

3rd Priority

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Tape Index Sheet

General Topic of Interview: Parkway Agronomy 1945-75

Date: 10/25/96

Place: Phone Interview - Spruce Pine, NC - Ranger Office to Pensacola FL.

Length: 1 hr 3 mins

Personal Data:

Narrator

Name William "Bill" Hooper

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Birthplace Mebane, NC

Birthdate _____

Occupations(s) Parkway

Agronomist 1945-75

Interviewer

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Title: Interp. Ranger

What was the occasion of
the interview?

Park oral History

Interview Data:

Side 1 Local people Anecdotes

Side 3 - Soil Conservation practices

Side 2 Agricultural Leases, etc

Estimated time
on tape:

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

1602

Slope stabilization

Mebane, NC, Chatham,

1605

Plow, Right of Way

Guilford, Appalachian State Univ,

1609

Roy's Shotgun

Levinowski, Potty Lockamy,

1614

Hemp Ashley

Hemp Ashley

1619

Yelan gain encroachment case

Stob

1630

Mrs. R's bushes

Glendale Springs

1635

Grandfather Mtn.

Mr. (Hugh) Morton

1640

Agricultural Leases

1647

Stanley Albot's Genius

1700

Soil Conservation practices

Natchez Trace

Mr. Diuguid

Use back of sheet if necessary

TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

JM: ...basic questions, like, what, what is your birthday.

BH: March 3, 1911.

JM: Did you say March?

BH: March 3, 1911.

JM: OK, and where were you born at?

BH: Mebane, North Carolina.

JM: Could you spell that?

BH: M-E-B-A-N-E. Mebane.

JM: Ooh, OK. I've seen that, I've passed by that before. OK. Mebane, OK. Matter of fact, we have some people in Julian Price Campground that stayed there, that was from that area too. Um, where were-- were your parents from Mebane as well?

BH: Well they lived there, but my mother was from Virginia, uh, Chatham, Virginia. That's just north of Danville. Sylvania County. Dad was born in Guilford County, North Carolina.

JM: OK. How many years did you work on the Parkway?

BH: Oh, good gosh.

JM: (Laughs) Hard question. When did you begin?

BH: 1945, it must've been thirty years, I guess it is.

JM: OK, what year did you retire?

BH: '75.

JM: 1975? That's a long time.

BH: That's about thirty years, yes.

JM: OK, where-- did you go to school before you began working on the Parkway?

BH: Did I what?

JM: Go to school, attend a University or College?

BH: Well yes, of course I did. (Laughs) My graduate degree was in Appalachian State University at Boone.

JM: OK, that's where I'm workin' on my Masters Degree at too.

BH: Yeah. And uh, I did some more work with NC State. And I also hold a certificate in Real Estate Law, at University of Virginia.

JM: OK. And I guess that's where you got the background ^{to} ~~of~~ being an agronomist. Did you have another job before you began on the Parkway?

BH: Yes, twelve years, two years of Civilian Conservation Corps, ten years with the Department of Agriculture.

JM: OK, did you work in North Carolina with the Department of Agriculture?

BH: Yes, yes. Altogether. North Carolina.

JM: Were you the first agronomist on the Parkway?

BH: Actually there was a man named Levan Dowski. If you want me to spell that it's L-E-V-A-N D-O-S-K-I. A Russian immigrant who had that title. And we don't know exactly what became of him but during the war he left Roanoke, Virginia, and that's all I ever knew about him. I knew him, personally. Uh, he, I don't know why he was an agronomist, 'cause he wasn't. But that's the job that he had with the Parkway, with that title.

JM: OK. So when you came there, you pretty much had your work cut out for you, I guess.

BH: Yes, not much had been done in the way of land management, land leasing, anything like that. And then there was a, there were some old problems that

BH: (continued) Sam Weems knew of, an agronomist was interested in. And one was a slope stablilzation on the Parkway Motor Road. The slopes there were just left because of the War cancelling all construction. And the slopes were left just to fill the side ditches, and they were workin' so much, and they were costing so much money to dig that dirt out and haul it away all the time. And so we had to stabilize those slopes, that was one of the things that he wanted me to do.

JM: How did you go about stabilizing them?

BH: Oh well, we would scarify (?) the slopes, by that I mean dig it up or whatever it is, prepare a seed bed, and they thought-- I said they, seemed like on parks, ever since they thought they had to haul in top soil and put it on there. But that's not necessary, and I knew it. So, we just went right directly to seeding, fertilizing, liming, and marching (?) always marshing. And uh, those slopes are still good today. And then the other thing was to put in the right kind of grasses, to suit the soil and the altitude, and all those things. Then there was a fire hazard, because the grasses that they were using, were temporary, like orchard grass, and ~~lespedeza~~ ^{lespedeza}, an annual ~~lespedeza~~ ^{lespedeza}. They would dry out as soon as frost came. And if anybody dropped a cigarette on it they woulda had a fire. We used to have fires all the time. But when we put in the new grasses on these slopes and shoulders, uh, I never, I haven't heard of any fires.

JM: OK. Were you, as the agronomist, assigned to the entire Parkway?

BH: Yes. Yes, yes. And well, up to, if you want me to elaborate just a little. That's correct, 'course the Parkway wasn't all constructed at that time. There were many leaks in there, 2F, part of 2F, uh, then up and then on down these Southern sections, then on North in Virginia, even around Roanoke, and around Asheville, those sections. But anyway, that's the way it was. And Sam Weems was sharp enough, shrewd enough, and clever enough to always get the first money that came, that Congress put up. And he got those contracts, with Ed Abbuehl's help, to let the contracts, and use Public Roads Administration of course, with the road, to build those other sections.

JM: OK. Um, I was talkin' to Patty Lockamy, she's an interpretive specialist in North Carolina, and she said that she saw a taped video interview that someone had done of you a number of years ago.

BH: Mmm. May be true, I don't know. Good gosh, I can't remember much.

JM: OK. I haven't been able to see it yet. I've been lookin' around for it. Is there-- I've got a whole bunch of questions set out that I want to ask you, but is there any particular area that you would like for me to talk to you about today?

BH: I don't know. Actually, as I said, uh, I have some real good stories, I don't know whether you want to hear them or not. 'Cause we had some relatively formidable problems with the rights-of-way easements and that kind of thing, and lands that were, one way or another, in other words, old problems that existed when I came there, with no settlement on 'em. I don't know whether you know this or not, but the State of North Carolina, did a peculiar thing in acquiring the Parkway right-of-way. The boundaries were laid out, and then, that was the right-of-way map. They took that, the State of North Carolina took that map to the Court House, and posted it, showing that that land was acquired just by deed of acquisition, all in one parcel.

JM: Wow, I didn't know they did that.

BH: Yeah. Then you see, there was no individual deeds recorded if it bought land from John Smith, or Joe Smith, or whatever. There was no transaction there. They simply went, had an agent come back and settle with these people, without any deed being made from the landowner to the State of North Carolina. And

BH: (continued) then the State of North Carolina just conveys to the United States like that. With certain easements, sometimes things arose, because of that. And one of 'em I remember was, uh, a Hemp Ashley, his land was completely cut off, ^{for access} I don't know whether you want me to get into any of these stories or not. And then Yelagain, down there on Section 2D, that's a fantastic mess, that it took us years to solve, and on and on like that. Those were the things that were--

JM: Yeah, I would love to hear those stories. I think that's exactly what makes these interviews interesting. (Knock on door) Come in.

BH: Well. I'll tell anything you want me to tell, I'm just mentioning those things. And then one of the most interesting and most frightening things ever got into was on Section 2A, at Cumberland Knob, uh, there was a, crossing State Route 16, was a grade, with the parkway, and we had to get a grade separation. And the State of North Carolina did that same kinda thing. And as I said, I had a frightening experience there. But I don't know, as I said, I'll tell any of those stories, or we can go onto something else, whatever you like.

JM: I would, I would love to hear that story right there.

BH: All right.

JM: I would love to hear that story, and any story, I think that is what makes these interviews so interesting.

BH: All right. You want me to go now?

JM: Yeah, I'd love to hear it.

BH: All right. I was down in uh, North Carolina, somewhere along the Bluff. AND Superintendent Weems called me by radio, and said, "Get up to Cumberland Knob as quickly as you can. We have a standstill ^{up} there. The engineers have gone in there to stake out the land, stake out the route for the construction of access to the Parkway and a road, and they had been ordered, chased out a there by a shotgun. Get there quick as you can." I did. I went directly to the engineer in charge of the little crew of three or four men. They were sitting over there under the tree. I inquired, and found out that this man had indeed charged in there, when they were workin', not expecting anything, with a shotgun, brandishing the thing, and they just simply ran for cover. Well, I knew who the man had to be, and I knew him personally, and fairly well, for that matter. He is a man with a terrible speech impediment and a wooden leg. Anyway, when I knew pretty much in my mind what must have happened is this. The State of North Carolina again, instead of going in and buying the extra land that was needed from this landowner, his name was Roy, they had simply filed a Declaration of Taking, at the County Courthouse, and then made a deed to the United States, without ever contacting the man, or paying him, that's what I assumed. It turned out to be about right, but I didn't know, I just assumed. So I decided to just try to go and talk to Roy. He was sitting over under a tree, with a shotgun across his knee, and I knew not to approach him as though I were afraid or anything, so I just walked along whistling. Called out to him, "Hello, Roy," somethin' like that. "Got somethin' to tell ya." Went on up, sat down. AND uh, I said, "Roy, somethin's wrong here. I heard that you went into this field over here where the engineers work, brandishing a shot gun, threatening to kill them. And I just wonder if you talked it over with them, or told them anything, or did you give 'em any warning." He said, "Yea tir, I did. I told 'em to det da Dod Damn head outta dar." Well, we talked some more. I said, "Roy, you cut trees for a sawmill man, and you know what it's like. You don't know whether he's paid for them or anything, or not, when you go in there." So I said, "S'pose somebody comes in with a shot gun and orders you outta there." I said, "It's the same thing, 'cause that engineer was simply doin' his job, he didn't know what was the matter." "Yea tir, dat's

BH: (continued) alright." Well, we talked on some more. He seemed to understand. And I told him, I said, "Alright now, Roy. Here's what we're gonna do. The State is going to pay you, and I'm going to give you my hand on it, that if the State doesn't pay you I'll do it myself, and you know I'm a man of my word." I said, "I'm going to take you home, and leave you, and I'm goin' over to Court House and see if I'm correct in this, that they've taken this land." And I said, "You know well the State, if they have taken it by condemnation, you'll get paid for it. But it's gone, it's already gone." He said, "Yes, but I wanted to cut my cwover. My clover." And he said, "Dey in dere with them, drivin' themstobs," That's what he called a (?) "Drivin' demstobs, and they've wiped my Chickabaw on my mowin' machine." And I said, "Well, we'll take care of that later. Now, I'm gonna take you home, and I'm goin' over there, and if I'm right, I'll come back and tell you. Then I'll get in touch with Raleigh, and find out how soon they can get somebody in there to pay you. And I guarantee it myself, and here's my hand on it, and I'm taking you home." Well he looked at me a little bit. He took my hand and I drove him home. And sure enough, when I got to the Court House and looked over the records, I happened to guess right on that one. So we got that settled. Across the road it was almost the same thing with the man on the other side protesting, but he was protesting to the Congressman. But I won't go into that anymore, we got it all settled and everything worked out it time. We were just lucky.

JM: Did you find that sort of thing happening over and over again.

BH: Somethin' like that, now and then. We had several of that kind of thing. 'Course the most difficult thing I had in that respect, uh, the second most difficult thing was a man named Hemp Ashley. Owned a piece of property. The State took this right-of-way as I said, but they made no Reservation on Parkway land for an easement for him to get out. On the other side of his land were just simply bluffs. He couldn't go anywhere except back to the Parkway and across the Parkway right-of-way to a highway on the other side. So he played cat and mouse with the rangers who tried to block him off. He would put up, I mean the rangers would drive some stakes in the ground. But he called 'em stobs. Down in that country it's not a stake, it's a stob. All right. He would cut 'em off at night, and drive out anyway. AND this went on, then the superintendent asked his district engineer to help him with it down in North Carolina, and they went to Raliegh and tried to get help there. But the attorney general in Raleigh didn't find any solution to it too. Either. The only thing they could find-- I mean it just wasn't in the schools youknow, apparently because he was over there, he really should get out, but there was no easement there, and the Parkway had no authority to grant him an easement, or sell him one, or anything else. There was no such thing. So this went on, cat and mouse, and the property was sold twice. And then, the Bar Brothers, who, real fine people, owner of a furniture plant, over in West Jefferson, bought it. I knew them, I went and talked to 'em about it, and they were willing to listen to what I proposed, which was, by this time, a trade, exchange of lands. Now we didn't have that authority, as I said earlier. The authority, we had no authority to buy land, sell land, acquire land, or even exchange land. So we had determined the need for it, and finally, the superintendent had gone to Washington and had found that the lawyers there could get an act through Congress fairly rapidly, which gave us that authority in 1960 somethin', I don't remember what it is, but to acquire, just acquire, acquire land by purchase or exchange, provided it's equal value, somethin' to that effect. So I proposed to the Bar Brothers that we would convey to them a very nice little

BH: (continued) old tract of land up there, in Glendale Springs, but behind the woods of, quite a distance from the Parkway, that would join their land and help the value of that without any damage at all to the Parkway. They took us up on it. And, 'course I had to do, in those days we didn't have any help for anything, made a separate appraisal, which was always required, and got that approved, wrote the deed, I wrote all the deeds myself, uh, two deeds there, you see. One for them and one for us. Uh, and we got them both executed. And I gave them the deed, executed by the United States of America, in exchange for the deed to that Hampton tract. Settled that, and then I went back to Roanoke, with a little old flat surveyor stake. And on it, on one side I wrote the word "Stob." And on the other side I had the address of the Bar Brothers in Jefferson. And said, "Here's this stob. Thank you. Sam P. Weems." Mailed it to them. And somehow that did a, I don't know what, next time I saw them, they were so, just amused by, pleased with it all, you know, that, from then on, I don't know, that was a good work, because one of the Bars became a State Highway Commissioner. And he did some real nice things for us. I'm just telling you, the worst thing, the most complicated thing I ever got into was Yelanjain, I don't know whether you ever heard of that man who owned 2D, built a restaurant in there.

JM: No, I've never heard of that.

BH: Well do you want me to go into that one?

JM: Yeah, I'd love to hear it. Can you spell Yelanjain?

BH: Well, Yelanjain is uh, I don't know, but the name is Y-E-L-A-N-J-A-I-N. Yelanjain.

JM: OK. I've never heard of it.

BH: I know. I hadn't either.

JM: (Laughs)

BH: We used to call 'im Lawn Jeans. Anyway, Mr. Yelanjain was a Presbyterian minister over there at Jefferson. He heard about a tract of land there, on the Parkway, called Cherry Hill. And he thought that would be a good thing to buy 'cause of the good view, and he and his wife would build a home and live out there. When he got over, he bought the land. He got over there though, he got to lookin' at it and talkin' to somebody, and got ideas in his head, about he could put a restaurant there. What I actually-- at that point, the deed that the State of North Carolina gave the United States of America, reserved an easement for a road on Parkway east, a private road, now private, P-R-I-V-A-T-E, I think it's ten feet wide, crossing the Parkway motor road grade, and extending to the land on the west side. That's what Yelanjain bought. But despite the fact that somebody-- now I didn't know him or anything at the time, this is just somethin' that-- somebody, I think the ranger told him that this was a private road, and what it meant, but he didn't pay any attention to that. He decided he was goin' into business, and build a restaurant, on his own land, right next to the Parkway. At that time, there was an open field there, and you could see it, so he built his restaurant, and went north and south on private land, and put up signs, "Cherry Hill Restaurant Ahead." Well, 'course this was causing all kinds of problems. As I said, it was supposed to be a private road, but what could you do if somebody turned in there. And it became such a sore subject that Mr. Yelanjain wasn't very popular with the superintendent and staff. Anyway, he wasn't makin' very much money. So he became desperate. Wanted to make some other kind of-- anyway he went to Washington to see if he could, and the Washington people came down, they all got their wisdom together, and went to see Mr. Yelanjain, and what they agreed to,

BH: (continued) best I know, was to let him become a concessioner, with his restaurant, provided he would convey to the United States, prob'ly six acres of land, something like that, I don't remember the amount. And then operate as a concessioner, and he would be given a wider right of way to the Parkway, in exchange. Because he would be a Parkway concessioner, and that would solve the problem. So a road was built in there, sure enough, wider, and a little different location, and he became a concessioner. But he wasn't very successful with that.

JM: OK. Where exactly was that on the parkway?

BH: On Section 2D just north of Glendale.

JM: OK. Near where North West Trading Post is?

BH: Uh, just north of that a few miles, and it would be on Parkway Right. Now, it oughta been, this is not there anymore. But anyway, to go on with this, I knew nothing 'bout any of these things, because I was busy doin' somethin' else, and that was none of my business. But this is the backdrop. When he began to fail with the business, he was of course heavily mortgaged. I think the small business administration. Uh, then he became even more in debt by borrowing from some people locally. Then he brought in a schoolteacher, who he knew quite well. And he gave her an interest in his business, as a come-on, I guess, whatever you want to call it. And they tried to manage, but they couldn't manage. Then he, Yelanjain, began to figure out something else, and decided he needed a motel there. That would do it. 'Course he hadno money to do it, but in his thinking, that I learned from him, if he could get the Park Service to agree that he could have a Motel, then that would solve his problems. But there's ^{nothing} ~~nothing~~ as far as I know, and was told, there'd been nothing in the deal with the concessions for him to have a motel. But he claimed that he'd been promised this, promised this faithfully to get, build a Motel, any time he wanted. And all he wanted to do was, 'course, get the right, and then have somebody else come in, build a motel, and that way, come out of it. All this I learned from him, more than from my own people, by goin' down and sitting and talking with him a long time. Talked all morning one morning, and I drank his coffee, and I ate his wife's delicious pie. But I paid for it. Anyway, then, uh, it occurred to me that maybe somewhere or other, we could trade this thing off, and maybe get somebody else to take that motel, which would be the National Park's concession, you know, from (indistinguishable) Well, yeah, they had the right of concession in North Carolina anyway, so that was all right with them. They would do that to help out and then they would prob'ly operate it, or whatever, they weren't too sure. But, in all this time, Yelanjain had conveyed to the United States, the property by deed, but he retained the restaurant itself. Trouble with his deed was, that it was covered, you see, that property was, and ^{all the rest of it} ~~his restaurant~~ was covered by these mortgages. So the deed to the United States was not clear. We didn't have a real clear deed or anything. And then I looked around, and here was a nice, new brick building, service station, with two gas tanks in front of it, and I asked where that came from. 'Cause there was nothin in the agreement that he was the operator of this, or even had any right to. It turned out the (?) oil company, over in West Jefferson, had built it, with an arrangement with him, and they still owned that. It's about as big a mess as you can get into.

JM: It sounds big.

BH: So, in order to get that title clear, on the land (laughs) I knew we had

BH: (continued) ^{to have} quit claims from all these people. And I did get one from the Small Business Administration. But the lady, the teacher, who'd come in as a partner, with Mr. Yelanjain, had gone to ~~Gambon~~ ^{Cuba}, to teach school at the Naval Base. I got in touch with the naval base over there, and learned that she had transferred to Germany, to teach in the army facilities there. So I wrote a letter, in those days, I wrote letters but they were all for the superintendent to sign. You go back, you won't find Bill Hooper's name to anything. It was always the superintendent, and I think that's the way it oughtta be. But anyway. To the lady, and included a deed of release, that would release that part of the property on which the restaurant stood, in order ~~for~~ ^{for} Mr. Yelanjain to sell it, and give her a chance to get her money, for the sale of the restaurant. Fortunately, she got the letter, signed the deed in the presence of the Captain of the company, and we got that release. Then I had to go to these private owners, and get a release from them, and fortunately we got all that. We declared it all up finally, and about the only thing I know about that is, about a year later, I believe it was, or so, after we moved to Asheville, the National Parks CONcession were losing money, so they closed it up, and they wanted to sell the restaurant then to the United States of America. But going back to the authority we have, which I just stated some time ago, the act is clear, it says, to acquire by purchase or exchange, land or interest in land. But you see, ^{legally} this isn't, the building isn't an interest in land, and it's not land. So ~~luckily~~ ^{legally}, we had no authority, and as far as I know, we had to disappoint the concessions. They still own it.

JM: Mm. I'm gonna switch the tape over. (END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE)

TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

JM: Is the restaurant building still standing?

BH: As far as I know. I haven't been over there in many many years. You know, I retired 1975. I was there a little bit later, but I don't know. It was a good building, very good building, brick building. But I don't know.

JM: Hm. There is a Park View Motel up there, and I'm wondering if it's the same one. It's right beside the Parkway, but on a spare road. I'm gonna look into that a little bit next time I go up there.

BH: All right. I don't think it, I can't believe it is. 'Cause this, as I said, is north of Glendale Springs, about a mile from that crossing north, and on Parkway right.

JM: Oh, no, it wouldn't be-- Well, it may be there. I'll check it and see.

BH: Yeah, maybe. But I'm sure it's not in operation, as a concession.

JM: Do you have any more good stories like these?

BH: This one is a Virginia-- in those days, the people along the Parkway would often write, 'cause they didn't really have somethin' that they were sure of, they'd write to the Congressman and appeal for help. An old lady up there in Virginia, wrote to her Congressman, and asked that he do something about the bushes that were growing up in front of her house, prevented her from seeing the Parkway motor route. Uh, and when I visited the old lady, she wanted to know why we couldn't cut the bushes, and I told her, I said, "That, 'ccordin' to our plan, land use plan, made out by the architects, that is not somethin' that we keep open, between the Parkway and your house sitting right next to the Parkway. Besides, it, this is the kind of thing that we don't maintain." I said, "We either have lands we lease to people, but we just can't, we don't have the money, or the authority, to go in there and just clean up all these lands. If we tried to do anything like that for you, of course we got to do that for other people." Well, she

BH: (continued) started, "Whooo, hoo, hoo hoo, you treat us worse than any dog, y'all do." I said, "Now, Mrs., if you're gonna cry, then I'm gonna leave." Then she pointed a finger at me, she said, "Now cut them damn bushes." (Laughs) Well, we finally settled with them some years later, because she had a road, private road, going out across the Parkway. And we got some money from the, when the government had a land acquisition program going, and bought out the property. And settled all those problems on that. Uh, (coughs) what we, there were some years in there we had money, and years we didn't. You know, available, the amount that we had authority. So we did several things. One thing we would do sometimes, in order to settle these problems, we would work out an exchange of property, we would have some property somewhere, just like I said we did with the Hemp Ashley tract. And we would trade that to the owner, and convey to the owner, something of equal value. And with that in mind, we could uh, I think it still could be done but nobody does it. Then, same way on crossings. The superintendent was very eager, as long as Weems was there at least, to get rid of these crossings, these, 'specially private road crossings, easements on Parkway lands. Any public roads that were good. And we worked out a lot of 'em, I don't know how many, but that was the authority that we used to get those things done. One of the uh, we had a problem with Grandfather Mountain, you may have heard a lot about that.

JM: Oh I sure have.

BH: Mister Morton over there, a very bright, very brilliant man, I always knew he was smarter than I was, so I didn't ever try to outsmart him, or anybody else, for that matter. Uh, but we made an exchange of lands with him, that was very beneficial to us. We had a tract of land that Mr. Price had bought, it was part of the Price estate but it was separate from all the other, just sittin' over there on an isolated tract of land. We had to protect it because it belonged to the United States of America. BUT that's all we could do, was protect it. And there was, from fire, whatever, encroachment, it was just a real problem. But on the other hand, Mr. Morton had a tract of land up on the mountain, alongside the Parkway, that protruded deeply into the property of the United States of America, which was the Parkway land. So we made an exchange there, but the problem, the next problem we had, was at the crossing there, 221 just south of Grandfather Mountain, that goes into Mr. Morton's Grandfather Mountain, the entrance, and so on. As long as there was no grade separation there, you see, the people on the Parkway could turn right off and go on down there. But once we put in the new section, the new Parkway section across Grandfather mountain, he wouldn't have, there wouldn't be any access to 221, unless again, we had to acquire some land for him. Uh, he, maybe you've heard, and Mr. Weems had some, I don't know, difficulties with each other.

JM: Right. I've heard that.

BH: All right. So, he wasn't very happy with us on the Parkway. And he made a statement, "No, I will not sell the government one foot of land. Not under any condition." But when I approached him, with the Public Roads Administration said, "We must have this additional land, or we have to make the interchange, an access." He looked ^{a little bit} ~~stumped~~. And I said, "Now, ^{since we} ~~potentially~~ you will not, and you made the statement, that you will not sell the government one foot of land. This makes it very easy for me." And I said, "It'll save the government quite a bit of money there to build that thing." Aaaaand, he looked at me, but he's not dumb. He said, "Yeah, I said that. But I didn't say I wouldn't give it to them." Well he did. Then, then we

BH: (continued) had some (indistinguishable) It turned out that in this, that's a vast tract of land, that he owned, Grandfather Mountain. It extends, you know, it's in three counties, and extends all the way over to Watauga. He, somehow or other, Mr. Morton had failed to record any deed at all over in Watauga County. AND when I was tryin' to clear a title to this land, I couldn't clear the title to the United States, unless he made a deed which would be recorded in Watauga County, and also found that Jefferson Standard, as I remember it was Jefferson Standard--

JM: M-hm. That was Price's company.

BH: Yeah. But they had a mortgage on the whole thing. So, it took quite a bit of work there to get-- I had to prepare a deed and get them to release the mortgage on those properties. But we managed, and it all worked out real well as far as I know. Well, anyway, I know you're tired of these stories.

JM: No, I like them.

BH: And I don't know what else I can tell you, just off the bat like this.

JM: Do you have any stories about problems with agricultural leases? I know that was an interesting concept to the people in the area.

BH: Yeah, well. The, we had a, I don't know, I don't think of anything off-hand, anything in particular. But we thought that leases had to be worked out so that we didn't show any boundary lines out there, if we kept the land open. We didn't like to see a boundary line fence that separated Parkway land from the adjoining privately owned land, because it, it would look like just what it is, a boundary line fence. Wouldn't be attractive. So often we had put the Parkway land into the adjoining land and removed the line fence. So that it looked like one broad field and there was no observable-- A lot of those things were just neat little ^{old} things that we did. And I guess those lines, those things still hold today. Then of course we had rail fences. And uh, we knew that some time or other, even as early as 1945, that we knew there wouldn't be any more rail fences, 'cause there's no more chestnut to make them.

JM: Right.

BH: And we knew, we knew quite a bit. So we did some, a bit of trading. Uh, I guess you wouldn't say it's exactly legal, but. Uh, what I would do was locate some rails, fences, somewhere, not too far away if I could, somebody owned, and I would take some barbed wire, and trail the wire, to get the rails. And then we began treatin' the things. Now a lot of those rail fences, some of those just north of the bluffs, they were already built before I came. They were built I think with WPA, no, CCC labor. Built some of those. But that's what we did to stockpile-- But I know you're losing rail fences, now, and will continue to I guess. But to me, that's something that makes the Parkway of distinction.

JM: I agree with that. But they are cutting them out, they're slowly getting rid of them. I hate it.

BH: I know. I know. Lot of those things worry me. And uh, I do know too, that once you lose a parcel of land, somebody's renting it, leasing it, and uh, for some reason he quits, or dies, or is out of the way. If you don't get somebody else to take it right then, and keep it, create a new lease, it doesn't take but just a few years to regenerate, then it's, uh, it's a prohibited thing. You've lost it.

JM: Right.

BH: And that's a thing that, uh, last time I went over to the Parkway several years ago, it bothered me, just a little bit, and uh, I shouldn't be grumbling about it, 'cause it may be real good reasons for these things happening, I don't know.

JM: Well it's interesting, just in the last couple few years, I guess the last five years, they have hired what they call a Resource Management Specialist, in each district. And one of their jobs is to survey every agricultural lease, and decide on the best way to improve it. Whether to get the cows out if they're tearing up a stream, or to plant something back in there, or put a new fence in, this and that. I don't know whether this is a move for the better or not, but I'm hoping it is.

BH: Well, I couldn't ~~comment on it~~ ^{comment on it} you. You know, wouldn't try to because, as I said, you'd have to know a lot about it. Uh, but I always thought that these people did so much for the Parkway, 'cause over the years, they, even just a matter of mowing with the mowing machine, once a year, to keep the-- would've been prohibited. 'Cause I know one time we had over three, when I was removed from the job of Parkway, well Land Management Specialist is what I became, to ~~Realty~~ ^{Realty} Specialist, uh, we had over three thousand acres to lease. Well, I don't know what there is now, or anything like that. But I said, it always bothered me to think that the contributions, and that's the only contribution I know of, of any amount, that has gone to help the Blue Ridge Parkway, came right through, as I said, leasing, by the farmers, or landowners. And I know, it takes a lot of effort. It always did, ^{agreed bit of} effort to search around, maybe sometimes go out at night, and all this kind of thing to even find people to do it. But that's what you had to do. Uh, and, I never wore a uniform. And you may not believe this, but a uniform has a certain effect on people that just plain clothes do not.

JM: Right. I've noticed that.

BH: I don't know what it is, but it's somethin'--

JM: Yeah, it is. Either for good or for bad. (Laughs)

BH: Yes. It isn't all bad, but, Sam Weems always agreed with me on that, "No, Bill, don't put--" He-- I liked working for him because what he wanted, when he told you to do somethin', all he expected you to do was do it. He never told you how. I never had a real serious disagreement with him about any of those things either. We had some wonderful people there, brilliant people, uh, and I s'pose you still do (laughs) 'cause I don't know them now, much. But you didn't know Stanley Abbott, you've heard of him.

JM: I definitely have heard of him. And I'm interviewing Ed Abbuehl next week.

BH: I'm glad you're doin' that. They are two very brilliant men. Ed Abbuehl was professor at uh--

JM: Cornell.

BH: Cornell. And that's how Stan Abbott-- 'course I think ~~he was just (indistinguishable)~~ ^{was in his class.}.

JM: I believe so too. And he called Ed Abbuehl in to help him when he was assigned to the Parkway job.

BH: Now you have it. Exactly. And I think the most brilliant man, in many respects that I've ever known, was Stan Abbott. I didn't say he was as shrewd as, Sam Weems, was the shrewdest. But, uh, Stan Abbott could sit in a meeting, of four or five or six people, each expressing views and whatnot over a subject. When it was through, he could call the secretary, summarize the thing without hesitation, and it would be correct. He's the only man I've ever seen do that.

JM: Well that's real funny. Ted Pease, when I talked to him the other week, he gave me exactly that same example of Stan Abbott. He talked about a meeting where there were people from all sorts of organizations, and he did exactly that. (Laughs) So, and I hear he was very much a genius.

BH: Uh-huh. Well, of course the most fortunate thing we ever had, as I said, was this act that enabled the Parkway, and 'course it's still there, to

BH: (continued) acquire, by purchase or exchange, land or-- Well, and the only reason I think Abbott got into it really was the fact that in traveling and working with people up and down the Parkway, I think I knew nearly everybody that was a neighbor. One way or another had business with-- whether we leased 'em land or not. So, when somethin' would come up, out in the field, naturally the superintendent would say, "Bill, do you know him?" "Yeah, I know him," "Well get down there." And that's, and we'd have these problems, and, "Get down there." And that's how this developed that I got into, uh, from uh-- But the other thing was, in those days the ranger force, the Chief Ranger was a grade lower on the Parkway than, for instance, the Smokies. And accordingly, the District Rangers on were a grade lower. And that used to bother Sam Weems. He wanted to get the best. Well, in order to get the quality points, or whatever it is called, they had to, the Ranger ~~Board~~^{Force} had to add, and they decided then, that they would add to the Ranger Force all the responsibilities of what the agronomist was responsible for at the time. That had more ^{to do with it} ~~do~~ than anything else. But then I was, already, as I said, bein' assigned to some of these other things, that, uh, crossings, and problems, as I said before. So it was-- (indistinguishable) and then, the superintendent cautioned me then, "All right, Bill, you will still be our reference. And I don't want you to forget, that I'm still expecting you to watch that doggone land lease program, and be sure that you give it some of your attention." And that's about the size of it, as far as I know.

JM: OK. Did you have anything to do with the surveying of Cone Park, when the Parkway received it? Moses Cone?

BH: The survey, the survey itself, no. We uh, now this is where Gary Everhart came in, he was a student at NC State, engineering. They brought him up there before he finished. And he worked, doing boundary surveys, if that's what you're talkin' about.

JM: OK.

BH: And then, he became, as soon as he graduated, on the engineering staff, in Roanoke. And transfered to Richmond and all around, and first thing you know you're director of the National Park. (Laughs)

JM: I know, it's crazy.

BH: All right. Well. But we did, on the Cone land, of course, when a landscape architect decided what they wanted to keep open, we arranged leases, and on the Price park, the same way, to keep those lands open. I don't know what's happened to them since, whether it's still leased or not. The uh, that orchard in front of the Cone Manor, was at the time Park Service, took it over after Mr. Cone's death, was well maintained, that was an apple orchard that you ought to see, especially in spring with the blossoms. And the lake down below, you know how beautiful it is, with the horse trails, and so on. 'Course all that had to be changed, and I don't know what it's like now. But I think the apple orchard's gone, and, I hope the view's still there.

JM: It is still there. They are working with the Appalachian State University Biology Department to graft some of the apples, 'cause there's still about six hundred and sixty apple trees still there. So you still see it, but a lot of the bigger trees have grown up between the house and the lake, and they're contemplating cutting some of the trees back to get the original view back. But they are working at maybe bringing the trees back more.

BH: Well I'd love to see it, 'cause, as I said, that is an impression I have in my mind, I'll never forget it. If I think about Cone, I think about that.

BH: (continued) It ~~was~~^{was} absolutely beautiful. Then, some of those mountain tops up where the Cone grade is, I called it the Saddle. That, to me, should always be kept open, if possible, I hope--

JM: Yeah, it is still open. It's still a meadow, and we still have a farmer come in and take the hay from it. And the whole trail up to Flat Top Towers has been renovated, the Historic Preservation people have worked real hard on all of the Cone trails in the last two years.

BH: Well, I'm so glad that you and others are doing something about all those things. It does my heart good. The Parkway is such a-- there's nothing like it in the world you know, and I think the people in Washington have never quite understood, to the fullest, what an administrative problem it is, with the lakes, and all, and then the amount of travel involved, and so on, to get anywhere, I mean for any person to be familiar with the Parkway. It's just under five hundred miles there.

JM: Right. It's a long park.

BH: Yeah. And I know sometimes the Washington people used to say they were comin' down, and go over to the Parkway, and they thought all they had to do was come down, and we'd take 'em over it in one day. Those things didn't work-- We also, with the Parkway, (laughs) did some, we did some associate work, or whatever you want to call it, with some of the smaller parks, like uh, Appomattox, and Guilford, and oh, oh, I worked a lot in the Smokies, in the early days.

JM: Did you.

BH: Yeah. And, Natchez Trace Parkway, down there some, and all that kind of thing. 'Cause as I said, we did not have, in the Park Service, they just didn't have many technicians along the line that I worked in. You know. So, on loan I would work at some of those stations. And then, same thing happened with some of the Parks, land acquisition problems and so on, that was particularly true at Appomattox. We had, they had two big problems up there. One of 'em was an unusual thing. The property, to the endholding, it had gone on to a man named, I guess it was Diuguid, D-I-U-G-U-I-D. And all the other land had been acquired, but that's right in the heart of the property, was just a few acres, I don't know how much. Well, I found that the heirs of Mr. Diuguid, still owned it, but they were scattered all over. I also found that Mr. Diuguid was actually a black man, who had worked hard at a blacksmith shop. He had been freed, and had bought the freedom of the girl he married, and raised a family. And as I said, they were bright, bright people, but they were scattered all over. Now, what we did in those days too sometimes, there was no money, government money available to buy property. And maybe there wasn't any legal authority. So what we would do, we made arrangement with the National Parks uh, whaddyou call it, the-- hmmm. To lend us money. What I'm thinkin' about isn't-- why that name doesn't occur to me. I don't know why it doesn't occur to me who I'm talkin' about. ANYway, they would lend us money. And we would buy the property in their name. Then, when money would become available, we would make another deed, convey it to the United States, and the United States would pay the--

JM: The interest?

BH: Or, pay, for the property, pay the loan back, just pay for-- What's the matter with me, I can't, sometimes I run into blanks.

JM: Oh, that's OK. I kinda know what you're talkin' about, but I can't pull it up either.

BH: Eastern Park and National Monument Association.

JM: Oh, OK, Ok, that meant the people who were concessioners.

BH: You know who the Eastern Park, who that is. All right. They were very kind,

BH: (continued) and I don't know how many pieces of land that we bought for the Parkway, and up there, that way too. But-- in Appomattox, there was one holder, out in Columbus, Ohio, a lady, and she would not sell. I went out to Columbus, to visit her, when I couldn't do any good by telephone. Her two sons had come in, and they didn't understand any of this, and they seemed to think they still owned it all. Actually they owned one eighth. Now far as I know, that problem has nev-- I don't think it's ever been solved. I don't know if it's been solved or not since. Because it may have. But they would not sell. Because they wanted a price that was equal or more than the whole property was worth, and we had already bought-- and I couldn't do anything about that because we could not exceed the appraised value.

JM: Hm. Do you remember where that land was?

BH: Yeah, it's right in, it's a holding right in the Appomattox. It's not far from the heart of it, it's not far from the office there, they could show it to you. But anyway, that's where it is. It's right in the heart of the Appomattox Courthouse Park. Anyway, as far as I know, that's-- But you see, except for payin' back the Eastern National Park and Monument Association, it doesn't matter. Because nobody can ever do anything with it, now that the National Park Association owns seven eighths of it, and so it's an undivided thing, and nobody has any-- it's an undivided property, and nobody can do anything in there, and it's safe, as far as that goes. But I wanted to clear it up. ^{but couldn't} But anyway, it seems like that, ^{occupied a lot of my time.} but I wanted to mention the Eastern National Park and Monument Association because they were very kind to us. And I can't name the number of pieces of land we did buy like that. And later on, now, in all these things, this may seem peculiar to you, but when I first got into this land acquisition business, as I was tellin' you about, (END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO)

TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

BH: ...Then I had to make an appraisal, and get that approved. Then I had to negotiate, accordin' to that appraisal, to try to get it for that amount. And then, I had to prepare the deeds. Whatever the deed was, from the individual owner, to convey it to the United States of America, and that had to be approved by the Attorney General of the United States, and then, I had to go back and close it, and make sure that we had clear title, without tax liens, or anything like that. All this was very, as I said, rather strange to me, and sometimes then we had to condemn property, and we had to go into court. And when we went into court, I found myself outclassed ^{and everything} ~~more than anything~~ else, because, I didn't know, sometimes, what the lawyers were talkin' about. So I decided the best thing I could do was get a certificate in Real Estate Law, and be, at least understand what it was all about. But that's how all this developed. And I've enjoyed it a lot, I enjoyed it really. Sometimes it was maybe not so funny, but it was good.

JM: Hm. That's good. You said that you've been back on the Parkway about seven years ago. Can you think of anything in particular that you would like to see more attention to?

BH: ~~As I said,~~ ^{Matter of fact!} yes! As I told you, I worked for the Department of Agriculture before coming to the Blue Ridge Parkway. And it was through the Soil Conservation Service. And one thing I was very careful about, always, with the leased land, particularly if there were row problems or anything like that, I would go the field personally, ^{if they had to run rows,} and lay out the line of any row, corn row, whatever, potatoes, so that it was on a contour. In other words, see, there isn't much topsoil there to begin

BH: (continued) with, maybe four or five inches at best. And if that ever goes, you can't have any more crops. And that land is supposed to be there, not for a year or two, but forever.

JM: Right.

BH: Now all these things are-- so, as I said. Now, goin' back, last time I was there, I know I drove up to Virginia or something. And I saw some rows runnin' up and down hill, I don't mind tellin' you. And it sorta hurt me. And the other thing, if it was a very wide strip, I'd just have 'em plow up a strip on the contour, then leave a grass strip, then another row strip. Strip-cropping. I don't believe there's any on the Parkway now. But that's the way I did it. And I'm not sayin' that anybody else couldn't do it, I'm just sayin' I miss those things.

JM: Right. Can you think of any other area that you would like to talk about that we haven't gone over yet?

BH: I don't know. (Laughs) I thought for a while, when I first ~~started~~ ^{retired}, that I was gonna write a book, because of these little incidents with people, like, I remember goin' down to see this gentleman, and, he and his wife were very nice to me, but he showed me his pine trees, out in back, that he was about to sell, for price. Well I know how to cruise timber and get a pretty good value, and I went out and looked and asked him how much he was gettin' and I said, "Mister. That's not half enough, that's not half enough, don't sell it." And sure enough, he got nearly, I told him what I thought, he got the price put on it, which was more than double what it was getting. Well he appreciated that a whole lot, and he was leasin' some land from us, so he and I were good friends. I was down there one day and I heard that his wife died. I ran over 'cause I was real sorry, I wanted to see the old gentleman and he was gone. Took several weeks before I got back over there, and I went, knocked on the door and I heard him say, "Come in, come in." I opened the door, and there he was, with his hands in one of them old-fashioned bowls, washing his hands, he said, "My God, ^{to be} come in, come in, I'm glad to see you." He went over and wrapped his wet hands around me and there was water drippin' all down my back. And he was chewin' tobacco like a rabbit, spitting right up on the floor, and the juice came runnin' right down in the hole (laughs). And I, he said, "Now set down, son, set down, I want to talk to you." And I said, "Well, Mister." I won't call his name, I said, "I was worried but I came by to see you. And I thought, well, maybe he's gone off to see some other lady." "Nooo, Lord God, No, son, I ain't goin' around lookin' for another woman. My wife's up there son, she's up there, I know she's up there. And I wanted to be with her. And I'm readin' the Good Book, you can see I'm readin' the Good Book, and I'm doin' what it says, and it says you got to forgive, son, you got to forgive. You believe that, don't you?" And I said, "Yeah, I believe you got to forgive." And I said, "Well you never had any problem with that, all your neighbors have been good to you, and I know that--" He said, "No, they hain't." Says, "Old Hoyt over there, he's cut some of my trees." He says, "He knowed them was my trees." He says, "What would you think I oughtta do?" I said, "Well I guess you could ~~leave~~ ^{prive} him." He said, "No, I'm gonna see him in court." (Laughs) Well, just things like that, and I thought, well, when I retire I'll write some of these things, but it's too much, and I haven't kept enough notes and so on. So I don't know of anything else that I-- It's just-- But anyway. Anybody, I think it's a privelege to have ridden on the Blue Ridge Parkway, I appreciate every bit of it. And I appreciate you givin' me this opportunity to-- it's been so long that my memory isn't so good. And some of these facts I've recited are honest, I may have made a mistake in a year, or some little slight thing. BUT actually I have not

BH: (continued) lied about any of these sights that I used to see. (Indistinguishable) he says, "Them that can brag without lyin', let 'em brag." And I've tried to live by that. I haven't lied about any of this, if you check to find that something's not exactly accurate, it's just the best of my memory.

JM: Well that's what oral history's all about. And I think you've really brought forward a lot of good pictures of what it was like. Especially using your voices, I loved that part. (END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)