

priority #7

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### Tape Index Sheet

General Topic of Interview: Seasonal Rangering 30 yrs - Gillespie Gap

Date: 10/25/96

Place: Linville Falls Campground

Length: 1 hr 31 mins.

#### Personal Data:

##### Narrator

Name Robert "Bob" Hewat

Address 304 N. Terrace PL.  
Morganton, NC 28655

Birthplace London, Ont, Canada

Birthdate 5/23/24

Occupation(s) High School

Occupational Ed teacher, Seasonal  
Ranger 1960-Present

##### Interviewer

Name Julie Mullis

Address 1489-1 Brown's  
Chapel Rd. Boone NC 28607

Title: Interp. Ranger

What was the occasion of  
the interview?

Pkway History

#### Interview Data:

Side 1 Early job - Doughton Park / Gillespie Gap

Side 3 - Parkway Troublespots

Side 2 Viaduct, Linville Falls Rescues

Side 4 - attitudes

Estimated time  
on tape:

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

1102

Doughton Park

1109

Gillespie Gap

1114

Viaduct

John Meyers

1136

Viaduct Construction Bldg.

Phil Noblitt

1140

Tanawha trail bridges

Sadistic = Satanic

1144

Linville Falls Rescues

Beener = Caribeenner

1159

Filming - Last of Mohicans 1994

1203

1964 Linville Falls

1213

Parkway Signage

1219

Bear Den Campground

Use back of sheet if necessary

(back)

1224- Grandfather mtn. Route.

1228 - wearing of the Hat.

1231 - attitudes of people.



Interview with Mr. Robert Hewat 10/25/96 Linville Falls Campground  
(Interviewed by Julie Mullis)

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TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

JM: ...Seasonal Ranger, on the Blue Ridge Parkway, by Julie Mullis. Now, Bob, before we really get into the depth of the interview, I need a few questions for you. Uh, when is your birthday, when were you born? Including the year.

BH: May the 23rd, 1924.

JM: OK, and where were you born at?

BH: London, Ontario, Canada.

JM: Canada? I didn't know you were born in Canada. Well tell me about your parents, were they from Canada also?

BH: Both.

JM: Both of them were? OK. Um, what year did you begin on the Blue Ridge Parkway?

BH: 1960.

JM: 1960? So that makes you a Ranger for--

BH: Long time.

JM: for 46 years? 36. OK.

BH: 36. 37.

JM: So you started before the Project 66, and I guess you got to see that take place.

BH: Yeah, I remember ~~starting~~ <sup>Project</sup> at 66, everything was supposed to be completed. (Laughs)

JM: Right. Now tell me a little bit about what you saw, at Project 66, and what projects were slated to happen, and which ones actually happened.

BH: The only three I can think of, is the little section around Roanoke, I don't know how many miles it was, three or four, anyway. The missing link which noone really knew anything about--

JM: Right, and that didn't happen until '87.

BH: In '60, or '64, when I came up to Gillespie Gap in '64, we didn't know anything about that missing link, Glencove Viaduct. The other project was the completion of the Parkway beyond Asheville.

JM: OK, so it wasn't finished. And the area around Roanoke wasn't finished.

BH: No. There was a little, I don't know how much it was, several miles, I think. I don't know exactly how many. Around Roanoke. And the seven miles here, around Grandfather. And then the... well I really don't know how much road was uh--

JM: Was it from Asheville all the way to the end of the Parkway?

BH: Well, probably not all the way from Asheville. I think 191 was finished around Asheville proper, and then went, started up the mountain into the Craggies, into the Balsams.

JM: Right. And then they had trouble with the Cherokee reservation, and whether or not they could build through there, and how they could do that. Was that part of the problem, or had they just not gotten around to it?

BH: Well, probably some of both, but I think it was more, just hadn't gotten around to it.

JM: Mmm. Where was the first place on the Parkway that you worked?

BH: ~~First place?~~ Doughton Park. I worked at Doughton four years.

JM: Forty years?

BH: Four.

JM: Four years. OK. And what all happened there, while you were there at first? What was going on in 1960 to '64?

BH: The Ranger I worked with, when I started, he was sort of protective. Then,

BH: (Continued) when I started, we had three distinct departments. We had the maintenance, the naturalists, and the rangers.

JM: And which were you?

BH: I was a Ranger. When we came on, um, we were classified as 025, 026, as a Ranger.

JM: Now what did you do as a Ranger?

BH: Basically I did, I've done the same thing, until the last three years. We were Campground Rangers, first, and then we were Ranger Rangers, after all of the deeds were over. The Ranger ~~belongs~~<sup>all</sup> along through the very beginning of the Park Service, was protection. And we protected the resources as much then as we do now, probably more so now because there are more people, more destruction, and so forth. But until the Ranger generally started back four, five, six years ago, the number one specialty was working the camp grounds, give programs, and go down on the road and do law enforcement. We had probably one title, which was <sup>with</sup> the Park Ranger. And we could do what that specific job, whatever it was, Ranger, or a naturalist, and we could do that and nothin' else. A Ranger couldn't write a ticket, never had been able to write a ticket. And also, they can't do a whole lot of law enforcement. They can tell people not to pick flowers and stuff like that, but that's as far as they can go.

JM: So you were law enforcement when you first started here, all Rangers were law enforcement?

BH: Unless you came on as a naturalist.

JM: And was a naturalist considered to be a Ranger?

BH: A Ranger Naturalist. Well, they referred to 'em more so <sup>than</sup> ~~as~~ the Naturalists, I guess, more so than a Ranger. Still, they were Park Rangers.

JM: As ~~soon~~<sup>far</sup> as protection of the Parkway went, did you have more trouble with locals, or natives, trying to gather stuff on the Parkway, and maybe use the Parkway commercially? Was that more of a problem then, than now?

BH: I don't think we had that problem, at least I wasn't aware of it. The first time I became aware of people using and digging on the Park Service property, maybe ten years ago, when the people, local people came up, the local florists. I don't know if they had somebody digging for 'em, or if they came up and dug themselves. I'd say about ten years ago was the first I can remember anyway. Of the people coming in and taking all the rare plants, 'cause we've caught several hundred or so <sup>drinking cups filled with dirt,</sup> ~~(indistinguishable)~~ plants of different kinds, and dig plants like rhododendron, flame azalea. Now it's more common, for someone to come in and dig a hundred, thousand plants in summertime.

JM: Well what was the biggest problem that you had back then, as far as law enforcement situations? Was it pretty much the same as it is now, or was it of a different nature, in the '60s?

BH: Basically the same then as it is now. Just more of it. More people. And probably the hours are no longer 8 to 5, they're 8 to 8. There was really, I don't really know of any difference. However, the resource has changed. I mean, I think there are more resource problems now than back then, when I first started.

JM: Are you talkin' about the insects, and the trees dying, as far as the resource? What do you mean by the resource?

BH: Mostly plants. Well, they started a new thing recently, I don't <sup>know</sup> ~~remember~~ who it is, but anyway, they've started a new thing now with antifreeze. Put



BH: (Continued) antifreeze in a cup, for the bugs.  
JM: Right, and then they take the bugs and use <sup>with</sup> them for science.  
BH: They do some kind of experiment, whatever <sup>with</sup> the ones that they do catch.  
JM: By the time you were at Doughton Park, were most of the buildings built, and the trails built down there?  
BH: The--?  
JM: Were most of the trails built, around Doughton Park? And most of the buildings already in place?  
BH: Well, the ones I can remember, yeah, the buildings, yes, they were all up, unless they've added some since I left. And trails, like ~~basin~~ <sup>basin</sup> Creek, and Grassy Creek Trail, and Bus Mountain Trail, and Alligator Back, Cedar Ridge, all of those were already established.  
JM: Well where did you go to next, after your four years at Doughton?  
BH: Gillespie Gap. Linville Falls.  
JM: OK. How long have you been here?  
BH: ~~Basin~~ <sup>Basin</sup> from '37, be about 33. <sup>(years)</sup>  
JM: OK. Wow. Where did you live, when you lived in Doughton Park?  
BH: Hm. I lived at Doughton, at John Myers' Motel. He had a house there, that I lived in one summer. I lived above the restaurant one summer. And I guess I commuted two years. I lived at John Myers' home and restaurant two years, I commuted one year.  
JM: OK, but you always had your house down in Morganton the whole time?  
BH: M-hm. Yeah. I lived in Hickory. We lived in Hickory <sup>a while</sup> and then moved to Morganton.  
JM: OK. So you got on Gillespie Gap. What was Gillespie Gap like when you first got up here?  
BH: Well, other than just the normal changes on the Parkway, I think it's basically the same now as it was then. By basic changes, I mean the signs, have changed tremendously. The road characteristics, other than the white line, the center line, is the only thing I can think of. I know people used to say, "That road's nearly five hundred miles long and you can't pass on it." Cause they thought the double white line was a No Passing. Which we didn't encourage until now. <sup>seems like you can pass wherever you want to.</sup>  
JM: Hm. So it's only been pretty recently that they have the dotted lines in some places on the Parkway.  
BH: Well that came later, it has helped flow traffic somewhat. Now there are passing zones, and people pass. And I don't really believe the white line, or the solid lines had to do with traffic flow, for the simple reason that I've seen <sup>plenty of</sup> ~~many~~ people pass the double yellow. As a matter of fact, I've chased 'em down, and written 'em up for the <sup>very</sup> same thing. (Laughs) But basically the Parkway is about the same, except for the signs.  
JM: Do you have any interesting law enforcement stories?  
BH: Well, yeah, there is... oh quite a few. I don't know the, I really don't know the funniest. But... the most, the one that would follow a pattern more so than anything else would be, when you stop a drunk, where he'd been drinkin', and your first question is, "How many beers have you had?" It's always "About one." (Laughs) It never is a full one, it's always "about." (Laughs) "About one, maybe two."  
JM: Well you were around probably more than anybody else that's still here, when the Viaduct was being built, and I know you had a big interest in it. First time I saw you, I think you were giving a talk on the viaduct. Tell me a little bit about that.



BH: That was interesting. I really enjoyed that. I spent a lot of time, scheduled time, and also my time, on the Viaduct. I used to go up maybe on Saturdays or Sunday, and go where I could, where we had it blocked off. At the beginning we had most of it blocked off, as the building of the Viaduct progressed, we'd give the people a little more freedom. So I didn't try to interfere on my day off. On my scheduled days, I sort of went into the Viaduct as far as I could go. Drivin', and might walk some. 'Cause we forever had people in there. You could tell them not to go, stand and watch 'em walk away, you'd get outta sight and make a circle around and come back on the Parkway, and go in the Viaduct <sup>and see</sup> ~~and~~ see what was goin' on. Although we never had anyone hurt, that I know of, not even a minor injury. Still, sort of, during a work day, they'd obstruct maybe some work bein' done, and the like. But as far as danger, I don't know of any-- Matter of fact, as far as injury on the entire construction, I can only think of one that was serious enough to mention. And I've forgotten what, exactly what that was. A worker broke either a leg, or back, on Wilson Creek Bridge, before the bridge, the actual bridge was put together. Some of the rebarring, <sup>in one of the uprights</sup> ~~the~~ separating, I don't know why, it was still ~~(indistinguishable)~~ <sup>it was still (indistinguishable)</sup> and I don't remember how it fell out, but anyway, it fell and struck a worker, across the back or the leg, and broke it. But as far as serious injury other than that, I don't know of any. None that I, to my knowledge, was recorded.

JM: Well I understand that at one time you could walk completely through the viaduct, that they didn't have gates on either side of it. Did you do that often? And did you often find people in there?

BH: Never found anyone in there, but I found where they had been.

JM: What did they leave?

BH: Like beer parties, and camp fires, and happy-day (?) probably some sadistic, well there were some sadistic signs in there. But as far as seeing anyone in there, I never did.

JM: Right. I read somewhere that they were going to think about putting some shops inside the viaduct, and use that as a visitor center. Have you ever heard anything about that?

BH: Do what?

JM: Put a store inside the visitor center, kind of like a big visitor center, and put little shops and stuff, inside of it? That they thought about that at one time. (Laughs)

BH: That's, (Laughs) that's a new one on me. I've heard everything, I thought I'd heard everything up to this point. Never heard of that one.

JM: I read it somewhere, and I thought it was real interesting.

BH: Some of the stories I heard, that women come up with, about the viaduct, and what they should do, is, rather amusin'.

JM: Like what?

BH: Well, they wanted to, most of it was to build a walkway on the outside of the viaduct, so people could see, would know what was goin' on. Yeah, women, for some reason or other, I don't know that I heard a man, I don't mean to pick on the women. But it seems like the women are the ones that had suggestions <sup>as to</sup> ~~that~~ what they could be doin' so they could walk out on the viaduct once they found it, it would be closed to foot traffic once it opened, <sup>for</sup> ~~for~~ traffic. And I wish I could think ~~about~~ <sup>of</sup> all of 'em, but one wanted to put an enclosed walkway with windows, so you could walk a



BH: (Continued) ways, look out, walk a little further, and look out, different places. It's kind of unbelievable, some of the ideas that people do have. The thing we had most ~~concerns~~ <sup>of the fun</sup>, the Rangers and I guess the Engineers, that had the most fun with the public, and especially the women again, we'd tell them that it was glued together. "This bridge is glued together." The men always laugh about it, "Ha ha ha. This bridge glued together with ~~Elmer's~~ glue?" But I've heard a lot of women say, "Well, I ain't gonna ride across that bridge," and I've heard people, after they rode across it, that they wouldn't go back. Why, I don't know, but, it sorta relieves a little bit of the anxieties if you tell 'em no, they've got cables holding the sections together. But some of 'em say, "Well, I went across ~~but~~, I'll never go back." So. That was the biggest joke. And a lot of 'em were serious about it too. 'Cause I don't think twice before I go back.

JM: M-hm. I've heard people say that too.

BH: Um, I've heard a lot of stories, say like this past summer, I didn't actually hear the man say it, but it came from a reliable source, that ~~it was~~ <sup>he</sup> said that uh, the viaduct would fall in ten years. And he was supposed to be, I think he was a highway employee, of some sort, I don't know how high he was. But anyway, he said, he looked at it and said, "Oh, that bridge will fall in ten years." When I was a kid, I don't know how this came about, how I heard, or anything else, but I heard a man say one time that, workin' in concrete, that it takes concrete 50 years to cure, after you pour it, and I guess that would have somethin' to do with the thickness, and maybe the componant parts that it's made of. That it would take it 50 years to cure after it was poured, and then 50 years to deteriorate after it cured, <sup>which would</sup> ~~to~~ give it a life of 100. And Just recently, I read somethin' about it, that it would take it even longer than 50 years to cure. Apparently if concrete is taken care of like it's supposed to be, it has quite a life expectancy. As an example, someone built a fire on the south end of the viaduct abutment. You might have seen it yourself, but there was a great big place on the abutment, where the fire has completely burned away the concrete. You can see into the ~~rebar~~ <sup>rebar</sup> (2) And stuff like that. I don't believe the fire on the inside had a whole lot of effect on it. But it probably didn't get too hot, 'cause heat rises. But the fire, this particular one, I don't know how long it burned. But it burned out a three or four foot square section right out of the side of the ~~abutment~~ <sup>abutment</sup>.

JM: Do you know why that man said that, what justification he had for it--

BH: That the ten years? Prob'ly just talkin'. Like some people talk. He couldn't get into the bridge. Maybe, well. I looked at it myself and I planned to go back in there before the summer's over. And walk it again.

JM: I was always waiting for the inspector so I could get in there myself. And never have.

BH: But I'm-- the road surface is rough, but all the other parts of the bridge that I have looked at, other than the one that the fire burned a section out of, <sup>are</sup> now like they were when it was first constructed, I don't see any chips, or cracks, or places, <sup>cracks, places</sup> where something has fallen out of the structure. And it's still, as far as I know, a hundred percent. One reason you don't see the cracks in it is because of the epoxy that was used. And actually the purpose of the epoxy was to waterproof it. And therefore the water can't get down into the cracks, and in the wintertime when it freezes ~~and~~ it expands, and causes some kind of a -- I don't really know of any, don't really know of any maintenance that's been done on it, in ten years.

JM: Did you give the talk to the engineers about the earthquaking proof cones on the viaduct?



BH: Well I've talked to the engineers quite a bit. About the whole work. I talked to one, <sup>one day</sup> and this was about the only time I really talked to anyone about earthquake, or earth movement. He had a device that ran, I believe it ran through the bridge abutment, and I can't remember if the bridge abutment was the only part of the bridge there, or if they'd actually started construction of the viaduct. But anyway, he had an instrument that he, he told it me that it ran into the side of the mountain. I don't remember now how far it ran into the side of the mountain. And its purpose was to see how much movement was in the side of the mountain. And whether that was true or not, I don't know. And I don't remember if he took it every day, or every week, or whatever. But I did talk to him that one day, and he was adjusting the little instrument after he put it through the bridge. And he said, I believe his comment was that he hadn't recorded any kind of movement.

JM: Do you remember anything else interesting that the engineers told you that the general public doesn't know that they would find interesting?

BH: Right off, I don't know of anything. But the thing that, I'm really not real clear on, is not the Viaduct, but it's the section of the missing link. It's between Wilson Creek Overlook, and (?) Overlook, and there's a section in there, (END OF SIDE ONE)

#### TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

BH: The engineers, when they went in, surveyed it, and looked it over, and this is what I don't really understand, said that they were afraid to go in there and bulldoze it out, and build another bridge, because they didn't know what they'd get into. Now, what that gettin' into is, I really don't know. So rather than to build the bridge, it was just a rockslide, actually, that's what it was. Rather than to build a bridge, they went in, and smoothed it over as best they could, and made it level by ~~doing~~ <sup>building</sup> it up with gravel, coarse gravel and fine gravel. To a point about three feet below road surface. And then, at 180 feet, they made it in, well one continuous section, rather than to leave the loose end, they tied end to end, two sixty-foot sections together, and put the third one in so that there would be nothin' broken between that beginning and end of the section that they would be workin' <sup>on</sup> there. They formed it, put three layers of three quarter inch rebar, tied on a six inch square, and poured three feet of concrete, in that whole 180 foot section. Now why they had to do <sup>all</sup> that, I don't know, but they would do it, I know, 'cause I watched it. And that particularly interested me. That interested me about as much as <sup>some of</sup> the work on the Viaduct.

JM: Yeah. That is interesting.

BH: And, I guess maybe that, if anything up there is goin', that'd be the last thing to go, I'd say.

JM: The Viaduct, or that section right there?

BH: Well now, the interesting thing, too, about the Viaduct, that people probably don't stop to think about, is just about everything I know of, is there's nothin' loose. All those loose ends, it's always tied together like-- When they poured the footing, some of the footings there, they're a hundred ten feet deep, and there's no such thing as a hundred and ten foot piece of metal, or ~~rebar~~ <sup>rebar</sup>. So, to get a hundred ten feet, they'd put, whatever, two or three sections of somethin', 50 or 45 or 30 foot section together and weld it so that it would be a continuous piece of metal. From top to bottom, from the ground up or top of the ground down. Even when they tied their, in the store <sup>room</sup> I mean, in the room where, the building where the sections are put together, they didn't have loose ends, it was always an end tied.



BH: (Continued) When they put the grade, before the finishing touches on the Viaduct, all of the sections were solid, and there was nothin' exposed. And when the temporary cables that held the two sections together when they were put up, were three pieces of metal on each side of the section, they'd tighten 'em up, the purpose was to hold the sections together. Even when that section, or when the boats were taken out of that section, they were filled up with that epoxy glue too. Cement. So there'd be nothin' exposed. The only thing exposed is the inside of the section, just like when you build a house, the inside of the, where you put furniture, and the only thing exposed is the walls and the ceiling and the floor. And that's the way this is.

JM: Where exactly was the building that they put the pieces, constructed the pieces ~~in~~? Was it towards Grandfather Mountain or the other way?

BH: It was about a mile away from the Viaduct. It was on 221, right between the Parkway and the entrance to the Mountain. There was a little building up there, just a sheet metal building, they threw it up, maybe in a day or two. And then there were some trailers around for office purposes, and things of that nature. They're all around the mountain.

JM: Tell me the story again about directing helicopter traffic. (Laughs)

BH: I was detailed ~~one~~ one day. It must have been before the Viaduct was ever finished. And I don't know why I was up there, but anyway, I was detailing up there. And a helicopter man set a bridge for the Tenawah Trail. And this happened to be the Glen Cove Creek Stream, or whatever. Right under the Viaduct. And I'm not particularly fond of a helicopter anyway. And it must have been a company helicopter, because I don't think anybody would rent anything out like this piece of machinery. It looked to me that it was built and (indistinguishable) And the hood doors ~~were~~ flattened. And he was havin' uh, <sup>I don't believe</sup> it was real windy that day, but the wind seemed to be blowin' him around a little bit, or he couldn't get settled. And my job was to stand under, or nearly under the helicopter, on the viaduct, to do what, I don't remember. But, about an hour, maybe an hour and a half of anxiety. (Laughs) Anxious to get out of that place. And 'course, nothin' happened, and the bridge was lowered down and put in place. And it's still standing today, that I know of.

JM: What about those car doors flappin' open.

BH: That was the hood doors. I don't know if they were supposed to be tied down or not, or if it was an extra wing. I didn't particularly like the idea too much about it.

JM: That was on the helicopter?

BH: Yeah. What they did was they'd pick up, well if it was a short bridge, they'd pick it up in one piece. If it was a section, they'd pick it up in sections. It was heavy. It was a pretty pine, <sup>four by four</sup> ~~four by four~~ <sup>probably some</sup> ~~two by tens~~, with a hundred and eighty <sup>under it</sup> ~~the~~ rails. The, uh, two or three, I believe it was two, <sup>under it</sup> ~~two~~ pieces that hold up the bridge itself. I think it's two, sometimes, some of 'em probably three, too, I mean the whole work, the railing and all. And they just set the-- to build it, measure it and build it, they had the foundations ~~poled~~ and they'd just come in and send it down. That's all there is to it. If it was a section, two or three sections, they'd ~~add~~ <sup>add</sup> it together, if it was just one section, they'd just set it down on the--

JM: The Stack Rock Bridge took a lot, it's a long one. The Bridge at Stack Rock, I bet it's really, was a long section.



BH: Yeah, I don't believe I saw that one. They must've put that one up in Fairy Spring, or the Falls, because I don't remember it. All I know is, the lumber stayed down there for a long time. And some of that might've been built by hand, it probably, I'd say it was. But, I know the ones from the VC back to the boardwalk, they were all put in by helicopter.

JM: OK. Did you ever hear of any gold being found while they were blasting for the Viaduct?

BH: No.

JM: One man, I don't really trust him completely, but he told me a story about that, and I'm not sure whether he was believable or not.

BH: No...

JM: OK. I ask everybody that.

BH: Uh, I don't know that a whole lot of blasting that took place, I think most of it was drill. <sup>Used</sup> the air drills, drill into the rock. I imagine ~~that~~ they blast <sup>it</sup>, shake and move the earth to a point that it could've been a disaster rather than a blessing. 'Cause I don't remember seeing any, or hearing of any, anyway, but I do remember the <sup>air-com</sup>pressors, and the pretty good sized piece of equipment, 'bout the size of a pick-up truck that they'd lower down off the Viaduct.

JM: And they were real careful with protecting the rocks and the creeks and the plants.

BH: And <sup>right</sup> ~~gone~~ down to where they were going to make the next footing, and uh, work from that point. I remember the air compressor and all. But I don't remember, I just don't remember any dynamite, or explosives anyway.

JM: Well the other area that I find real interesting is the whole Linville Falls area. And the rescuing that you had to do there. You've seen a lot in your years ~~there~~. I'd like you to talk a little bit about that. Tell me a little bit about the rescues that you had down at the falls.

BH: There's been a lot.

JM: I know. How many do you think you've actually gone down to--

BH: Well, the one that I don't particularly like to talk about, it was in April, of '74, I believe. We had a little kid wash over the falls. It'd been a rainy month, and he and his, it was his ~~mother~~, or his step~~father~~. And father or stepfather, were down at the Falls, and this little nine year old boy was playin' around down where he shouldn't have been. I don't know that the parents, I don't know if they called him back. He fell in, slipped and fell in, and washed over the Falls and drowned. And the man, whatever relation he was, if any, didn't want us to go try to find him. Said just as soon leave him where he was. That was sort of barbaric. And I was out, I believe it was Easter Vacation. And I was out and heard about it. And came up here. We took an aluminum boat down there. Into the basin to drag. We also had some <sup>divers</sup> ~~(and it was a~~ comin' from Asheville, or Charlotte, I believe. And I remember takin' the boat down the side of the mountain <sup>a pine tree</sup> and a rope, and that's when I was into climbin' quite extensively, and I thought I knew everything. And I learned one thing from it. Be sure you know your ~~belay~~ man. Because he let me fall, about the first thirty feet, with the boat, and it just so happened that there was a little ledge there that I caught. I stopped on, stood on my feet and caught ~~in time~~ with my hands as I went down. Otherwise I would've had about 165 more feet to fall. If you climb and you use a static ~~belay~~, <sup>belay</sup>, know your ~~belay~~ man. The boat was practical, but not for that particular time, because there was so much water comin' over the falls. ~~Finally~~. <sup>The force of the</sup> The water flowing through the opening there in the river, you just couldn't keep the boat still long enough to do any good. Where the divers



BH: (Continued) came up at, I think they found him, they did find him the next day.

JM: How many feet of water did you say he was in?

BH: He was down about 45 feet. And the divers said they hadn't reached the bottom yet, so--

JM: So we don't know how deep it is, *under there*.

BH: Prob'ly not a whole lot deeper. But at least we know it's 45 feet right there at the... (pause) Well, another lesson I learned, I just happened to think, is, I was on the South end one day, and I got a call that someone had fallen in Linville Gorge (indistinguishable) And it happened to be a 15 year old kid from California. He started from about 35, maybe 40 feet, from the bottom, and was workin' himself around to what now is (?) Basin. Overlook. The wall, without a rope.

JM: Was it not there yet?

BH: Nothin'. He was just freeclimbin'. And I was over at the South end, when I got the call. For some reason or another I was drivin' a truck, and it was about four o'clock. The CC boys were still at Gillespie Gap, they hadn't gone home yet. And someone says, "Think maybe you need to stop at Gillespie Gap and get some help?" And I said, "Naaa, I think I'll be able to make it." (Laughs) So I came to Linville Falls, Nobody with me. And to make a long story short, four of us carried that kid out of there. He was only, less than 150 pounds. But that was one of the hardest jobs I had ever taken in my life. Carryin' someone in a (?) Litter, up the Linville Falls trail. That far. Four of us did carry a two hundred pound man. Out of Linville Falls. He was across the river, we brought him up to the Upper Falls Junction. There were four of us carryin' him too. 200 pounds. That's a lot of weight, in the (?) Litter. And especially where we had to go, go up there. We had to go up places with him that he was just about standin' on end to end, or, standin' say on his feet or his head. And we had to go under some, well, one log that fell down right parallel with the trail. Matter of fact, it fell right in the trail. That was also a pretty good job. The lesson I learned from that ~~is~~ <sup>was</sup>, take as many as you can.

'Cause you can never have too many. And we're blessed right now, with men on the rescue squad, 'cause last few carry-outs I've been on, if you didn't get out of the way, if you happened to be on the road, and if you didn't get out of the way, you'd get run over by the rescue squad gettin' to the Visitor Center, to get in. They don't go down just to be goin' like, to have an excuse to be on the Parkway, they go down to work. They're sincere in that job. And 95 percent of it is volunteer, anyway.

JM: Well you told me about one accident where a child went over the first part of the big falls and the father tried to get down and <sup>get him out, and</sup> ~~he got stuck~~ too. I thought that was real interesting.

BH: It was a little girl, I think they were Vietnamese. I don't know whose idea it was, I think it was the daddy, who went over the wall out over the overlook, where a sign says, Stay Behind the Walls. Walked around the overlook down below it, and went down where you just about had to climb, any distance at all you would have to climb, it was <sup>so</sup> steep. 'Course it wasn't but four or five feet from the water there, where the rock wall and the water met, it was just like water foamin' through two rocks. And it was real swift, strong. Not very deep, but it ~~was still possible~~ <sup>would be impossible</sup> for even a big strong he-man to stand up, it wouldn't be possible to stand up. But anyway, the two of 'em got down there some way, I don't know how, and the little girl slipped and went into the water, and



BH: (Continued) washed down, about 20 feet to a pool. And how she stayed where she was, I had no idea. Her father jumped in behind her, to save her, and he of course washed down into the pool too. And they both stayed in the pool, and again, I don't know how they stayed there, but, they managed to get up on a rock ledge, and again, how they got on that rock ledge, I have no idea. But that's the way they were when I found 'em.

JM: And you had to go and, how'd you get them out?

BH: Rescue squad.

JM: Did y'all need a boat, or anything?

BH: No, they had some boats, didn't have boats, they went in on their own this time. But they have boats now, a beaner or a piece of metal <sup>river</sup> ~~hook~~ into the rock. And you put a beaner ~~hook~~ on that to be an anchor. And you rely on the person to tie up to the rope, and then to the beaner and work yourself around the rock wall. There are probably three or four in there now. There weren't any at this particular time. Their knowledge of rock work, and their dedication, tryin' to save people, this one fellow, tied into a rope, he had a <sup>delay</sup> ~~delay~~ man, he had worked himself down the rock into the level where the two were, and he tied them in and lowered a second rope, and he tied 'em in, one at a time, and pulled 'em out. And another thing is, I don't understand about people, we had a big audience down there. And when we got out and around, back across the river, and crossed the wall into the overlook where he was supposed to be, and he stood up and smiled (laughs) I think (indistinguishable). I started to (claps hands) But that's just the way people think. There've been others, and we've had little ladies fall and break their hips, and maybe a leg. Most of 'em, thank goodness, are false alarms. People, lotta times, anticipate, and (phone rings, tape off, then on again)

JM: Was that girl and her father call, was that just a few years ago, or was that several years ago?

BH: At the Falls? JM: Right.

BH: Two years ago.

JM: OK, so not long ago at all. Uh, how was the filming of the Last of the Mohicans? (Laughs) I heard it was crazy.

BH: Long, and people.

JM: Just film people, or--

BH: I don't know, but if everyone, in his or her profession is as engrossed as these movie stars, it's just <sup>instead of</sup> ~~one~~ step above, but they seemed to think they were about ten steps above everybody else. What, I don't know. Except one person, and that was the main character.

JM: Daniel Day Lewis?

BH: He was, then, anyway, he was the most down-to-earth person I've ever met. He was just like, one minute he was workin' in the film, doin' the scene, and the next minute he was directing traffic, and the next minute he was doin' somethin' else, and the next minute he was doin' somethin' else. <sup>But</sup> The rest of 'em, they were so straight laced, And I just don't, well, it's not my cup of tea. For sure. But other than that, but some of the workers were real nice.

(END OF SIDE TWO)

TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

JM: Yeah, well keep on talkin'. Go on about Daniel Day Lewis, if you want to,



JM: (Continued) and film people. Do you have any more things to say about the Last of the Mohicans?

BH: Well, not really. Just, when they make movies, they just, they want everything right now, and then, and they don't want any interferin'. And we're nature-protectors, we take care of the environment, I do. And we don't want anybody interferin' with ours. And if they step on a blade of grass, we have a fit, and if we say somethin' to them for steppin' on the grass, they have a fit. Far as I'm concerned, it just-- that, and car commercials, they can eliminate. And that would make a lot of people happy.

JM: Right. I think so too. Somebody's makin' a lot of money, and I don't know who.

BH: Yeah, well, that old green stuff is always the root of all evil, isn't it.

JM: It sure is.

BH: But I know a lot of, lot of people. "Car Commercial next, oh my goodness, we're ~~re~~ goin' to see it again." Not just comin' from one person, it's comin' from a number of people. So as far as the movies are concerned, they can keep 'em in Hollywood. For my part. The Linville Falls area, when I came here, I guess it was in '64, there wasn't, it was Linville Falls Community, and the Parkway went through the present roadbed, back then ~~as~~ now, but that's all there was. There wasn't any Linville Falls Campground, Visitor Center. That Red Trail, or (?) Trail. The way you got to the Falls was from the Linville Falls Community. With (indistinguishable) Forest Service. Now that trail, (indistinguishable) Bureau, had been there as long as I can remember, and that was the only way into the ~~Red~~ <sup>Falls</sup>. The Park Service came in, I don't know when this was, but they came in and redone part of the trail to the Falls, from the Junction there, ~~Linville~~ <sup>Upper</sup> Falls Junction, and the present junction now back through the overlook on the Parkway. There was a trail that went up through the woods, more or less a footpath, it wasn't much of a trail. Footpath to Lower Falls and (?) View. Still is visible in places if you look for it, if you know what you're lookin' for, it's highly visible. And probably you could go the whole trail all the way. <sup>From</sup> The Junction there at the Upper Falls to (indistinguishable) You might have to walk around a small tree or a rhodadendron bush, but it's still present. The present trail, from the visitor center, we put in and turned over for public use, somewhere ~~from~~ <sup>in</sup> 1966. That's when the Spur Road and Camp <sup>and</sup> ~~ground~~ the Visitor Center-- Spur Road and the Visitor Center were there before-- the Spur Road and the Parking Lot was there before the Visitor Center. The Visitor Center was in '84 and the Spur Road was in '66. The Campground, I remember spending three weeks in there by myself, before it was even paved. As a matter of fact, before some of the Spur Road was paved, two bridges over the river, and one bridge over ~~23~~ 183 it originally took so long to get into complete the roads, but... But anyway I guess it wasn't appropriated till '82 or 3, when the Visitor Center was first started, built. I can remember walking across the bridge at Linville Falls, before it was a complete bridge. Before the bridge was (indistinguishable) And I can remember walking the Spur Road before any bridges were finished, across the river here. As I <sup>BO+</sup> said, Linville Falls was nothing. The picnic area, yes, it was here. <sup>BO+</sup> The campground and the Visitor Center were in the making. And the Visitor Center didn't open until sometime in '84. I think they opened in the beginning of the '84 season. And the Eastern National took over.

JM: How did it feel to be workin' at a brand new campground? Were the people excited about it?



BH: At the time, I didn't work at the campground. I just did road patrol. A few years later-- To give you a little history of campground work, when I first started, the only thing we did, walked through the campground, took the licence plate number, the number in the party, and the site number down. That's all we did. There was no charge, we didn't ask for names, or anything of that nature. Then later on, when I went to Crabtree, and here at Linville, we started chargin'. We charged, I've forgotten now, we had ~~little~~ little tickets, that were fifty cents, and I'll say a dollar. And we sold those, and we had a little fisherman's tackle box, put the money and the tickets in it. When we sell a ticket, throw the money in the box and walk down the rest of the campsite, ~~keep your hands to~~ <sup>collect the money and</sup> keep warm, we walked the campground. And we walked the campground here at Linville Falls, too. And then we, then when the price went up, to two or three dollars, we had these little kiosk buildings built, and had a, had a campground Ranger. That's all he did. Campground Ranger worked in the campground. Then it wasn't, a Ranger would come in, park his car, walk around the campground, take down the information he needed, get back in his car and leave. That campground Ranger stayed in the Campground all the time. He might have had a few other small unimportant duties. His main objective was to operate the campground, and keep it, like the brochures, and whatever he needed, in the campground. To do what he needed to do. He did have a cash register. And ~~I ran a~~ <sup>they ran</sup> cash register. And then, I don't know why they got rid of the campground Ranger. They started having Rangers, and also Naturalists, for the campgrounds. In that, came to the old accountability sheets. And some people can get it right, and some people can't. I know, you know what ~~it~~ means, 'cause you do it yourself.

JM: Yeah. I do.

BH: But that's, so in the campground, in the wintertime, well back then, when they had the campground Rangers, I think the campgrounds were closed in the wintertime. But now, maybe, they did keep two campgrounds open for a while, in the wintertime. Here, anyway, Crabtree and Linville. I think all the others were open also on the Parkway. But now they've gotten in down to one campground in North Carolina and one campground in Virginia. And the way they get their camp for that is to, the Ranger rides through 4,5,6 plots, on a given day, and count the number of cars, and just estimate. 'Course if they can see a whole bunch of kids out, around the campsite, they can count. Normally, it's just about a rule of thumb, that if you see a tent and a car in the campground in December or in January, there's gonna be two people. But other than the signs on the Parkway, the signs we have here, in the campground, to me there's not a great change in 37 years, as far as the overall picture. There's been maybe, ~~like~~ like, in the intersection, when I first started, they had several signs, matter of fact, some intersections had too many signs. We had signs on ~~some~~ <sup>cement</sup> posts, Marion, so far, and ( ? ) so far, and Spruce Pine, so far. Just cluttered. And it was a long, fairly long white sign with black letters. On a cement post. And some of 'em were on one post, with the security in the middle of the sign. Some were on two, and it was secured at both ends of the sign, at the side so it wouldn't fall. And then the little rock bay, or island, where the signs were, were built up probably in the '70s, with the curbing, about 4 to 6 inch curbing. Didn't have it before, ~~you could~~ <sup>you could</sup> run up and run all over the sign if you wanted to, and make donuts, and skin up the grass. Sometimes on Saturday, there'd be



- BH: (Continued) a lot of, most of 'em anyway, <sup>were built</sup> would ~~build~~ up at the curb, which protected the sign to a point also that the bay triangle. BUT other than that, 'course there was a lot of things we missed. Like I mentioned, there'd be a lot of things that will come up. Some are insignificant. Some might be important. I guess you always leave something out.
- JM: Do you think the Parkway's gonna always be the way that it is now?
- BH: I'm afraid not.
- JM: What changes do you see?
- BH: I'm afraid it's gonna be turned over to a concessionaire. I'm so afraid of that, I just don't know what-- there are signs there right now. I don't know about in Virginia, but your signs in North Carolina, they turned over one campground. And Eastern's takin' over now too. Eastern, they built a big, big building down, I don't know who built it, I guess the Park Service did, a big building down in Asheville. For the Park Service. For me that stuff's more commercialized business.
- JM: Yeah, I hate to see that too. And it's mainly profit, instead of just protecting the natural scenery, they just wanna make money the best way they can.
- BH: Well, the Park Service, I can remember one thing here that uh, if you think about it, just sit back and think, and maybe read over the history of it, it would be rather amusing. Of course it makes some people mad, and some people could care less. But we had an incident down at Bear Den Campground. Again, that's goin' back probably into the '70s. And it's been the Park Service Policy as long as I can remember, where a billboard stood up where it could be read from the Parkway, and the Park Service come in and plant White Pine, a fast growing tree, as a barrier to block out the sign. Well, I don't know what happened at Bear Den, why this came about. And I'm not really sure which happened first. But Bear Den, when it was open, and I guess it was Mr. Moody from Hickory, he bought it, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> advertised. And it really put the Bear Den Campground on the map. 'Cause you didn't hear much about Bear Den. We had one campground, the Safari Campground at uh, Crawford Gap. They built a campground down in there and they built a swimmin' pool. It didn't last but a couple a years, but Bear Den, Mr. Moody must've advertised quite a bit in Hickory, because they started getting trailers in. But anyway, what happened was, and as I said, I don't know which one was first. But the Park Service, in the property that the Park Service owned, we owned about maybe 100, 150 feet of the road from the Parkway to the Boundary. And what the Park Service did, came in and erected cement posts, little round posts, just about a foot wider than a trailer. And they built it up pretty high, just about high enough to strike the bottom of a trailer. The reason, and like I said, again, I don't know which happened first. But to retaliate, Mr. Moody went over one of the ridges that you see from the Parkway comin' South, when you first come around this curve there, and you see down into the valley, over the Bear Den Overlook, he put up, gosh, I don't know, he put up a tremendous sign: "BEAR DEN CAMPGROUND" in big red letters, on an 8 by 4 plywood, on the posts. So that didn't sit very well with the Park Service, and finally the two got together and ironed out the differences. And the Park Service says, "Well, we'll take our posts down if you take your signs down." That was the ultimate result of it. To me, as long as Bear Den did that, I had no problem with it. A lot of people go there and like it. Campground's a campground. A lotta people come here and they like it. Some people don't, and some people don't like Bear Den, that's just the way people are.



JM: I know more and more signs are poppin' up along the Parkway, like Doughton Park has Racoon Hollow, with their big sign next to the Parkway.

BH: Well there was an incident at Doughton Park too, 'bout mile post 235, I believe, someone wanted to build a motel in there.

JM: Oh yeah? Hm.

BH: And they wanted access from the Parkway, and I don't think the Parkway would do it. But there was somethin' else at Doughton Park too, at Hoggedy Rock. Some fellow came in and built a chair lift. I think he got it into operation, but I don't believe it was-- well again, you had to go from the Parkway to the chair lift. And the Parkway didn't want to be in, so, he had to go maybe build a road up the side of the mountain 10 or 12 miles, and that wouldn't be practical. So he just said, "Oh the heck with it." And let it go. That was in the early '60s. 'Cause I was still at Doughton Park. When that was goin' on. I saw it but I never did go ride it. But I'm sure there was other things, too, that come up. The Viaduct was a standoff between the Park Service and--

JM: Hugh Morton.

BH: I don't know why. I don't understand a whole lot of that because I heard at one time there were three approaches surveyed. There was a lower, the present one, and an upper. And I think uh, why I've heard that the owner of the mountain wanted an entrance from the Parkway through his mountain. Then I also heard that he was more interested in the lower route.

JM: Right, following 221.

BH: I don't know, you hear all of the stories, you don't know unless you just sit down and pick up all the information, discussion, and ideas that people have, you don't really know. Back to signs, I remember, one thing that amused me, and I never did get a real answer, I don't think anyone ~~can~~ answered the question, the whole time those signs were there, but anyway, at one time, and they were still here in the late '60s cause I can remember them, but they had little speed signs on the South shoulder in the road, anywhere from, well the Parkway speed limit <sup>was</sup> over-all 45, so they didn't go above 45, and they didn't go 45, they were all below. Some were 40, some were 35, some were 30, some were 25. Depending on the severity of the curves. And I think there weren't too many in Doughton Park that I can recall. There were quite a few here in Gillespie Gap. And I asked the question several times. I said, "Is that a speed limit sign, or is it a safe speed sign?" And nobody could ever give me an answer. If it was a speed limit, if it, where it says 35, well it didn't say 35 miles an hour, it said "Speed 35." And you don't know if it's Speed Limit 35, or if it was Safe Speed 35.

JM: Right. And you were law enforcement, too, weren't you? That would make it hard not to know. (Laughs)

BH: But, back to signs, that is the biggest, and quite frankly, I like the old signs. I'm not too fond of this red and white that I'm lookin' at now, Do Not Enter sign, and all this modernized brown, and (laughs).

JM: Well, whaddyou think of them makin' all the new mile posts out of recycled plastic? (Laughs)

BH: Well, I'd go along with that if they don't mess up. 'Cause I think what they're gonna do is make 'em square. From what I could see of the picture, the ones they were puttin' in, were from the Balsam Mountain. They were square.

JM: Square. I like the way they're shaped now.

BH: Well, it's more practical because you can read--

JM: Both ways.



BH: Well if it's square, you don't have any--

JM: It's strange, yeah.

BH: That takes the rest of the Park Service. One other thing. I've got my hat on right now. I wear my hat, probably seven and a half, sometimes eight hours a day. When I came to the Park Service, (clears throat) that was pride and joy.

JM: Right, and now people don't want--

BH: People wore their hats. And it was, at one time that was the regulation. For law enforcement, it was regulation. You wear your hat <sup>in the Park.</sup> ~~and uniform.~~ And if you didn't have your hat on and the chief came by, he'd chew you out. And another thing, and it was right here in this campground. I can remember, I don't remember the lady's name, but I saw her more than one time 'cause she came here a couple years. But I was walkin' down the middle road, loop there, one day, and very few people in the camp. And I saw this little grey-headed lady comin' up over the horizon, in the road. And I kept walkin', and she kept walkin', and she says, "You know," she said, "You know, I sure am glad when I see one of them hats coming, 'cause I know it's protection." That's not the reason I wear it, I can say the reason I wear it is because, well, one of the reasons, I always wore a hat. And another reason is the hat was part of the uniform, and if we didn't wear it, we got chewed out. I know, I've been laughed at time after time after time after time. About wearin' my hat. Put it on when I get here, when I get in my uniform. And I don't take it off, lotta times I don't even take it off when, there's a key I need in the Visitor Center, and I don't know if that's right or not. <sup>a bunch of</sup>

JM: Well, I see Jill, she's big on hats. She's told <sup>a bunch of</sup> people to put them on. So that's good. Have you noticed any other changes with personnel, or with Rangers and Duties and such, and just the way things have changed over the years, that's major?

BH: Well, I think we get along better now than we did when I first started with maintenance. Or even when I came to Gillespie Gap. It seemed like maintenance and Rangers, well we had one foreman, maintenance foreman, I won't use his language, but he said, "Boy, all rangers were dumb. Didn't have any sense." 'Course, that's a matter of opinion. It's not true--  
END OF TAPE TWO