rocks, over rocks, and you have to be careful. And it's not for everyone; in fact, I often take groups in there, or I have in the past, and they all get through and they say, "Gosh, I'm glad I did that, but I'm not going to do it again," because it's so difficult and it's threatening to try to engineer your way around these and not get wet or fall in. So it's my...another favorite place is Grandfather Mountain. I just like the experience; well, the mountain, of course, is magnificent. But I like the experience of crossing it. They've got wonderful trails where you have to climb ladders and go up across big rocks, and all of it is just an exciting experience. But both of those places I've taken a lot of pictures.

(B361) PC: Speaking of exciting experiences, you almost died on that Carolina Mountain Club hike, did you not?

BE: Yeah, once, down near Lake Lure...it's a place I'd been to often. And I was on top of this mountain, and there's a little stream there which I had crossed dozens of times. But this one particular time, there was just a little, just a very light stream flowing over this rock. I mean, just enough to wet it. But it can be slippery, and I stopped in the middle of the water, and warned the fellow behind me, "Watch out, it's slippery here." But by doing that, I lost my momentum, and when I started up again with my little dog on a leash, I slipped and went crashing down a little waterfall. And I slid down for about a couple hundred...oh, I guess a hundred yards, and I realized, I thought I was going to go over the side of the mountain. But what happened...it was just, it looked like the side of the mountain, but actually, it dropped off into a little pool. So what I did just before I got to the drop off, I straightened myself up – I was sliding on my seat – and just before I got to that drop off, I tried to straighten myself out and get out of it, but what it did, it put me in a pinwheel, face down. So I went over face down and caught myself with my hands when I dropped about ten feet. But what happened...my arms didn't get hurt at all. But what happened was I landed on a rock; it was just a small rock about six inches in diameter, and it hit my hip and it broke the socket of the hip, the acetabulum. And I couldn't move...oh, for the first ten seconds before the pain hit in, I got up on a dry rock with my feet in the water and sat there, but I couldn't move another inch after that. So the leader of the hike was from the Lake Lure area, Nyna Forbes, and Norma Forbes, sisters, and they knew a mountain doctor down there that was accustomed to rescue operations. So Nyna was leading the trip, and when she walked down the mountain for about a mile,

she immediately got in touch with this doctor who came to me after I had been in the water maybe two or three hours. By the time he... he got up there, and he had a radio walkie-talkie with him, and he called the Rescue Squad from Hendersonville to...(B424) [tape ends abruptly]

End of Interview.