

**Interview with Ted Pease,
Landscape Architect of the Blue Ridge Parkway
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Mrs. Jesse Pease, Ted's wife, was also present during the interview.

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Interviewed by Mary Myers, Asst. Professor
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Ted what is the correct spelling of your name and date of birth?

I was born November 21st 1909. P_E-A-S-E, Ted or Theodore is the first name.

What do you have a degree in?

What matters mostly is my college. I went to the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida and have a bachelor's degree.

At that time, the person who was in charge of the school of architecture was also the state architect, a man named Weaver who we called King Weaver. He was determined that anything that had architecture in it at all was in his department. The man who was the head of landscape architecture said "No Way." So my degree wound up being a degree in landscape design which didn't make any difference. The Civil Service Commission accepted that. I took an exam in 1930, I guess, or '31 and from that exam my name... I passed it and my name was put on the civil service register. You weren't around then but jobs were scarce, Or there just weren't any. See I graduated in '31. And in '33, one day I had a telegram that said "Must know today if you will accept the job in the Smokies." signed Ludgate whom I didn't know. It turned out that he was the resident landscape architect in the Smokies at that time.

The CCC program was just getting started and they were flooded with CCC Camps. I guess they had a dozen or more in the park. They were trying to find some more personnel, supervisory engineers, architects and landscape architects and he got my name from the civil service list. So I borrowed a dollar and I wired him back and said that I would accept the job but to send me some more details on it. So we had a letter in a few days. We were in Florida then. It said the job was in Gatlinburg and that I would be paid the going rate for junior landscape architect on the civil service scale which at that time was \$2000 a year, minus fifteen percent. If you remember, the president, President Roosevelt was just getting going and one of the first things he did was cut all federal salaries by fifteen percent which I think was a great thing to do. And we got that back five- percent at time after two or three years or something like that.

So we set sail for Gatlinburg. The roads at that time were not as good as they are now and we got onto dirt roads up in Georgia, dirt roads and detours. WE came into Gatlinburg from the Maryville side, the west side. We were aiming at Knoxville but we finally got there.

But my job there..I don't know, there were a bunch of young freshly graduated landscape architects and a couple of older ones. Malcolm Bird was one of the older ones and he worked in the field mostly. And another one, a man named Leeman (sp?) was from Charlotte. And he had worked with..., oh shucks, he had an office a landscape business there, had written a book. Anyhow, Leeman was a good experienced man so he was outside. I had no great big amount of experience but I knew how to work and I knew something about work and construction.

How did you know about work and construction?

My father was a civil engineer and he railroaded all his life. And he worked mostly in location and construction of the railroads. And that includes a lot of grading on the railroads.

Summers, for several summers, my grandfather had a dairy farm in New York State. Quite often in the summer time my father would schedule his work, if he was gonna be out in the wild woods somewhere, and we'd go up there to the farm and I'd work. Of course, my granddaddy and my daddy believed that boys ought to work at something. So I knew something about work as such and Ludgate had me outside practically all the time. The other fellows were all good or fairly good draftsmen. That was about all the experience most of them had had.

They used a lot of those CCC crews for trail building. At that time the Smokies had only two or three trails, one along the back bone and one from Gatlinburg up to Mt. Lacon (sp). So I was able to get around through the brush it turned out. And I did spend a lot of time locating trails. We had good topo plans of the park. Lud and I, or I by myself, would make a map location of a trail. Generally they had a backbone of a trail system in mind but not located yet.

And then they had a fellow there named Wylie Oakley, the roaming man of the mountains, he called himself. He had worked mostly as a guide for visiting fishermen and important people who wanted to go fishing. And Wylie was supposed to know every creek and every ridge in the Smokies. And he admitted that he did without any fresher(sp) at all. But he didn't quite. Because they assigned Wylie to me to show me which ridge was where. And generally we got along pretty well but couple of times we weren't able to get out by dark. And we had to, as Wylie said, had to lay out all night. She, (Mrs. Pease) didn't particularly like that because I had no way of letting her know. We had no radios at that time.

Mrs. Pease just said there were maybe two telephones in the town of Gatlinburg. And you didn't have one of them?

One was in the park superintendent's office and they had an extension into the Bureau of Public Roads office. And the fellow who owned the hotel, Charlie Huff, the Gatlinburg hotel, the Mountain View, had the other phone. Gatlinburg was a nice little mountain town at that time.

What year was that, Ted?

The year was 33.

So you were primarily working on trails in Great Smokies National Park?

Yes. I would locate the trails. The other fellows just had no experience at all, close to that line. For instance, we would make a map location and from that would figure a grade that we would probably need to get from this point to that point. And then we used an Abney Level, I don't know, are you familiar with that? An Abney level, you hold the level up to your eye and look through it and you have a bubble that goes up and down. It has a quadrant built on it and you can set five degrees or ten percent or whatever grade you want to run. And you have someone with you, Wylie Oakley, and you send him out ahead and flag him up or down the hill until he was on the grade. And then send him on and you tear off a strip of red cloth and you tie it. That's why we called it flagging the trail. And then the construction would follow those flags.

Was Wylie part of the CCC operation or did the park service hire him?

He was, Wylie was hired as what they called a local experienced man. And he got a little more pay than the CCC boys. He got thirty dollars a month, I believe it was. And their board and clothing, the army furnished that for them. Wylie, he got some of his clothing and he took advantage of whatever was available. He knew the main ridges of the park but he didn't know everything. For instance, I was locating a trail to Alum Cave. Have you ever been in the Smokies? Well, Alum Cave is a very popular visitor point there. It's not a cave but a big overhanging bluff. During the Civil War, they dug or quarried alum there to help in making gun powder. And the trail to it went straight up the hollow and it got steep before you got to Alum Cave and they used packhorses to pack that stuff out. But it's an important trail in the park. It's the shortest trail to Mt. Lacon. It's five miles from the highway to Mt. Lacon by that trail. And it's a foot trail only, no horses. That's the first trail that I located. Wylie kept talking while we were running around there in the brush where he got caught in the rain one time and he said there was a big overhanging rock that he said had a hole up through it to the ridge. And while he was in the rain there, there was a creek right at his feet and he caught enough trout to feed him there. And so he stayed there until it quit

raining. And he kept talking about that. So there was a little creek right down where the trail started. And I said, "Well was it this creek?" Yeah, this was the creek. So we went up that creek and then it forked, and then it forked again. And Wylie would say, "This is it here" and we'd beat our way up through the brush, till the creek got down to a trickle and gave up altogether. And he'd say "Well maybe this wasn't the one." Well, we'd go way back down and start all over again. And, finally we found it and I managed to get the trail followed up the creek and up through that hole. Now we call it arched rock.. And when I left there you had to kind of scramble up through but The last time I saw it, before I left, we had made a plan for steps up through there and they were partly built the last time I saw it. And beyond Alum Cave the trail went up to Mount Lacan. It is one of the principle points in the park for visitors. A fellow, the son of the man who owned the hotel, Jack Huff had gone up there and found a spring almost on top of the mountain. So he built a cabin there and would take visitors up. That was one of the first trails that they built. He would keep take people up there and keep them overnight and feed them and charge them. Its still operating. I don't know if Jack runs it now but he had a concession to operate that.

Did you feel that your experience working on the trails in the park help you later on with your work on the Blue Ridge Parkway?

Yes, because we have built quite a few trails from the picnic grounds and campgrounds along the parkway.

When I came up here as far as I know, no one on the parkway had ever actually built a trail. We had a man or two, on the other side, who had some trail experience but not much. Anyway, I more or less, worked all up and down the parkway on trails as we built the parkway. Like at Crabtree Meadows, there's a nice waterfall, about, oh, nearly a mile down there. We wanted a trail there and a trail back up. And it was Forest Service Land so we had an arrangement with the forest service to go ahead and do whatever we wanted to do there..

After I came up here we got a couple of CCC camps, one up in Virginia at Rocky Knob and one here in North Carolina, down toward Marion, down that way. We had CCC labor that we used mostly on trail developments or modern roads. We had, of course, roads in nearly all of the picnic grounds and campgrounds. We built whatever was needed at the overlooks. In the main contract we could get a road, a little spur that wasn't too long for a parking area, and the area itself graded but not a finished job. We would come in and finish the grading, come in and put the curb, sidewalk and that sort of thing.

Are you aware of the visit by Bob Marshall to the Smokies in 1934? The Secretary of the Interior, Ickes, sent him out to make a recommendation about the route of the Blue Ridge Parkway as it approached the Smokies and I guess it caused quite a stir.

I didn't know him but I do remember the stir. I guess you already know as much about it as I do, It caused quite a commotion. The people in Tennessee thought

the parkway instead of staying in NC should detour around in Tennessee somewhere. And the people who located the parkway, Stan Abbot and Ed Abbuehl, mostly, of course, they made a map location first and then they did an awful lot of walking and pretty much had the location fixed in their minds before this trouble came up. They had hearings. I don't know how many. Maybe I oughtn't to tell you this now. But At one hearing, it was supposed to settle things, I guess it was one of the last ones, They had politicians from Tennessee and from North Carolina and from the park service. They made their arguments. The politicians did the arguing because Stan and Ed Abbuehl already had a tentative location. But the politician, I won't mention any names who was interested in getting it into Tennessee said that any body with any good judgement would know that there was more beautiful scenery in Tennessee than in North Carolina. But the North Carolina contingent had provided themselves with a lot of great big photographs that were, a good many of them came from the Smokies. They had a landscape architect there who was an excellent photographer and had worked at it. Exline was his name. He's not living now but he was a good photographer. He used one of these big old view cameras and I'd go along with him to show him places. It would take both of us to carry the tripod, the camera and all the equipment that went with that. But he was a wonderful photographer. And he would sit for an hour if we needed to with his camera all focused waiting for a cloud to come by if he felt that he needed a cloud for the picture. Anyway they had a lot of photographs that were shown as evidence that North Carolina had beautiful views too. And that was the turning point in that discussion. After I was here, it was already settled for North Carolina. Besides that, you've heard of Robert Doughton, that Doughton park is named for. He was a man of considerable influence in congress. He was chairman of the ways and means committee for years. He was one of the strongest backers that the parkway had. I guess. Bob Doughton was interested. And I don't think it did go through his district. I don't think that was his total interest by any means. He was interested in the whole project and what it would do for the state. And it pretty well worked the way he thought it would.

I want to go back to the educational part. As you know the parkway is such a beautiful work of art, I am trying to find a little more about the background, the thinking, the philosophy, of the people who designed it and worked on it. Can you give me a little more insight into some of the things you were reading while you were in college and working on the parkway

Now Stan Abbot was from Cornell. And so was Ed Abbuehl and they became good friends at Cornell. And when they appointed Abbott to come down and locate the parkway, Ed Abbuehl was the first person he got. I guess they had both been working on the Westchester Parkway in New York, which was the only parkway in the country.

They were both very conscious of scenery and the overall effect of the parkway. And, of course, I remember Abbott said one time, that what he envisioned for the

parkway that to the visitor what would appear to be an open area that we built the parkway through. And when we had to go through woods and do a lot of clearing, to keep that in mind. He wanted a natural appearance wherever we could. And he and Ed Abbuehl both, were very conscious of the flowering plants, the rhododendron and Craggy Gardens and that area is famous for the purple rhododendron there. They were both familiar, or became familiar, with our principle flowering shrubs, azaleas, rhododendron and laurel.

Which dates did you work on the parkway?

We came to the parkway in June of '38. I was on the parkway and up and down until I retired, except for while I was in the army that was, when was it. I retired in '74. I was in the army from '43 till '45.

Did you work in the North Carolina Section mainly? Were there specific sections you are associated with?

When I first got here, I was in the Smokies and Stan Abbott and Ed Abbuehl visited there one time and interviewed several of us. Malcolm Bird had worked with them, I guess, in Westchester and as soon as he could he got himself moved to the parkway. I guess they were recruiting on that trip. They never said so. Of course my name was on the civil service list and it was easy to get me if they wanted me. Up until then I was working on six months appointments. And every six months I had to get reappointed for another six months. When they offered me a transfer to the parkway it was a permanent appointment and that was a big factor. But they were good people and you could tell that right away. I guess they checked me out for what I'd been doing in the Smokies. I don't know whether they ever interviewed Wylie Oakley or not. Wylie, we were friends. He had ten or twelve children. Every time he had a new one he'd get someone to write him a letter to the last important visitor that he had guided while they were in the Smokies. And he would tell them he had enjoyed showing them around so much while they were here and just wanted to tell them he had a new baby at his house and would they mind if he named the baby after him. And in a few days where would come a letter with a nice check and they would say they were happy to have the baby named after him. And he had a child named after just about every important visitor that had ever been in the Smokies. He had several boys, I can't remember all their names. Wylie was...when they sent out lunch to the trail crew while we were building that Alum Cave trail, I was on it a good bit of the time if I didn't I'd go for a day or two somewhere else. But the CCC crew, we had a couple of local men that acted as the foremen if I couldn't be there and they kept things going. And Wylie...they would sent out lunches every day and we had a big coffeepot. And everyday someone would built a big fire and make coffee. By Friday we had about five pounds of coffee. The army cooks, you know, they just poured coffee into a bag, four or five pounds. And the local men, who had families that were going home for the weekend would divide up the coffee and the sugar that we had. Most of them would be able to take home a

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couple of pounds a coffee and maybe five pounds of sugar every Friday. And they liked that.

Was there anyone like Wylie who helped on the location of the parkway, that you are aware of?

I don't know of anyone that did. They contacted local people. Bear hunters and people like that usually knew more about the wild country than anyone else. I know one or two that they contacted, or used to know them And they were quite helpful. Down through Asheville, there were several people there that were well acquainted. The Guardians of the Asheville Watershed...they claimed that they knew that area like your hand. They knew the boundaries of it pretty well. We had to get passes. I actually got arrested once for trespassing because I didn't have my pass with me.

You were arrested because you didn't have your pass with you?

The parkway was built from Black Mountain Gap where a road up to Mount Mitchell crossed it. Down about, almost five miles to Balsam Gap. During world War Two it was gravel not paved and it was not open to the public. We had a gate at Black Mountain Gap. There was a lot of windfall there during World War Two. After I got back they wanted me to get in there and make an estimate of the big Spruce and Red Spruce and Balsam that had been blown down.

Did the road cause the blow down? Did the road itself, the fact that it had been cut through the forest, do you think that contributed to the blow down?

Well yes, any time you make a road through the woods that's on a slope you contribute to that somewhat. We tried to work it out so it wasn't so obvious. You've been to Doughton Park? The restaurant, the gas station that's right on the parkway and the lodge is all built ...it was all designed by a fellow who had made a study of the American, HABS, historical American buildings in the Smokies. He came to the parkway and designed those buildings. They were all built of lumber that we cut from those down falls. We had a sawmill and sawed it ourselves. But...

What was the year that you were caught without your pass? Do you remember?

That was after World War Two was over that would have been in '46 I guess. The people who watched over the Asheville Watershed had a little cabin up there down below the road and had rented a telephone from their office in Asheville. The warden arrested me and marched me up to where my car was parked near the gate because there was a blowdown shortly after the gate. So I knew that they had a phone in that cabin and I convinced him that the best thing to do was

to go to their telephone and call their office in Asheville and see if they wouldn't let me go or whatever. And we did and I talked to the superintendent of the Asheville watershed and asked him if he wouldn't call Sam Weems the parkway superintendent at Roanoke and explain to him why I was under arrest. And he finally did. You didn't know Sam Weems but he was a hundred percent for the parkway and something like that he didn't like. So he talked to their superintendent and they wound up wishing they hadn't arrested me in the first place. And we never had to use passes again. Weems pointed out to that man, can't think of his name, that we had a deed for that land and we didn't need passes. But he was all right. He thought he was doing his job and he kind of enjoyed arresting people, I think.

What motivated you to go into the profession of landscape architecture?

Well I don't know. I know that was while I was in school in Gainesville, I worked a couple of summers for a nursery at Winter Garden, But I was already, I don't know that there was any especially compelling, If there was anybody, I guess it would have been an uncle of mine in New York State.

Where in New York?

At Owego, a town where I was born, or the nearest town. But he was in school, I guess he was a school supervisor of some sort. He was a Cornell man, too. Anyway, he had always liked the outdoors. It was very nice country where the farm was there, very much like this area here.

Owego is near the Pennsylvania border in the southeast part of the state. That's where my grandfather's farm was. I guess that he had as much to do about that as anybody did. Although I know he used to remark highway construction, he would remark about how they butchered the landscape. That may have had a little bit, I don't know that the prospects of a job with the Park Service was much of a factor because there weren't jobs with anybody at that time. I graduated in '31 and Roosevelt was elected in '32 and he was trying to get things fired up. Anyway that was sort of a bad time for people who wanted to work. There just weren't any jobs.

When you came to the parkway, in 1938 you said, what were your responsibilities at that time? Were you a project landscape architect, were you still a field person?

Yes, I was. I worked almost entirely in the field. I worked quite a bit on making land use maps. We started making them about that time. I would do the fieldwork while the weather was good. And in the wintertime when the weather was bad I would make the final drawings here at home or if we had an office, there.

Were you living in Boone at the time?

No I lived first in Galax, Virginia. I was supposed to be in what we call landscape development, in North Carolina. But I lived in Virginia because we couldn't find a place in North Carolina. We lived briefly in Sparta. And Sparta isn't a very big town now and at that time it wasn't that big. We were there, I guess, a month or so and still couldn't find a place that we could rent. We had sort of an apartment for awhile. We would go to Galax on Saturdays to buy groceries because the grocery store in Sparta didn't have any fresh vegetables. Everyone had a garden and the grocery store couldn't sell vegetables. Anyhow so we would go to the grocery store in Galax Saturdays. And we were there one day and Jesse had a migraine headache. And I inquired of someone if there a doctor in town who had night office hours. They told us one and we went to him. We were asking everyone we saw then if they knew of a house for rent or an apartment. When we asked him he said "Yes I do. I've got one. It will be available next week. But I'll tell you right now if you give noisy parties or drink liquor don't bother to look at it because that's why its going to be vacant next week." So we looked at it and rented it. We lived there for all the time we were in Galax, about two years.

And I got bold enough then just to notify the people in the office that my address wasn't Sparta anymore, it would be Galax, Virginia. It was interesting. The parkway then. what was built then, was at the state line which was as close to Galax as it was to Sparta. So I could go out and get on the parkway and go to where ever I was going.

At that time the Bureau of Public Roads, of course, we had an arrangement with the Bureau of Public Roads for them to design the construction and engineering. help let the contracts and supervise the construction work. And they had what they called a landscape crew and they had a landscape architect. I never met him but once and I don't remember his name. But he worked out of Washington and he'd come whenever he wanted to and meet with the crew and that they had working in landscape development. Mostly planting bushes in places that needed it. I had only one time that I was ever able to contact him. Soon then, as soon I got there, they planned to phase out. They never did anymore landscape work as such. But they did have a crew there. It was an interesting thing. The foreman of that crew was a fellow named Lisle (sp) He wound up being superintendent of the parkway and died shortly after he retired.. (sp) He wound up being superintendent of the parkway and died shortly after he retired. But he was a good man and had a charming personality and did a good job.

I am interested that the Bureau of Public Roads did landscape work, on the parkway, you said. Would the design have been done by the Park Service?

The first contract that was let was with NelloTeer who was a great big contractor. At that time the first construction plans for instance in a cut, they just went up to the top of the cut. Now we have them rounded at the top. And then we realized that that old way wasn't what we wanted. Our newer contracts all had rounding at

the tops and bottoms of the slopes. That principally was what their landscape crew was doing. They would round off the top and then they bought shrubbery from nurseries around and about. They took care of that. Course they were using park service money. We paid for all of it. Their landscape architect that's mostly what he did, hunt up the nurseries that had rhododendron or laurel. That's mostly what we planted. He didn't stake it out exactly. Granny Lisle,(sp) said he would take a handful of stones and throw them like that and say, "Plant a bush," wherever one landed. His idea was to get a very informal arrangement and it worked pretty well.

Which year was that?

That was when I first came here. That was going on right then. They didn't do a whole lot of work. They didn't last very long; they didn't work at it very long. But they had some good men; they were all local men that knew how to work. Most of the local people through the mountains if you tell them you want to take that bush and plant it here why he knows how to dig a hole and will plant it probably so that it will do all right. Now the CCC boys you had to train them how to plant the plants. With them we would put a stake where we wanted plants planted. Malcolm Bird figured that out. We would color code the top of the stakes; green for one bush and different colors for the type of shrubbery and then bands for the sizes. You could plant great big ones or little small ones by just driving a stake there. I would take an armful of stakes and my hatchet and I'd drive stakes and then they would plant them.

How did you determine where to plant the plants and which plants? The whole design component how was that figured out?

I'd have to pull that out of my head right then. What you would do usually, If it was on a cut slope you'd look at what was up above there. Mostly, with shrubbery. Trees, well, we'd look at trees, too but stake them separately from the shrubbery. And if it was mostly laurel we'd use laurel there. If it was pink rhododendron, we'd use that, whatever and pick up the general arrangement up above and bring that down over the cut, enough to get away from the sharp line of the top of the cut. Of course, we couldn't, on these long high cuts, we couldn't do it all the way down to the road. It just would take more plant material than we could buy. But we'd break that line at the top of the cut, first by rounding it with grading and then by whatever planting and we'd thin out the planting as we came down enough to... But that was the idea. With trees we'd usually collect them. We rarely could find the tree that we wanted from a nurseryman. Most of the local nurserymen are growing laurel and azaleas. But we'd collect trees, hardly ever one more than four inches diameter. When you plant them on the slopes it's a lot easier if you can find one on a slope to dig. Because it's hard to fit one into the hole otherwise. And that's the way it would go.

We could see right off the bat that there was going to be too much for us to ever do what we would like to have eventually. So we'd usually wind up having to start it and break that hard line. On the fills we had a similar problem. We'd try to bring whatever was down there up the slope enough to break the fill line. Then when we came to a view area the main thing there was to enhance the view with planting or framing or whatever appeared necessary. At that time we did a good bit of work before we made the plans. So in effect we were making the plans, planting the plans as we went.

How soon would the plants go in after the cut had been made? Construction occurred and then how soon would you follow with the plants?

We tried not to we didn't interfere with the construction. If we had more than one project going we'd work on one in an area where they had finished. We never, tried never to get in the way of a contractor. If we could not plant in a section until he had moved on, we would rather do that. Of course, you know how the sections go, one and two, a,b,c and like that.

And so you were working in about ten-mile sections and would try to wait until the contractor had moved on, if possible then begin your planting work.

The length of the sections was usually from gap to gap. They would vary, as I recall they were never less than eight miles. Ten miles, we would kind of favor that, or close to ten miles. A very few of them are fifteen miles. I think we had one sixteen miles. But that gets to be quite a large figure for a contractor to bid, longer of course. But a section in the neighborhood of ten miles was big enough to interest the big contractors but still something that wasn't so big that it was just going to go on and on and on. We liked the contractor to get out of the way before we did what we could do and what we did do.

In the planting plans, what were your aims? Were you aiming for diversity of plant material?

There's a general rule in the whole park service that any planting that you do you use plants that are indigenous to the area, I think is the expression they use. But you use local plants. If adjoining planting in the shrubbery area is a mixture we tried to pretty well imitate it. We never wanted a definite change where the top of the cut used to be. We would try to get away from that.

What do you think now about the evolution of the landscape, the plant growth of the parkway? Some things are dying out, such as the dogwoods, and some of the other species are having problems.

Now I've been retired for 25 years but so far as I know we haven't gotten into the replacement of something that died naturally. Now we have a certain amount of loss of plants that we plant. We tried to hold that to a minimum. In some areas dogwood was the feature in the woods and we would try to bring that onto the slope if we could. But we had some trouble with collected dogwood. You have to be careful. You can't get a very large dogwood and move it with any great degree of success, regularly. Little fellows, little seedlings you can pick up pretty easily and give them time and they will get to be larger ones. But of course costs always enters in to planting areas like that and the local nurserymen, they are in business to make some money. And we were never able to get reduced prices or anything like that.

What were your main goals when you were doing the design work for the parkway, or the goals that were expressed by...

You mean the land use maps?

The parkway, in general, what do you think the main ambitions and goals were?

As far as plant material is concerned?

Plants and some of the details, the details and location of the road...

If we could, we wanted the parkway to fit the landscape so that it didn't look like an intrusion, it looked like a natural something that we built the road on. That's not always easy in the mountains. As far as plant material, we used the same if it were what we would consider weed plants ordinarily. If that's all that was there that's what we would plant because we followed nature's choice of what would do well there.

I've been reading through the plant spec's of 1939 and it seems like some of the cleaning out of woods specifications were adjusted to take into consideration leaving some dead wood for den habitat for some animals, do you know anything about that?

We did not have a naturalist on the parkway for some time. But when we did we heard quite a lot about that sort of thing. But there was never any question that a dead tree that might fall across the parkway, we cut it and moved it out before it did fall across the parkway. That's more of a safety measure than anything else. Other than that what we wanted was a natural look. Of course the construction area itself was hardly ever so wide that it would have much influence on leaving dead timber because we just didn't own it far enough. Because like a big old dead chestnut like we had thousands of at one time, we would leave the picturesque ones and they would melt into the general scenery all right. And a lot of the big old chestnuts were quite picturesque and some of the them were

sound enough and sturdy enough that you could pretty well tell that they would stand for a long time. Other than chestnut, most other dead trees we would take down before they fell from natural causes. For one thing if they fell into a planting that we had made they would do a lot of damage to that. And dead trees are a hazard along a roadway anywhere and especially in the wintertime when they can load up with ice and come down.

What kind of consideration was given to the areas where you had drainage or erosion problems?

If there was severe erosion, so far as I know we never could include erosion control in the construction contract other than what was caused by the construction. But in some areas where we had significant amounts of erosion, for instance over in Price park there was quite a large area there that for some reason was just riddled with gullies, some of them fifteen or twenty feet deep. And it wasn't that steep but it was just an accumulation of water that would wind up cutting a little more and a little more. I remember that over there I rented a bulldozer for several weeks. And he worked there and he filled in what he could with the material. And instead of just a bunch of gullies it's a smoother thing now. And he got it smooth enough so that we could seed it and we seeded it to grass. Now we would like for natural woods and shrubs to come in those places. But it takes time for that and we could stabilize it with grass and then hope for a little natural, a few trees. Trees will come from quite a ways. The squirrels bring acorns and plant them around, that sort of thing. We didn't have too many areas like that. Because in the mountains there is not a whole lot of natural erosion in a natural condition. Where there is erosion there is usually a stream in the bottom of it, from a spring or two.

And then too, things that were ugly and were not gonna help the view any, they had first priority when it came to working outside of the construction zone. For along time we tried to pretty well limit all that we did within the construction zone. But we'd sneak over if we were nearly done with something, why we'd stretch it a little. And Ed Abbuehl was understanding about things like that. And he, I guess he understood me, too. Because he would drop remarks occasionally, like "Gee if we could ever get something growing here, it would be great wouldn't it?" and say no more about it. I know one or two places where Ed would remark "Gosh we ought to have a little pulpit here in this view."

And two or three places we have one now.

What is a pulpit?

A pulpit is something that we would build out for a visitor to stand and look at the view.

Would that be at the overlook?

Usually it's connected with an overlook because that's where most of your foot traffic is going to come from. And people, for instance, south of here at Chestoa View, that's down the other side of Linville a few miles, and you drive up into an overlook and then there's a trail there and you can see that right down below you can see there's a little circular something and the trail to it. If you go down there there's some steps and it's no bigger than the end of this room, built up with a wall oh that high around it. A few years ago the papers were full of it, some guy pushed his girlfriend off and killed her. We got a lot of publicity from that.

One of the uses that wasn't anticipated. (laughs)

Right.

Did the parkway build any stone amphitheaters in their parks or campsites?

Most of our amphitheaters are just seats and a stage. All that I can recall were picked because of the shape of the location.

Would any stone work have gone into them?

I don't know of any. There is a little stone work here and there. Stonework is pretty expensive. We had to watch it. Along most of the trails, occasionally you need some wall just to hold the trail up. That's just part of trail construction. Around the overlooks we tried to include in the construction of the overlook, if any masonry was needed. We usually built the curb, stone curbing in the overlooks and in the campgrounds and in the picnic grounds if it was needed we did that.

What was the policy related to drainage and water flow issues?

So far as water flow, any time we interrupted the natural flow we tried to get it back into its natural course. Around camp grounds and picnic grounds where we wanted to get the water out of the use area we would most always try to put it back in the water course that it would have been in any way. At least any that I had anything to do with that's the way we did it.

I've noticed stone structures that take the water under the road.

What you saw are what we call head walls at each end of a pipe. The Bureau of Roads preferred a concrete headwall because they were simple and the contractor could figure them easily. We preferred a stone headwall. So we have some of each along the parkway. A few of the concrete ones that you could see too much, we thought, we would cap it with stone so that a visitor wouldn't notice it.

As the Park Service has evolved it has more ecological purpose. Did that come into play during your time with the parkway

When I went to Gatlinburg, see, the Park Service wasn't but sixteen years old. They had few written down hard and fast policies. They had some general ones, like you didn't cut anything you didn't need to cut and like that. As time went along and we did more and more development we began to notice things like that more than we did in the early days. I don't know that we have policy that covers everything now. I guess discretion is what we are supposed to use.

Were there any policies that you are aware of that might have changed what you did in the design work due to attention to some endangered species?

If we ran into anything of an endangered type if it's possible, why we saved it even if it's undesirable. We used to have a lot of jokes about poison ivy and things like that. But I have seen people, not right on the parkway but when we lived in Asheville, I remember there was one place up toward the Craggies where there was A nice tree or two in a flat place completely bedded with poison ivy. And I've seen people picnicking right in the middle of it.

I got bawled out one time. I stopped and told the people. That was poison ivy and they had children with them. The guy said "You tend to your work and I'll tend to us". I thanked him and went on .

But children have no business with poison ivy. And I'd never hesitate to eradicate it out of a picnic ground or campground. It's not needed there. And rattlesnakes fall into the same category. The naturalists don't agree with me on that. Most naturalists will tell you that the rattlesnakes were here before we were and they should have priority. And if there are rattlesnakes around, why its all right to warn people but don't kill the rattle snake.

And I could never agree with them, never did. But it's a silly thing, I think, to have anything that could be dangerous to children, especially children running around loose. And most people when they are picnicking, let their kids run.

Can you tell me a little bit about the design process? You mentioned the other night on the telephone that much of your time was spent walking the parkway and then drawing.

Well the design process, really, at first, You have a location to begin with . You want to go from here to there and if it s something like the parkway it's a matter of miles. And then you fix your starting point and your terminus and then you have to decide, if there is a choice, if you want to follow one ridge or a different ridge. And you make a general decision, as much as you can. But then as you go along the ridge and the parkway the Blue Ridge is supposed to follow the

Blue Ridge. As you go along the ridge, you go really from gap to gap because that's where you can go to the other side of the hill if you want to without a lot of trouble and expense, is in the gaps. And the only way to decide which side of the hill is the best one from this gap to that gap is for someone to walk through there and make a tentative location. And you do that from gap to gap all along. After the parkway was fairly well located and the Tennessee argument was settled. There was no doubt that the parkway was going to go from this spot to that spot, usually gaps. Then it's just a matter of when you had the money for the construction. Of course, the states were supposed to, and did, furnish the right of way. Each state agreed that they would furnish up to a hundred and twenty five acres to the mile on our location. So that's the first rushing thing that you have is to get enough of a location established so that the state can begin with buying the right of way. After you definitely have decided that you are going from this gap to that gap, then the Bureau of Roads would send a man in to stake we called it a preliminary line, a "p" line. It was a rough line, not hard and fast.

After the general location was definitely established we'd send in a Bureau of Roads engineer who would stake out the "p" line. Those people had a lot to do with the location of the parkway. We had one that I remember in particular, was an older man, his name was Allfather. The people that knew him called him Allpop. He was a good bit older than I was and he had quite a potbelly. He'd get some of the local men, you know and say "I'm going stake out a section here about ten miles." He'd hire them to work by the day. They'd look at him and think "That old boy isn't going to work anyone to death." Well, Allpop would walk you to death. He'd just walk all day, through the brush, steadily. He had that reputation with all of the local men that he could hire. I've heard them say, "Allpop tried to hire me again the other day just to walk out a little line with him. I told him I was busy."

Was he a civil engineer?

He was a civil engineer and a good one and sympathetic to the parkway. Abbott and Abbuehl had talked to him and he knew how they felt about things. We rarely had to change one of his preliminary lines. Of course, he had a map that he could look at. And he knew that he had ten miles to go definitely on this side of the ridge. Then he would look at the construction. His main concern was if the construction was impossible or expensive or easy. And everything else being equal he'd take the easiest, cheapest way. But sometimes he would take, for instance, you're not familiar with Doughton Park? There's a long inside curve just this side of Doughton Park. And it was a vertical cliff there, is about all it was. But it made kind of a feature. And that's where the parkway is. But they had to shoot it out, just a notch out of the solid rock around that vertical curve.

And it doesn't have any thing to do with what you want I guess, but frequently they'd send a new landscape architect to me and he'd work with me for a while. I'd see if I could get him going good. Anyway, this fellow, he was kind of

stubborn. The parkway was graded up around through there and graveled but not paved. And it was wintertime. We'd go up there with a little snow or ice on the road. I mentioned to him, "Now there is just enough super elevation here so that if we stop, we'll gradually slide right on overboard. So we need to go just fast enough for centrifugal force to hold us up there." "Yeah, yeah." He understood that good.

Next time... it wasn't too long before we gave him a car for him to drive. And he was going along and I was following him. I guess we were coming in one night. There he went up around this curve, going up on a curve to the left and all of a sudden the door of his car opened and swung all the way out and I could see he was holding that door open. When we got around on up above, I blew him down with my horn. He stopped and I said "What in the world did you come around there holding the door of your car open?" And he said "Well, if we started, if I started to slide in that car I'm gonna jump out." And I said "Well, where are you going to jump to?" And he studied about it for a while and he never answered.

So just being a landscape architect don't make you smart about things like that. And some of the brand new ones, you did need to tell them some things that you wouldn't think you ought to. You'd tell them just to make sure that they knew it. We got some odd balls from time to time and some good men, some real good men. But every once in a while something like that would happen.

It would spice things up a little bit. It sounds like you had a good working relationship with the Bureau of Public Roads people.

We had problems from time to time. But usually I would try to handle the problem before it got serious, if you know what I mean. Of course, they had inspectors there that were engineers. Most of them were graduate engineers, had civil engineering degrees and knew a lot about construction but nothing about park service ideas. We tried to tell them in advance what our main consideration would be as construction went on. And on every section some landscape architect was supposed to be there to work with the contractor. Actually you worked with the bureau engineers. And if something is going on that you can't have you don't run up to the contractor and say "Whoa". You go to the fellow that's giving the contractor his orders, which was one of these Bureau boys. And we never had any real serious trouble. We quite often... they would want to do things that we wouldn't want to.

Right out here, the first summer that I worked in this area...there was no place to rent or sell in the area and I boarded between about halfway between here and Deep Gap. And there was a house that you could see it from where I boarded. But at some time the house was torn down. It was a big old, nice old two-story house but it was right close to the parkway.

The fellow who owned it had planted a row of sugar maple trees. By that time they were three or four feet, (*caliper?*) beautiful trees. They were in a row and

we would never plant things, that many in a row. But anyhow, I noticed they were just off from the construction line. The toe of the fill was about ten or fifteen feet before you got to them. And the terms of the contract, the contractor. . any work that he does outside of the construction zone has to be negotiated with the contractor as it takes a special price. Well, the engineer on the job, who was in charge of the contractor directly, decided that he didn't like that row of maple trees. And he knew that we didn't, in general, go for trees in a row like that. So while the contractor was clearing the right of way and had a crew cutting trees, he decided that he was gonna break up that row of those big maple trees. And he was gonna do it by cutting half of them down.

I came along just as the saw crew had the first tree, they were about half way through it...too far to save the tree. So I stopped. Of course, I knew the fellows. We talked a little bit about why they were cutting that tree. Mr. Wise had told them to cut it. He wanted it cut and he'd marked the rest of them out. I said "You know this is outside of the construction zone and, actually, you boys ought not to be doing anything out here if you want to get your pay."

Well, they were aware of that.

And so I said, "Well I'd appreciate it if you don't cut any more because I m going to hunt up Mr. Wise and talk to him about this." And so I did.

And I said "How come you're cutting down all those maple trees down there, just outside of the construction zone?"

"Well," he said, "They don't look like they ought to."

I said, "You're trying to talk like a landscape architect. Now you're an engineer, come on, why are you cutting them?"

He said, "I just don't like trees in a row either."

And I said "Well, look, they're beautiful trees and in the fall those trees can be a feature. And we can plant some more small sugar maples around to make it a great big group instead of just a row. And he said "Yeah we could. I hadn't thought of that." And so we had no more trouble there. He said "Well, we won't cut any more of them."

Then on the final inspection of that road. Of course, they cleaned around where the tree was. The contractor was in his car. And then this man was in the front seat with him. And the superintendent was in the back seat and Ed Abbuehl and then me. Of course I figured I was just along for the ride. But anyhow, that was Sam Weems. Now Sam Weems, he was for the parkway. Well, we were coming down where you got a view of those trees. And it wasn't fall and they weren't in color and their leaves were all gone. But any way we were going down there and Weems said He said "Wait minute, Whoa, whoa, stop." And we stopped and he said, "There used to be six trees there."

Now you wouldn't believe it but there did use to be six. And he turned around to me and said, "Who cut that tree?"

And I said, "Well, that's a long story."

"We've got time." he said.

And the guy, Wise, that got it cut ,was sitting right there. And he was just sitting there not listening to anything.

I said, "Well, Frank can explain it to you, maybe better than I "

And Weems looked at him.

And Frank, he finally said, "Well I knew that the Park Service didn't like trees in a row. And I was just gonna help you all out a little."

And then his boss, he was in the car too, his boss looked at him and said "Well I never heard anything about that. That's outside of the construction zone there. "

So anyhow I said, "Well, the tree's gone. We can't put it back. Maybe we can agree that we won't cut anymore."

And Weems said, "We certainly will!"

So no more was said and we went on.

Now Sam Weems, he would remember things like that. I remember a car wrecked down the parkway somewhere and there were two little white pine trees, about six or eight feet tall. The guy went off on a little curve and just only about that much fill and those little pine trees. He went off and rolled over and broke off one of those trees. When Weems came by the wreck had been taken out and the trees had been taken away, too.

He met me first and asked me, "What about up there at such and such a place? There used to be two little white pine trees there. Now one of them is gone."

He said "And the ground's all skinned up. Looks like a car wrecked."

I said, "It did and ran over that tree."

"And ruined it!" he said.

I said, "Yeah, broke it off."

He said, "I always did like those two little trees there." (laughs)

He had a great memory for the specific details.

He traveled the parkway and anything that you were doing that was questionable you'd better keep an eye open because the superintendent might come along any minute of any day.

Was he a landscape architect?

Pardon?

Was Sam Weems a landscape architect?

No, he was an engineer. He was a Georgia Tech engineer, and a good one. Well when we got to where we had a parkway engineer, they always said he was a hard man to work for. Because he was as good an engineer I guess himself, as we had ever. But Weems was for the parkway. He started out buying right of

way for the state, one of the states. And then he saw that this was something he was going to be interested in. And he was a good superintendent.

But up until World War Two Stan Abbot was the resident landscape architect and acting superintendent. And Weems got to be appointed as his assistant superintendent but

But after World War Two when everyone came back from the war Abbott was told, "Well, it's too much now for one man to do both jobs. You can have either job that you want but not both of them any more."

So Abbott said "Well, I'm a landscape architect I'll stay with that."

So then they made Weems superintendent. And then Ed Abbuehl took over the landscape part. They sent, right off the bat, they sent Abbott to Williamsburg. Abbott had a way with people. He could sell his point. That Colonial Parkway, if you're familiar with it, that Jamestown Parkway goes from Jamestown to Yorktown. Where it tunneled under part of Jamestown they were having trouble. They were about to put tunnel portals, rockwork on the outside. The then superintendent there wanted stone. The Rockefellers wanted to use Jamestown brick, which was an odd size brick that many of the houses there were built out of. And they were having one newly made that we called, that everyone called the Jamestown Brick size. That's what they wanted to use for that tunnel portal. . And it got to the point where the superintendent was about ready to fight with them over it. And so they transferred him and sent Stan Abbott over there. I guess they told him of the trouble they were having.

So when he showed up, the way I heard the story, some of the Roosevelt, (Rockefeller?) people contacted him right away and said "We want to go ahead with the headwall on this tunnel now. And we'll not beat around the bush, we want to make it out of brick and the other superintendent was holding out for stone and insisted it ought to be stone. Now what do you think about it?" And Stan Abbott had already looked the place over and knew the situation and he said, "Well I can't think of anything better than your Jamestown brick for that." (laughs)

That was Stan Abbott.

He started off on a good footing with his new job.

He had no more trouble with that there at all. And it was building in a big hassle. But that's the way he was. He understood people. And actually, the Jamestown brick do tie in with the rest of the brickwork, some of it within sight of there. And the stone would actually be a little bit foreign there. I wonder off every once in a while...

Your wanderings are good, too. What percentage of the decisions related to the design were made in the field and what percentage were made in the office?

Well, I had never thought of it percentage wise. I have always been sort of, well, not proud, but anyway I always felt like I never did make a decision that I felt was important that was reversed by the powers that be. But I'd hate to have to say how often that occurred, not very often. Most of the final decisions were made on the ground because that's where the problem is. Abbott and Abbuehl, both, if I had something that I was concerned about and didn't know what they would probably want, I called. Of course, they approved of that. Usually one or both of them would be familiar with that situation where it was. Once or twice they said, "Well, we need to look at that. We'll be out there shortly." Or they'd say, "Well, whatever they wanted, or say, "Well, whatever you think is best."

But they were reasonable people. And they were the best to work for.

Yeah, you mentioned that you enjoyed working with them. Ted, when did you last get up and visit the parkway?

I don't know. See, neither of us can drive anymore. I was trying to think.

Jesse: It was when Esther sp? and DT sp? were here. My brother and his wife and we drove up to Cumberland knob. And he's been dead five years so it was before that..

Okay, sometime in the nineties, you went up to Cumberland Knob?

Jesse: Yes, We both have poor vision and Ted hasn't driven now for six years. Its been almost four since I've driven.

Ted: We used to go quite often. When we first moved here from Asheville, we used to go back down there every once in a while. She could shop better down there than she could here and we had friends there that wed like . And occasionally, It would take a little longer to go the parkway than the state road but wed get to ride over some of it. Someone told me just within the last day or two that he'd wanted to get us and ride on the parkway. I don't remember.. but that's what it takes now is someone else. You hate to tell people, "Hey, let's you take us out to the parkway and just ride around awhile." That's kind of overdoing it a little bit.

Well I'm sure they wouldn't have a better tour guide anywhere, Ted.

I enjoyed the parkway and I got to know a good bit of it. And the last, as I said one time, I was supposed to work just in North Carolina. And then people would leave and one thing and another and I'd have to go a little farther up into Virginia. And the last several years I worked I had to cover the whole thing from Cherokee to the other end. Of course, by then we had radios in all of our cars. That's an

advantage and a nuisance, too. But I would be able to put it off long enough so that I maybe could do something else on the same trip and not too bad. Now if they just wanted me in Bluff Park or Doughton Park, (it started out as Bluff park), why I could run up there any day. And the same way if they just wanted me down this way, somewhere between here and Asheville. And by then we had pretty competent maintenance crews most everywhere. And those fellows, they were local men. They were pretty proud of what they were doing. And they worked well at it and did well.

Now we had at one time. Well, I never had any real trouble. But you know the parkway goes through the Indian Reservation and Sam Weems negotiated with those Indians for I don't know how long. And they didn't want to give up a right of way through their reservation, and they didn't have to. And Weems would go down and as he would say, "Butter up the Indians", talk to the chief and he finally convinced the chief that it would be a good thing for him to do. And so he agreed and we got the right of way.

And then some of our own maintenance people were a little bit on the stupid side. Because they... I had gone down there one time, I remember, at Water Rock Knob we had a road up to a big parking area and then they wanted a trail from there up to the top. And I had to go down there and locate it. They had an Indian, a young Indian man working in maintenance in that area near Soco Gap, was their headquarters. And they gave him to me to help flag that trail. And he was a good one. He says, "What time do you want to start in the morning?" when I first contacted him. I said "Well, I'm in a motel over here in Waynesville I can be there most anytime. What time do you usually go to work?" He said, "I usually get there by seven." I said, "Well I'll meet you at seven o'clock at the parking area."

I got there next morning at seven and he was sitting in his car waiting. It was one of those mornings when there was a heavy dew. And the weeds were higher than your head where we had to start out with the trail. I said "Cody", his name was Cody Lambert. Lambert is one of the tribes. I said, "Cody, we'll get wet here." He said, "Won't hurt."

So we started off through there and we were wringing wet before we went a hundred yards. And that's the way he was. He was smart and he would do anything you wanted. He was just a good man. I heard before long that they were having a little trouble down there. After we finished what we were doing, to back up a little bit, I recommended when they needed a good foreman down there that they consider him because he was the sort that would be a good man. And down there, anyway, some of our local men were having trouble with some of the Indian men down there. They had two or three other Indians that worked down there. Anyway it got to me. And I didn't have anything to do with it. But I did express that my view was that when we entered the Indian reservation we ought to use Indian labor down there in maintenance and if we did I didn't think we'd have any trouble. And that's what they did. And the last I heard, Cody was

the foreman of the maintenance crew in the reservation there. And I know we went down that way one time for some reason or another, once in a while Jesse would ride with me if I had to go and we passed his crew. They were eating lunch, or had been eating lunch, and the truck was parked and behind it there were three or four Indians there lying down behind the truck with their head on the stone curb, resting after eating their lunch. (laughs)

That's a hard pillow.

That tickled me. You'd think that if they wanted to rest there was grass over there. They lay down on the gravel with their head on a stone curb. And Cody was with them. He wasn't lying down he was working on his time business in the cab of the truck.

The Indians, I think, from what I've seen... Now I mostly just knew Cody but I talked with some of the others, and I think and I don't know whether its because some of them had jobs there now. But I think the Indians like the parkway through there. Because, well, now they have the casino and they're all getting rich, I guess, from that. But at that time there were gift shops there that the traffic on the parkway was helping out a lot in their gift shops. I guess now their casinos are benefiting from the parkway, too.

Did the parkway have separate facilities for the different races? I read somewhere that it did.

You mean in the restrooms?

Restrooms, restaurants, what not.

Not that I know of. I never heard of it.

Not in the North Carolina section?

No, or in the Virginia section. Now from time to time we might have a truck delivering gasoline that had a driver that was black or something else. And he might have mentioned that there were places where he didn't use the restroom or something like that. But there's never been any regulation that way. Now I do know that Weems was from Georgia and blacks were not blacks to him. But he didn't make a big thing out of it.

What was your reaction when you went up on your last visit to the parkway to the way it looked?

Well it looked pretty good but maybe not as good as I thought it ought to look. A big part of the way the parkway looks comes from mowing the road shoulders and from mowing out the little bays that are supposed to be mowed on the

master plan. And sometimes, mowing machines are pretty expensive. And we wear them out pretty fast on the parkway. The driver gets more money than a common laborer does and should. But usually, for one reason or another, there will be little areas that just like that have not been mowed recently and don't look as good as you'd like them to. I don't remember seeing any major blunders that have been made somewhere.

Of course, by the time I retired I don't think that all the Land Use Maps were complete. Because working on land use maps used to be something that no one liked to do. And it is tedious. For me, I can't do it out of my car. I know several people that claimed that they could and would try to do it. But I have to do it from walking along. With... We made boards, we'd take plywood cut a piece big enough so we could fold a plan sheet one time and then use clothes pins and clip it down around that. And you can hold it. Its light to carry but still. You can do work on it with pencil. I always had that in my car and would work a little bit as I had time. And then in the wintertime when the maintenance crews weren't doing anything except pushing snow or shoveling snow, I would try to do all the land use planning that I could. It worked all right that way because the plant material that I was primarily interested in was evergreen anyway. And the trees I could recognize. We were supposed to, on the land use maps, if there was a 48 inch White Oak we were supposed to mark that we wanted to be sure that it was not cut for whatever reason. We'd mark it as a 'so big white oak, specimen'. And We'd mark it on the plan and it would be protected if necessary, that way. . And other things like that wed make notes about the land use.

Now Malcolm Bird first started out working on land use maps. And Malcolm would make a detailed list of plant material that he wanted planted. Now if you find a land use map, and they're probably using the same ones because it costs money to remake them. And you can print the old ones pretty cheap. There are probably quite a few lands use maps still around that Malcolm Bird made or I made. Because he was in charge of that to begin with but he soon left.

But I continued that until one day I happened to think about it and I asked Ed Abbuehl if it was necessary for us to say so many of this and so many of that and so many others. Now I agreed with spotting a special tree that you want or like that. "But the people that were going to be doing the work", I said, "do they not have common sense enough and know enough about what we want anyway that if we just say extend the shrubbery to this line here and then indicate a shrubbery line? Why, wouldn't that be better than to say why in this area plant fourteen blueberries and ninety two whatever?"

And Ed studied a while and he said. " Well, yes and if they don't, we ought to be able to find someone that will be interested enough and know enough to do that."

So all of the later land use maps that I made would have a note maybe to say extend shrubbery line as shown or sometimes after so long a time, its automatic if you indicate the shrubbery line which is different from the tree line why your

foreman will know what you mean and what you need to use. And besides that if he's going to have to collect it he don't want to have to help carry it any farther than is necessary. And in a few rare cases we did have our own people that would collect stuff from the area that they were supposed to extend it. (laughs)... but not much.

So generally if they were collecting it would be pretty close to the area where they were planting?

If it were possible, if the material was there and if we could spare it without changing the looks of it. Usually they were going to have to carry it so they would favor the small sizes that were underneath the larger things anyway. In general that would be the way that it was done. And as long as they collected in the area they can't go wrong. They might get the proportion out of whack a little bit but as long as it comes from within sight of there its going to be the kind of material that they ought to put there.

Did they collect within the parkway bounds? Were they able to find enough plant material?

We collected from our own property wherever we could as long as it wouldn't interfere with what we were trying to keep. Like the other side of the hill, something like that we would collect. We didn't collect many trees. Trees large enough to show as tree right away in your planting, they are heavy and they get to be a real problem moving them in there. You can dig a nursery grown tree with a lot smaller ball of dirt than you can dig one that you collect. That gets to be a factor. You can get nursery grown trees up to three or four inches that say four men two on each side, I had them make things that they call, what is that that you carry crippled people on?

A gurney?

Yeah, and we had that. It would be with a pole and maybe just a canvas in between and four men could get that. And four men can carry a pretty good size ball. If they use good judgement and plant the farthest away one so they won't have to walk through those they've already planted care? But you can usually get in local nurseries....a lot of the local nurseries wont have a thing except rhododendron and maybe azalea. And they ship a lot of it. And that's what ships best and what they sell the most of. But a few of them have discovered that they can collect some little seedling trees and line them out and let them grow a few years. There are people around town that need a tree. They do have a market for them.

When the work was being done, in terms of the construction, installation of the plants, etc. how many people would be in a crew typically for a section?

Well it mostly depends on how many good men you can find. The maintenance foremen were always on the look out for good men and most of the time they would have one or two that weren't worth much. Usually they'd lay off several men through the winter. They'd always lay off the worst ones that they had. Come spring if they were hiring men back again, they'd hire back any good ones that they had had to furlough. If the no good ones came wanting their job back they'd tell them, "Well we just can't use you this time." And they'd finally get the message. But people are people and there are people that work hard and people that don't work hard.

Would you have a standard crew size then?

No It somewhat would depend on what we had to do. A lot of the sections, there's still basic work that needs doing or a lot of routine work that they never get caught up with. Like cleaning ditch lines. You know you're going to have to do that. And you need several men to do that. Your small crew of best men that you keep through the winter you try to plan that as far ahead of time as you can. That is the foreman does. The foremen usually aren't bashful about dropping off a man that isn't much good because it reflects on him if he don't get the work done. And he knows it.

Would it be the foreman then who was the one reading the plan or would a landscape architect be out in the field too? The land use maps or the development plans?

During construction, well, we used to have a lot more men than we have now. And of course you depend on congress for the money every year and now our permanent staff is minimum. Then they can hire seasonal men and do, for the routine jobs. I don't know of any landscape architects or engineers that are hired on a seasonal basis. Usually the same one makes the plan and looks at it as they put it on the ground. Now they may be doing it differently now than they did when I was there.

I just wondered who was interpreting them. When you said you changed the procedure from spec'ing all those little plants to say 'extend the shrub bay here', or 'extend the shrub line', who would be responsible for interpreting that? Was it the foreman then?

On the land use maps theoretically there is enough information there so that the foreman, the full-time maintenance foreman, is supposed to be able to interpret land use maps. Now that don't mean that he can or does. But if they're interested we will help them., if they don't quite understand things. And you use the same symbols, if you're using symbols, over and over. If a person is interested.. we've always been able to get a maintenance crew with people that had experience in planting shrubbery for instance. Because this area of the state, that's one of the industries here. And there have been two or three pretty

big outfits that collect shrubbery by the carload to ship north to sell to nurserymen. And there are men at every town along the parkway that have worked collecting shrubbery. Some of them have worked for themselves. Some collect a truckload and then sell it to someone that does collect it.

Where were they collecting the plants?

Whoever is not looking, usually. (laughs) The Forest Service through here has a lot of land and the Forest Service is growing trees more than shrubbery. They will let people collect shrubbery. The closer you get to town the less the forest service will let people collect shrubbery on this land. And some of the state parks have let some collection be done. Usually for their own use. I guess the forest service is the largest landowner that we would collect from.

You mentioned two or three big nurseries in the area, do you remember the names?

Well, Wilcox,(sp) here for many years had a business of collecting.. is it botanicals they call it? Yeah, local plants, A large part of their market was sassafras bark and birch bark that went into cough medicine and whatever they knew it, from ginseng on down.. A lot of the local people got to where they could spot a plant that the collectors were buying as far as they could see it. And if no one was looking they would dig it up as they passed. That has been an important part of the economy of this area for many years. There were others besides Wilcox. I used to know several of them but I don't anymore. There used to be one that had an office on 221 down toward Marion there. And Gardens of the Blue Ridge over here . they were a big collector for a long time. But that wasn't them that was one of their competitors. I cant think of his name. Usually the plant collectors, their main office and activity was close to a railroad because most of these things had to be shipped by rail. Now Tweetsie?(sp) Of course had a connection to Southern over here and they'd ship it out on Tweetsie (sp) and then it would wind up going on up the country on the railroad. But those people that are collecting would usually collect small plants that one person could handle. .And they got to be pretty good at that because the nurserymen wouldn't pay for them if the ball was broken up too badly. And they got to where they could dig a good ball and they knew how to plant them. But through this area the Forest Service would let collectors collect small plants and sometimes some of the plants that they could tap and collect the sap... I was trying to think, different medicine. Cough medicine, a lot of cough medicine has natural plants or flavoring.

Tape ends