NPS Oral History Collection (HFCA 1817)
Herbert Evison's National Park Service Oral History Project, 1952-1999

Ronald Lee
February 1, 1971

Interview conducted by S. Herbert Evison
Transcribed by Thelma W. McDonald
Edited by Charles Kennedy
Digitized by Sara E. Forrest

NPS History Collection
Harpers Ferry Center
P.O. Box 50
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
HFC_Archivist@nps.gov

RONALD F. LEE

An interview conducted by

S. Herbert Evison

February 1, 1971

for the

Oral History Project

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

Harpers Ferry, West Virginia 25425

1977

[Tape #128, #129
3 sides]
R. F. Lee

Transcriber: Thelma W. McDonald 11/20/71

Typist: Charles Kennedy 01/14/77

EVISON INTERVIEW WITH RONALD F. LEE

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

February 1, 1971

[START OF INTERVIEW]

Herbert Evison: This is February 1, 1971. And this morning I'm in Philadelphia up on the 15th floor of Hopkinson House, a very, very modern apartment complex on Washington Square South. The apartment I'm in is occupied by Ronnie and Jean Lee. Ronnie, old boss, I want to start out with getting your vital statistics so to speak - when and where you were born, your family, where you went to school and college, and so on.

Ronald Lee: Well, Herb, I was born on September 18, 1905, in Montevideo, Minnesota. I could give you a long history of my family. I've just completed one, incidentally, which goes back to Thompson, Connecticut, in 1731 and comes on through Vermont, but I won't do that here, except to record the fact that such a thing exists. My family moved to Western North Dakota, and I grew up in Dickinson, on the Northern Pacific Railroad in the southwestern corner of the State. I went to grade school and high school there and then registered at the University of Minnesota in September 1923 and took my undergraduate work. I majored in economics at the University of Minnesota. I graduated and returned to Dickinson, spent a year working in my father's business.

Herbert Evison: Which was what?

Ronald Lee: He had a rather diversified business in Dickinson. I decided to take graduate work at the University of Chicago where I entered in the fall of 1929, seeking first a master's degree in American history. When I got that I continued toward a doctor's degree, interrupted by a year of teaching in a junior college to earn a little money, and resumed finally at the University of Minnesota in 1931. That may be too much detail.

Herbert Evison: No, it's not. Don't worry about it.

Ronald Lee: I could spin on, of course, about these matters indefinitely.

Herbert Evison: That's all right for that.

Ronald Lee: You wanted some account of the circumstances at the time that I found myself joining the National Park Service in the Emergency Program in 1933. At that moment, in June of 1933, I was completing my second year - I think it was - of graduate work at the University of Minnesota toward a Ph.D. in American history. And I'd completed all my course work and was considering taking a job for the summer in the University library. But Verne Chatelain, who was then the Chief Historian of the National Park Service, had sent a wire to the head of the history department asking for the names of graduate students who might be interested in summer employment with the CCC. They were called historical foremen or historical technicians, attached to CCC camps in historical areas that were part of the National Park System, or were just being added at that moment to the National Park System.

Ronald Lee: I didn't happen to be around and Dr. Shippy, the chairman of the history department, sent in five names. Mine wasn't among them, but I happened to learn about it afterward and asked them to add my name to the list, so they did. And fortunately, I was offered a job as historical foreman at the CCC camp at Shiloh Battlefield in West Tennessee. I was a little puzzled whether to take that job or take the one at the University library and I sought the advice of Dr. Guy Stanton Ford, the dean of the Graduate School and the leading historian on the faculty of the University. And he said, "Well, I think I'd take that job with the CCC." He said, "You never know where these kinds of things may lead."

Ronald Lee: So, I did and left the University along with several of my long-time colleagues now in the National Park Service. It may be that Herb Kahler mentioned this. Herb Kahler was a graduate student at the University who came in at that time. Ed Hummel was a graduate student who came in later. George Palmer was a graduate student there who came in. Herman Kahn joined the National Park Service for a couple of years and then went to the National Archives and later became the director of the Presidential libraries for the National Archives. And there were one or two others from the University of Minnesota who came for a time and then left.

Ronald Lee: I recall one rather amusing thing that happened. There was a newspaper in Minneapolis, I think it was the "Minneapolis Star", that was not sympathetic with the New Deal or with the incoming Administration.

Herbert Evison: By no means uncommon.

Ronald Lee: When word got around that several historians were being employed by the Government of the United States as historical technicians, an editorial writer for the "Star" dashed off a piece which appeared in the editorial columns. It went something along this line:

Ronald Lee: "We understand that five or six graduate historians at the University of Minnesota are being employed by the United States to go and mark historic trails down East. They're called historical technicians and they will be attached to CCC camps that are concerned with planting trees and doing other things of that kind. What we foresee is that sometime in the future John Taxpayer will be able to put his hands into his empty pockets and look out over the scene and contemplate his historically correct saplings."

Herbert Evison: That's wonderful. Anyway, you went to work as a historical foreman or historical technician in the CCC camp at Shiloh. Now over the past several weeks I have tape recorded several people who made just that kind of start, as historians, foremen, in CCC camps. And I'm curious to know just what you found yourself doing when you got down there to Shiloh, which would have been when? In June sometime?

Ronald Lee: If I remember correctly, it was about June 15, 1933. I think I was one of the first members of the CCC camp to arrive. The enrollees had not arrived. I reported out to the superintendent of the park, Mr. Livingston. He was, of course, the superintendent under the War Department's administration and continued under the Park Service for some years.

Ronald Lee: He was perplexed, as I suppose, in a sense, we all were, about just what the program would be with the arrival of 200 enrollees let loose on a park that probably had been cared for by half a dozen men up until that moment and was thought to be in good condition. I was sent down to the freight depot to check in the arriving equipment for the CCC camp as my first job. There was an intelligent Negro clerk at the freight depot with whom I worked in checking over and making sure that the equipment that arrived was what had been specified. And it included, of course, a lot of logging chains, axes, equipment of all kinds suitable for work, let's say, in a national forest. And Superintendent Livingston naturally became quite concerned about what sort of work program was going to be forced upon him as soon as the camp got under way.

Ronald Lee: Well, we checked in all this equipment and had many interesting conversations. This camp was going to consist of 200 Negro enrollees from areas throughout the South. And the Negro community in Corinth, Mississippi, which is where the rail head and where our material arrived, were themselves somewhat perplexed and concerned about just what impact this would have on their own community, including their own churches, because the clerk mentioned to me a long list of local churches that he, of course, saw might become in one way or another involved in the life of the camp. Before long - I don't remember, maybe a couple of weeks - other foremen arrived, including Charles Marshall, who was my coconspirator as another historical foreman in the same camp quota.

Herbert Evison: I'm glad you mentioned him because I hadn't realized until this minute that Charlie Marshall was another one who came in through the CCC.

Ronald Lee: Oh, yes, he did. And we had as superintendent, Ralph Bragg, who later became, I think, the land acquisition officer at Mammoth Cave, if I'm not mistaken. We also had as inspector for our camp - and he inspected other camps in Mississippi and Tennessee - Colonel Heider, who you may recall ended up as superintendent of Vicksburg National Military Park. At this same time other historians were arriving - Walter Coleman at Vicksburg, Stewart Cupperson at Vicksburg, Olaf Hagen at Meriwether Lewis, and so on. And we were soon in touch with each other and comparing notes on what was going on. There were many things in the early life of that camp that could be related.

Herbert Evison: Please relate them.

Ronald Lee: I don't know if they're particularly significant, but at the time they seemed interesting and amusing. We had as superintendent of our camp Tex

Bradford, who was quite a colorful character. He was locally known as "Crazy" Tex Bradford. He had had a really remarkable career over the years. He had been a boxer. He had lived with Jack London in California. He had been in Australia as a boxer. He had been in oil well business. He was one of four men in the country who wore asbestos suits and put out oil well fires. He had been in South America in this sort of business. He had been in jail there.

Ronald Lee: He was in the Bonus Army and was, of course, a veteran of World War One. I don't know what part he played in the Bonus Army, but he was one of the active members there in Washington, D. C. You remember General MacArthur moved them out from the vicinity of the Capitol, I think to Anacostia, or maybe to Fort Washington. And when the New Deal started, among the many applicants for jobs who came from the widespread ranks of the unemployed, one was Tex Bradford.

Ronald Lee: I remember that Colonel Heider was interviewing applicants and he interviewed Tex Bradford. And he wondered whether his health had survived all these many hardships he had suffered. Tex jumped up and began beating his chest. Just that moment Arthur Demaray came in and his mouth dropped open, and he turned and went away.

Ronald Lee: The problems of launching, with all the personnel problems, really the social revolution that was going on, with myriads of people coming from all walks of life and entering a government that was not prepared yet and was trying to absorb all these new programs, was something.

Ronald Lee: Well, Tex became our superintendent. And we had a group of foremen drawn from many different places and these really delightful enrollees from all over the South. They were wonderful workers. And shortly we developed a program of building trails.

Ronald Lee: We had the advice of foresters whose concern was what had been the policy of the War Department, to clean out the undergrowth. There was quite a stand of timber on the battlefield of Shiloh and the forest floor was bare. They were quite concerned about how it would develop ever the years ahead, so a program of planting, of roadside cleanup, of building entrance stations, beginning a program of interpretation, of readying better facilities for visitors, building some quarters, if I remember correctly, and so on, went on quite vigorously, organized within quite a short time.

Herbert Evison: One thing that I think is coming to be pretty well forgotten nowadays is just how a CCC camp operated. And yet here were 1,500 of them in operation in the '30's, actually more than that at one time. You may remember that they authorized a doubling of the number of CCC camps, I think it must have been about 1935, because of the destitution resulting from drought in the Midwest. Not that it ever went to that number, but I remember in the state park end of it we at one time were assigned something over 450 camps. That's a little bit aside from the main point,

but I want to get on here anything that you can remember about the way this camp to which you were attached operated. You told about what they did. I'm interested in knowing specifically what you, as a historian foreman or historical technician, found yourself doing.

Ronald Lee: Well, now that my mind is recalling a little better the circumstances at Shiloh, I should mention that actually we had two CCC camps. We had one camp with Negro enrollees and one camp with white enrollees. They were in different locations. Each camp, of course, had a superintendent. And, of course, there was an Army officer in charge of the mess, the accommodations, the supplies, and the life of the enrollees really, when they were not engaged on work projects.

Ronald Lee: We were responsible for directing the work program. Our job as foremen was to assist the superintendent, who in turn had to work with the park superintendent in devising the most constructive projects we could to improve the park. Now Shiloh Battlefield happens to be connected with the 17-mile approach road from Corinth, Mississippi, which also belongs to the United States. The shoulders of that road and many features of that road required attention, in addition to the land within the park boundary itself, so that enlarged the scope of our work.

Ronald Lee: There were signs to design, inscriptions to be written. And among the historians, one of our jobs was to try and keep the projects from adversely affecting significant features of the historic terrain. After all, there was no one on the staff of the camp itself who had any knowledge of the course of the Battle of Shiloh except the historians and they had to acquire that knowledge after arrival. So, we succeeded in stopping a variety of projects that might have invaded unwittingly, but nevertheless seriously, the historic terrain of Shiloh Battlefield.

Ronald Lee: But in addition, we had other responsibilities. For example, the CCC camp was not the only Emergency Program in progress at Shiloh Battlefield at that time. We had what was known as a CWA project. It may have been called a FERA. I can't remember which.

Herbert Evison: No, I don't think so. I think it started out as CWA.

Ronald Lee: So, it was thought we ought to have a project at Shiloh Battlefield. I organized a project of about 20 people at Shiloh to collect and organize material about the history of Shiloh Battlefield, inaugurate a guide service and lecture service for visitors, prepare new literature for the park, and do a variety of other things that constituted the introduction of a National Park Service type interpretive program into that area.

Ronald Lee: Now 10 of the 20 CWA employees were trained historians that I recruited from educational institutions in Nashville, Memphis, and Jackson, Tennessee. I had a Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University named Cecil Duke. Wally Luckett had not gotten his Ph.D. yet but was approaching it. He

came, too, from Vanderbilt University. There were two or three young men from Memphis State Teachers College and a couple of others from Peabody in Nashville and from a college in Jackson, Mississippi.

Herbert Evison: Now, all of these were people who were badly in need of jobs?

Ronald Lee: They were badly in need of jobs. One point that I didn't, I think, emphasize enough when we were talking about the University of Minnesota was the mood of young people in graduate school in the spring of 1933, with little or no prospect for jobs, with the bank failures occurring and the Depression really appearing to be deepening. We'd been scraping along on meager funds. I lived in a room which was almost the attic of a house in Minneapolis. I wasn't really bad off. Lots of graduate students lived that way and they were perfectly decent accommodations, but we were scraping along on pretty slim fare, I would say.

Ronald Lee: I remember sitting in a rooming house - if I'm not mistaken, I think maybe Ed Hummel and I were sitting together listening to FDR's inaugural address, - "Nothing to fear but fear itself", and so on. And it was almost within weeks, certainly within two or three months, that word was coming that jobs were appearing, and people's spirits were suddenly encouraged. Our initial thought was that this was only temporary. I signed up for a three-months' stint with the CCC camp at Shiloh Battlefield. It was expected that the camp would terminate its work in September or October. It was a three-months' enterprise.

Ronald Lee: No one, least of all those that I knew, foresaw that this was really the beginning of a tremendous economic and social revolution in the life of the country. We thought it was a temporary relief project to give us jobs to get a little money so we could then go on to the next thing, but it turned out to be a career. And I'm sure for many, many people that was true. So, at Shiloh for these young men who came on the CWA project, which was in fact a short-term project, it lasted six months.

Ronald Lee: I remember we studied hard. We collected and sorted information. We had oral interviews, but not with tape recorders, with local residents whose families had lived in the vicinity of Shiloh Battlefield back in the 1850's and 1860's. We had a very intelligent woman who was an unemployed schoolteacher and who had the confidence of the rather reticent neighbors of the park who were farmers living on rather poor land, not yet experiencing the benefits that would ultimately come to them from the Tennessee Valley Authority development. And this lady who spoke their language and had their confidence took down notes of their recollections of what their parents and grandparents had told them about life in West Tennessee in the years of the Civil War and specifically during the period of the Battle of Shiloh.

Ronald Lee: That material is all in the files of the park and I thought among the most interesting material that we collected. But we got a lot of other material,

too. And we had at least 10 people who were offering guide service to anybody who came along. I went out to the neighboring towns and gave talks to the businessmen's clubs about Shiloh as a point of interest for travelers. I'm sure that I envisioned a growth that may have been a little on the optimistic side, but that was the spirit of the times. We were encouraged and energized by all that was going on around us. And people greeted each other with enthusiasm. They took on these new jobs with interest. There was no lethargy. It was a loosening of energy that was occurring with the inauguration of those programs back in those days. And it was a great thing to have been a part of it.

Herbert Evison: "Gusto" is the word that I always think of in connection with the enthusiasm of those early days of the CCC.

Ronal Evison: It certainly was. There were those who thought that the enthusiasm might result in overdeveloping the park and their concern was not always unjustified. There were problems of that kind. We had some very nice fellows who ran the Army side of the CCC camps at Shiloh. And they devised various projects on which the energy of the enrollees could be expended. One of the real problems around the CCC camps was what the enrollees do in their free time. If they go into town, a couple of hundred enrollees descending on the town of Corinth - I don't remember the population of Corinth, but it's a modest-sized town - mixing with the young people of the town, boys and girls, poses problems of its own for the community.

Ronald Evison: The churches and the educational institutions in the nearby communities were very active in trying to find solutions to the recreational needs of the enrollees. Our commanding officer, I remember, devised various contests. We had a wood chopping contest in which two of our Negro enrollees, I think having survived competition with others, chopped logs in two for the championship of the camp. And I remember one lanky enrollee standing there with his ax in hand relaxed, apparently hardly realizing that a contest was about to begin. The other contestant had his ax all poised ready to start napping. And the commanding officer looked at this relaxed fellow and he said, "You know, we're just about to begin. Are you ready?" And he said, "I is ready." So, the officer gave the signal, and the chopping began. And this fellow sprang into action and really in a phenomenally short time cut through that log, wining the contest easily. And thereafter the camp adopted as its motto the phrase, "I is ready".

Herbert Evison: That's wonderful. Just wonderful. It's interesting to look back on that time when you did have your Negroes segregated into one camp, your whites into another. Of course, there have been modern versions of the CCC in recent years, the Job Corps with desegregated arrangements. It's almost hard to remember a time when, in practically everything that was done, the Negro was on one side and the white on the other.

Ronald Lee: And it was true in the National Park System. I remember very well - and this didn't have any direct bearing on the CCC - but one of the many things that I think is to the credit of Secretary of the Interior "Honest" Harold Ickes was his action sometime in the middle or late '30's in desegregating the swimming pools in the National Capital Parks System in Washington, D.C. Subsequently, or about the same time, he desegregated the concession accommodations in the concessions in the National Park System, although perhaps years went by before the order was strictly enforced or followed. And the facilities in the buildings that we were putting up for the use of visitors such as comfort facilities which had been segregated became desegregated.

Ronald Lee: I don't know to what extend the beginnings of desegregation can be traced in part to the New Deal, but I would think a lot of impetus was given to what I would hope is an inevitable movement in the nature of the life of the United States during the New Deal.

Herbert Evison: I think you're right. There certainly were many steps in that direction. Of course, Mr. Ickes initiated some of them. I won't burden your record with it, but I'll tell you about one experience of mine when we're not recording that bears on that. Well, Ronnie, is there anything else that you would like to put on the tape about the business of working in a CCC camp in the very early days of the CCC?

Ronald Lee: Well, in my case, and in the cases of some other foremen of our camp at Shiloh, we had responsibilities for stub camps at other locations. Now a stub camp might consist of 25 or maybe 56 enrollees in detached service at another location. I think we had a stub camp at Meriwether Lewis National Monument and one at Fort Donelson National Military Park. And so, our efforts at collecting historical data and inaugurating interpretive services and things of that kind were extended to those areas as well.

Ronald Lee: I traveled. I began my travels as a technician by going to Meriwether Lewis and going to Fort Donelson. And then before long the Natchez Trace came along, first as an idea and then as a project which involved us in other related activities. We also began training some of the enrollees in guide service. And you recall, by the mid-'30's or certainly the late '30's, almost all of the guide service in the battlefield parks was offered by trained enrollees who were selected for their talents along that line.

Herbert Evison: Well, Ronnie, sometime along then you departed from Shiloh to another job. And I would like to get on the record the circumstances of that shift of yours which I think took you to a place known as the Bond Building. Am I right?

Ronald Lee: Well, first I went to the Interior Building. I was called in to Washington, I think in the summer of 1934, to participate in a meeting on the survey of the route of the Old Natchez Trace. Other historians were called in at the same time. One of them was Olaf Hagen, who was at Meriwether Lewis.

And I think Randle Truett was involved then or later in the Natchez Trace Survey. At any rate, I arrived in Washington at the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings, as I think it was then called, headed by, Verne Chatelain. We held our meetings and made a plan for a historical survey of the route of the Old Natchez Trace. The meeting lasted about three days. But it happened that one of Verne Chatelain's assistants, Clark Venable, had a few days before been taken to the hospital with some fairly serious ailment. Mr. Chatelain asked me to stay on after the conference and take care of sane of Clark Venable's duties until he got back. Well, it turned out he ever came back. And it turned out that Verne asked me to go back to Shiloh and get my belongings and come back and be reassigned to the Branch of History in Washington, which happened a month or two later.

Herbert Evison: Did that involve a little increase in salary for you?

Ronald Lee: I think it did, but I can't really remember at the moment. I feel pretty sure it did, either then or in due course. Incidentally, just to throw in a little story, we historians who were out in these jobs as historical foremen, of course, aspired or thought a little of eventually becoming regular employees of the National Park Service. And an examination was offered. There were no historian examinations in those days as I can recall. We were instructed to take the junior naturalist examination. The junior naturalist examination contained questions that were utterly irrelevant to the duties of a National Park Service historian. I can't remember the questions. Walter Coleman used to tell lots of stories; you know. I wish you'd go and talk with Walter sometime.

Herbert Evison: I intend to tape Walter.

Ronald Lee: Walter answered one question that had to do with what disposition you'd make of canned goods in packing for a pack trip into the wilderness. And Walter, who always took the lighthearted view of things, answered by saying that he would pack them very carefully because otherwise they might rattle together acid warn the Indians of his coming. In the end, I became a Civil Service employee of the Government of the United States and the Chief Historian of the National Park Service on the basis of the response I made on the junior naturalist examination in about 1934.

Herbert Evison: Now, that is news to me and corrects an idea that I have held, that a new position of Chief Historian was set up in the Park Service after the passage of the Historic Sites Act and that an examination was given at that time for that specific position that you took and came out on top. Am I all wrong in that?

Ronald Lee: Well, I don't know whether you're all wrong, but you're wrong about my part in that. But before we go on to that, you were asking about the Bond Building and I would like before we go on to say that I believe it was in the late fall of 1934, but more likely in the spring of 1935, when Connie Wirth was enlarging the staff he had to direct the work of CCC camps in

state parks, that he set up a number of professional positions at his headquarters, one of which was a position of historian. And Connie asked me if I would be interested in transferring from the Branch of History of the National Park Service over to the State Park Division to be responsible for organizing a History Division for the state park enterprise. I thought it was interesting and I accepted his invitation to join him, and I did. I was then in charge of the historical group. One of my jobs was to recruit a historian for each of the eight district offices of the State Park CCC program around the country. I remember Dr. Agersborg in biology.

Herbert Evison: Under George Baggley.

Ronald Lee: Under George Baggley. And I remember Fred Arnold, the forester, and, of course, Ab Good, and, of course, yourself, and so on. And I have, as I'm sure you have, a picture of all of us taken on top of the Bond Building. Well, the historians, as I'm sure you know, but we might put on the tape here, that joined the Service in the capacity of historians for the district offices included a number who subsequently have had lifetime careers with the Service, among them Ed Small at Springfield, Massachusetts, Roy Appleman at Bronxville, New York, Charles Porter at Richmond, Virginia, Clarence Johnson at Atlanta, Georgia, Dr. Pitkin at Indianapolis, Indiana, and Ed Hummel at Omaha, Nebraska. There was a Bill Hogan at Oklahoma City who left to go into the academic field. And we had Russ Ewing at San Francisco who also subsequently left to teach at the University of Arizona. He was succeeded by Aubrey Neasham. I have always felt that the Service was fortunate to have had the benefit of the talents of these men in these different locations around the country.

Herbert Evison: Unquestionably.

Ronald Lee: Then we had, as you know very well, CCC camps at a fair number of state parks that were primarily historical in character but a much larger number that were natural areas with historical associations and perhaps some historical features. Among the camps that were primarily historical I think of La Purissima Mission in California, Fort Frederick in Maryland and Goliad Mission in Texas. And among places that had historical connotations were Mount Greylock in Massachusetts or Mount Katahdin in Maine and many, many others. The Illinois and Michigan Canal was primarily historical and recreational, and so it was all around the country - some forts, some canals, missions, and many natural areas, often with archeological sites or other features. We had some archeologists on our staff, too, including Erik Reed, who joined the Service first at Goliad Mission in Texas and then later, as we know, became the very well-known archeologist attached for a very long career to the National Park Service regional office in Santa Fe. So, the State Park CCC left its impact on the state parks and on the staffing of the National Park Service.

Herbert Evison: Now, there was a sort of interim period in the field of Park Service concern with history between the time that Verne Chatelain left the

Service and the time that you became the Park Service's Chief Historian during which as I remember it, Branch Spalding gave sort of temporary direction to the historical programs of the Service as a whole. But that period ended when you took over as a part of the Director's own staff. And when would that have been, Ronnie?

Ronald Lee: First of all, we all recall that the Historic Sites Act was passed in August of 1935. The Branch of Historic Sites, or Branch of History, or whatever it had been called before that date, became I think, after the passage of the Historic Sites Act, the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings. It was given new functions related to the terms of the new law. Its responsibilities were considerably broadened. But Verne Chatelain continued as Chief Historian following the passage of the Historic Sites Act for a time. In due course, however, possibly because of differences over policies or programs, Verne Chatelain tendered his resignation. He tendered his resignation four times in all, I think. It was rejected the first three times, but the fourth time it was accepted. I don't mean four times in all after the passage of the Historic Sites Act but during his term of service there.

Ronald Lee: I don't remember the exact date that he left, but I think it would have been perhaps sometime in early 1937. In other words, he would have served for maybe a year or a year and a half after the passage of the Historic Sites Act. I was then his principal assistant, but there were a number of others who were very – was I his principal assistant? Let me look.

Ronald Lee: In May of 1936 (June 1, 1936, [S.H.E.]) the general operations of the State Park Division were administratively merged with those of the National Park Service in Washington/and in the field. And as part of that merger the historical personnel of the State Park Division were transferred to the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings. And I returned then from Connie Wirth's organization to the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings and became the field coordinator for national and state park emergency conservation work and first assistant to Verne Chatelain, Chief of the Branch.

Ronald Lee: During that first year after the passage of the Act the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments was appointed, including as its members several who had served on the old Educational Advisory Board that had been set up back in the late 1920's under Dr. John C. Merriam. Among the members who went over from the old board to the new board were Dr. Waldo Leland, Dr. Clark Wissler, Dr. Hermon Bumpus, I think, and probably Dr. Frank Oastler. Among the new members were Major Gist Blair, George de Benneville Keim, Mrs. Reau Folk from The Hermitage in Nashville, Tennessee, and Dr. Fiske Kimball of Philadelphia, and several others.

Ronald Lee: One of the first tasks of the Advisory Board and of the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings was to organize the National Survey of Historic Sites

and Buildings. And we spent a good deal of time during 1936 trying to get that organized.

Ronald Lee: It was at that time or very shortly thereafter that a number of people who stayed with the Service for a long time joined the organization, among them Dr. Francis S. Ronalds, who came originally, if I recall correctly, as one of the professional historians inaugurating the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. And subsequently he became superintendent of Morristown.

Ronald Lee: Following Verne Chatelain's resignation the Director appointed Branch Spalding as Acting Chief of the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings. And then the Secretary undertook to find an eminent American historian to take on the job of directing that program. I don't recall that a special examination was offered although it may have been, but I believe a special committee was set up by Secretary Ickes to provide him with a list of recommendations of people who might be approached to take on that responsibility. And I think Horace Albright tells part of the story in his biography. I haven't read that part of it yet although I'm going to, so I don't know exactly what Horace has to say about it. I know that among the people that Harold Ickes approached was Dr. Theodore Blagen of the University of Minnesota, who, however, declined. I don't know how many were offered the job and how many declined, but I know that in the end, to my surprise, Harold Ickes offered me the job and I accepted.

Ronald Lee: I was appointed May 2, 1938, and that day became Chief Historian of the Park Service, although I had been really Assistant Chief for three years before that. Branch Spalding had been both Acting Chief Historian and superintendent of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Courthouse Battlefield Memorial National Military Park.

Herbert Evison: I congratulate you, Ronnie.

Ronald Lee: I'm writing a history of the military parks, by the way. Branch's heart was in the Civil War and in the battlefield parks in Virginia and I don't think Branch ever really wanted to stay in Washington, D.C. He continued then in Virginia, and I took on the responsibilities of the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings.

Herbert Evison: Now tell a little something about the conduct of this Historic Sites Survey. If I remember it, you had virtually no funds specifically appropriated for it but used help wherever you could get it to get the thing launched.

Ronald Lee: Well, I don't think that's exactly correct, Herb. I think we did have an appropriation, a modest appropriation but an appropriation for field surveys. It was hard to get a regular appropriation when there were so many professional employees on the rolls of the government, paid with Emergency funds. So, our appropriation was very small. But we had three or four people at least working on that survey and through them we were

able to call on the talents of the many historians who were in field locations, either in district offices or eventually regional offices, of the National Park Service but paid from CCC funds, or were headquartered in parks, especially, of course, the historical parks of the National Park System, but widely spread geographically around the country and able to make trips to locations in their vicinity and send in reports about particular sites and buildings.

Ronald Lee: There are many things about the early development of the administration of the provisions of the Historic Sites Act that deserve to be explored. I don't know whether you're aware of it, but there is a historian, Dr. Charles Hosmer, who is at work now preparing a volume on the historic preservation movement in the United States between 1926 and 1949, in other words, between the beginnings of Colonial Williamsburg and the foundation of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. He's already written a book on the period before 1926. I've made a couple of tapes on this for Hosmer and have been in correspondence with him on several aspects of the program. He has also gone deeply into the archival material in the records of the Park Service in Washington and at the National Archives. I don't know how far you would like to go into it on this tape.

Herbert Evison: I would like to say this, Ronnie. First, I have seen one tape that Dr. Hosmer made and that was with Roy Appleman. I knew that he had also taped you. And as I said to Roy with respect to his tape, I hope sometime a copy of it can be made available to this archival work that is now being undertaken by the Park Service. I would say the same thing about the transcripts of your interviews. I feel sure that after he has gotten from it all that he needs for his book he wouldn't have a very good reason for refusing to let the Park Service make a copy of this kind of record. So, if I ask you questions which you feel that you have covered satisfactorily in Dr. Hosmer's tape, just say so and we won't go into them.

Ronald Lee: All right.

Herbert Evison: I would like to ask you in this connection though for an opinion which Dr. Hosmer may have asked you for too, but this refers to Roy Appleman's transcript, the interview that Dr. Hosmer had with Roy. Roy said that he felt that history and Park Service concern with it and interest in it reached its apex in the '30's and '40's and that he didn't feel that history had quite as important a place in the overall operations or thought or planning of the Park Service nowadays, or during the '50's and '60's.

Herbert Evison: I might say, before I ask you for your opinion, that it occurred to me that there have been some very significant developments in connection with history during the period when Roy says interest has lessened. For instance, certainly it's much more elaborately organized in the Director's staff now than it was. The Park Service not only is concerned with money for its own areas but with allocation of Federal funds for non-Federal historical projects. The historical landmark program, which I think is a

marvelous thing, developed back in the early 1950's as I remember it and certainty has become a very large and important concern of the Park Service. So, with that preliminary I get to my question. Do you feel that there has been that change in emphasis?

Ronald Lee: Well, I have great respect for Roy Appleman, both as a historian and as a public servant and as one who has been very close to what has gone on in the National Park Service in the field of historic sites and buildings for many years. I haven't read the transcript of his tape and I don't know just exactly the full line of his thinking in regard to that. But I would like to preface a comment about the National Park Service with a little broader comment about what the Government of the United States has tried to do about historic sites and buildings over a long period of time.

Herbert Evison: Wonderful! Fine.

Ronald Lee: I don't know whether you know what historical feature of the present National Park System was first authorized by the Congress of the United States, but it turns out to be, as nearly as I can determine, the Yorktown Monument. The Continental Congress, meeting here in Philadelphia on October 29, 1781, 10 days after the successful end of the siege of Yorktown and 10 days after the surrender of Earl Cornwallis to General George Washington, who was in command of the allied forces of the United States and France, passed a series of resolutions having to do with the victory, one of which was that the United States would cause to be erected a marble column at York in Virginia on which would be inscribed a succinct narrative of the surrender of Earl Cornwallis to General Washington, the Count de Grasse and Count Rochambeau and adorned with emblems of the alliance between the United States and France.

Ronald Lee: The column wasn't erected at that time for reasons I have yet to trace out. Even the 50th anniversary of the siege went by without this column being erected, but it was finally put in place and in pursuance of this original resolution, on the 100th anniversary of the surrender, in 1881. That's the first commemorative marking of the site of a major event in American history authorized by the Congress of the United States. And from 1781 on there are long spans of time when little or nothing was done, especially during the first century of the life of the country, although there were some things done during that period that are not generally thought of in this connection.

Ronald Lee: After the Civil War more interest began to be taken. The first centennial of the years of the American Revolution saw Congress participating in putting up monuments on several battlefields of the Revolution - Bennington, Newburgh, Saratoga, Trenton, Princeton, Yorktown, and so on. They considered helping in the preservation of some of the headquarters of General Washington, including the one at Morristown and the one at Valley Forge, but they didn't carry through at that time. It took

another 50 years to get the Morristown headquarters under the care of the Government of the United States.

Ronald Lee: But along about that time interest began to develop in the Civil War battlefields. There was great scientific interest in the meaning of the pueblo ruins and cliff dwellings and mysterious survivals of unknown ancient civilizations that were thought to have lived at a tine no one knew when on the mesas and in the cliff caverns and on the level places out in the Southwest, also in other places - in Ohio, the earth mound builders as they called them in those days. And there was quite a period of development of interest prior to the passage of the Antiquities Act in 1906. This resulted, of course, in the proclamation of quite a few historical and archeological monuments, not to mention the much larger number of scientific and nature monuments that were established under that authority.

Ronald Lee: World War One interrupted this sort of activity to some extent, although the War Department proclaimed a long list of monuments in 1915 and withdrew them 10 years later, leaving only a few such as the Castillo de San Marcos, Fort Pulaski, Castle Pinckney, Fort McHenry, and so on. The Statue of Liberty was proclaimed in 1925 by Calvin Coolidge. But after World War One there was a marked upsurge in the 1920's. And the upsurge in the 1920's was all under the aegis of the War Department, really carrying out ideas and proposals, many of them that had been introduced in Congress in the 1890's or early 1900's and laid aside until the war was over. And there were perhaps 15 or 20 actual authorizations made during the 1920's under the aegis of the War Department before October 1929, when the Stock Market crash signaled the end of that sort of activity until the New Deal picked it up in 1933.

Ronald Lee: Before World War Two there was, as we know, a great surge of interest in American history and culture and social origins and all that sort of thing. You had not only the Historic Sites Act, but you had the Writers Project of the WPA with state guides and all the interest thar that stirred in the roots of countless communities around the country. You had the Index of American Design. You had the Artists Project of WPA which oftentimes drew inspiration from history or literature or cultural backgrounds of one kind or another, and theatre projects and all, that were part of a general searching for what nowadays we call cultural identity and purpose in the life of the country. And there was a great blossoming of that in the 1930's.

Ronald Lee: Then World War Two interrupted that in the 1940's, although there was great interest right here in Philadelphia, to cite one example. And war often stimulates interest in history and a return to the locales of previous national crises. The Independence Hall Association was organized right here in Philadelphia on July 4, 1942, about six months after Pearl Harbor and at a time when the people of the country and especially the people of the Eastern cities thought it conceivable that there might be bombing raids,

fires, and Lord knows what, sweeping into our cities as they had into London and into Paris and cities all over Europe.

Ronald Lee: And the Independence Hall Association was, of course, led by Judge Edwin O. Lewis and became the leadership that created the Independence National Historical Park and also gave great stimulus to a historic form of urban renewal here in the old part of what was the Capitol of the United States before Washington, D.C.

Ronald Lee: So, there was interest in the 40's in historic preservation although Government funds were harder to come by until later. And really, they weren't very available until after the Korean War was over.

Ronald Lee: And then MISSION 66 came along with all of the stimulating influence it had on all the programs of the Service from historic preservation to nature preservation to especially, I think, visitor services and interpretation and facilities for the parks and the addition of new areas, too, including the surveys of the seashores and lake shores, and so on. But it hasn't ended with the '40's or '50's. The '60's have seen major strides ahead in historic preservation, in my opinion, although some aspects of the program within the Service may have experienced some pauses.

Ronald Lee: The field areas are not staffed at the park level with historians in the same way they were before research was separated from interpretation, for example. A lot of research that was going on at the field level, at the park level, is now concentrated in a special group headquartered in Washington, D.C.

Ronald Lee: There are a number of things that reflect the continuing interest of the Government of the United States in the historical resources of the country. One is the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which authorized an expansion of the National Register of Historic Places to include not only those of national significance but also those of regional, state, or local significance, - places of historical, archeological, architectural, or cultural importance. Also, a program of matching grants to the states to make possible state-wide surveys comparable with the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings was authorized, together with grants to the National Trust for Historic Preservation for the purposes of its programs, plus the prospect of grants for brick-and-mortar projects that might be approved as part of official state historic preservation plans. All that work is going forward.

Ronald Lee: I write a column. I don't know whether you're aware of it or not, but I've been writing a column for the organ of the American Association for State and Local History, which is a federation of many of the state and local historical societies in the United States since 1966. And this happens to be the current issue. I write a column every other month. And I'm going to look at this just to cite a measure of current activity.

Ronald Lee: Beginning tomorrow, as a matter of fact, there's going to be a national conference of 50 state historic preservation liaison officers in Washington to discuss the expansion of the National Register and the grant-in-aid program for the states. It will be followed by a joint meeting with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the President's advisory council, which was also established by the 1966 Act. I'm going to that meeting.

Ronald Lee: Forty states have comprehensive surveys under way and projects to prepare state-wide historic preservation plans. Financially these programs total $4,371,000 this fiscal year, half of which comes from the states and half of which consists of matching grants of Federal funds through the National Park Service. Forty-one state-wide preliminary plans have already been submitted to the National Park Service in Washington and they are now undergoing review by the Service and by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. It's expected that they'll be given a two-year tentative approval so that projects within them will then become eligible for matching grants for brick-and-mortar projects for which some $2,700,000 of Federal funds are available between now and June 30th. The states have already applied for 15 million dollars so this pie will have to be cut in some way.

Ronald Lee: Furthermore, the states have begun nominating sites for the National Register already. In 1969 they proposed 118 sites for the National Register, in 1970, 597, and this year they're coming in at a rate of 100 a month. And next year my expectation would be that based on the amount of survey work going on they'll be coming in maybe at 1,000 a month as additions to the National Register.

Ronald Lee: Now these are not, mind you, registered national historical landmarks. That title is reserved for the/small number of superlatively important places selected through the process of the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings. This is a much larger number of places that are nevertheless going to be protected, at least temporarily, from the adverse effects of Federal construction projects or other Federal projects that are financed in whole or in part with Federal funds, including grants and loans, such as highways, dams, reservoirs, airports and all that sort of thing that have been one of the major sources of impact on so many of our natural and historic resources that comprise part of the basic heritage of the country.

Ronald Lee: And they will also become eligible for what may become a growing program of Federal assistance to preserve them from other causes of loss or deterioration. Now this law was amended. The appropriation authorization given in 1966 has been extended for three or four more years. Congress, I think, shows every sign of continuing interest in historic preservation.

Ronald Lee: I forgot to mention earlier that in 1949 Congress also chartered the National Trust for Historic Preservation. I won't attempt to give the story of that chartering here. David Finley has written a little book on the history of the National Trust. And I have given some account of my knowledge of it in a seven or eight-page letter I wrote to Charles E. Peterson for inclusion in a report that he wrote recently about Hampton National Historic Site.

Ronald Lee: It so happens that Hampton had an interesting connection with the beginnings of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. I've been in a position, and I think I've been very fortunate to be in a position, to see how some of these programs develop and to participate in various ways in helping with others in the development of these programs. I'm persuaded that the Government of the United States will continue to support historic preservation, although it also will continue to support projects that have an adverse impact on historic places. It's like Sancho Panza and Don Quixote. You neither win nor lose.

Ronald Lee: Let me add one further observation, Herb, about the Government of the United States in historic preservation. It isn't all done through the National Park Service. People tend to forget, for example, that before 1933 the War Department had almost a half a century of involvement and concern with historic preservation, beginning even before the authorization of Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Military Park in 1890 and continuing right on up all the way to 1933. They were very active in the 1920's, including incidentally the establishment of the American Battle Monuments Commission which takes care of cemeteries and erects monuments on battlefields on which troops of the United States have fought overseas. And it's still a going and viable agency of the Federal Government today.

Ronald Lee: Unfortunately, we still have wars going on. The Housing and Urban Development has bumped into the problems of historic preservation increasingly since the beginnings of urban renewal after World War Two. At first there was a tendency to tear down all the old buildings and put up new overly institutionalized communities. In the last few years, however, perhaps in the last 10 years, there's been a marked change, not without exceptions, of course, but there are many instances in which assistance has been given through urban renewal grants to projects of rehabilitation and preservation. Society Hill, which we can see right outside our window, is one of quite a few examples that could be cited in cities and towns all around the country.

Ronald Lee: This is supported by additional legislation adopted by Congress the same year the National Historic Preservation Act was passed, in 1966. That year there were four acts of Congress that strengthened historic preservation, one affecting urban renewal, one affecting the Park Service, and one affecting the Department of Transportation. I forget what the fourth one

was. It may have had something to do with the General Services Administration.

Ronald Lee: So, in thinking about how the historical heritage of the country in the form of historic sites and buildings is going to be preserved, it's necessary to think of the ways in which several agencies of the Federal Government participate. Fortunately, all those agencies are now represented on the President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The Department of Transportation is represented there, for example. HUD is represented there. Interior is there and GSA is there, and so on. The Lord knows there is much room for improvement. Nevertheless, there is a constant process, I believe, of gradually, perhaps belatedly, but nevertheless genuinely, strengthening the institutional fabric by which the historic heritage can be preserved.

Herbert Evison: I am delighted to have that statement on record, Ronnie. Now I think maybe we better leave the discussion of what developed out of Roy Appleman's statement and go on to some other phases of your career. Now, of course, I have known you and known you well, from way back when, but I also was part of your own division over a period of several years in Washington in the ‘50's. That was a period in which I think it's fair to say your primary concern was interpretation. And I think there must be developments or trends or events in that period that tie in directly with interpretation that ought to go on this record, that perhaps you'd like to have go on the record.

Ronald Lee: Yes, I would like to make some comments about that period.

Herbert Evison: You were at one time, if I remember rightly, an Assistant Director of the National Park Service.

Ronald Lee: I was. I was appointed an Assistant Director of the National Park Service in 1950, I think. It might have been 1949 or '51. And I served as an Assistant Director for two or three years until the change of Administration when the Eisenhower Administration came into office in early 1953 and began a study of the organization of all the Federal departments and bureaus including the National Park Service. And a study of Park Service organization was made at that time. And it was concluded that there should be established a Division of Interpretation, as I recall it.

Ronald Lee: I had a choice, I think, of continuing as an Assistant Director with other responsibilities, or going into the position of Chief of the new Division of Interpretation. I preferred to stay with what I thought I knew something about and what I was really mainly interested in, which included the work of the History Branch, the Natural History Branch, the Museum Branch and the Information Branch. We had a Branch of Archeology I think by then or were about to create one. They were representing the kind of work that I had been doing in the Service up to that time and that I felt best qualified to continue to work in.

Ronald Lee: I thought the establishment of a Division of Interpretation was a very good move for the National Park Service for several reasons. One reason was that, more or less unwittingly, but nevertheless it was a fact, the Service had two programs of interpretation before 1953. One was functioning in the natural areas of the System and that stemmed from the early experience and traditions built up by Harold Bryant and Ansel Hall and later by Carl Russell and others, and a somewhat separate, although similar in some respects and in other respects somewhat different, development of visitor services and interpretation that had grown up under the auspices of the History Division through Verne Chatelain and Branch Spalding and myself and Herb Kahler and others who had participated in it.

Ronald Lee: If I'm not mistaken, the publications for the historical areas and the publications for the natural areas were different in format. The approach was somewhat different if I remember correctly. And it went that way through the guide services, the lecture services, the audio-visual, the museum exhibits, and all the rest to a certain extent.

Ronald Lee: At any rate it seemed that the policies, the programs, could be better integrated and coordinated than they were. And that was the objective that you and I and the others set forth upon in 1953 when the Division of Interpretation was initiated. We all had our separate parts before that, but we were now trying to coordinate it a little better. In fact, it had been coordinated to a certain extent by an Assistant Director before that; in other words, to some extent by myself. As Assistant Director, I had had these functions in that capacity also.

Ronald Lee: We were fortunate, I think, Herb, that we got organized and got our ideas lined up and our objectives more or less in mind pretty clearly in the two or three years before the launching of MISSION 66. So that when MISSION 66 came along, the interpretative program was, I think, pretty well prepared to make suggestions that could become part of that tremendously stimulating and far-reaching effort to update the facilities of the National Park System. As a result, one of the central features which – I don't know what the thinking of today's interpreters may be, but we thought in those days – we gave up the term, "park headquarters" as the focal building in a national unit of the National Park System. We gave up the term, "park museum" as the term for a central facility in a park in the System and we adopted the term, "visitor center" in order to place emphasis where we thought it belonged, - not on the superintendent but on the visitor and not on the museum objects but on the visitor. And we tried to provide in those visitor centers a range of facilities from publications, exhibits, slide talks or moving pictures, in some instances, to restrooms and counters for cooperating educational associations and telephone service and the whole range-of information services that a visitor would need upon his arrival in the park. And we projected.

Ronald Lee: I remember having a conversation with Roy Appleman about visitor centers when he was on the MISSION 66 Task Force. I remember saying to Roy, "I've counted up and I think we need 109 visitor centers in the National Park System." I'm sure others felt the same way. If I'm not mistaken, the report of the Task Force came out with a very substantial and, I think, a number somewhere in that neighborhood.

Herbert Evison: My remembrance of it was 110.

Ronald Lee: Well, maybe it was 110. Then we had those planning teams with Myron Sutton and other talented people going out to project the contents and even working with the architects on the visitor flow through these facilities. We held conferences on the design of visitor centers in the Eastern and Western Design Offices with Bill Cabot and Cecil Doty and others, Red Hill, of course, and Bob Hall, and their colleagues. Your program of publications was expanded and developed with funds that had not previously been available. And information was dispensed to visitors through self-guiding trails and self-guiding leaflets and through markers and reception desks and orientation programs, and other means that the Service, I think, had long hoped to introduce but had lacked the resources to achieve. Connie Wirth's leadership of MISSION 66 and his success in Congress and with the Administration in getting the funds made possible a great many things, including this, I think.

Herbert Evison: Made possible a great many things which, as recently as a year before the program was launched, a lot of us wouldn't have dared even think about as possibilities.

Ronald Lee: We were able to combine at least some research with interpretation but perhaps not as much as was needed. I'm sure that in the field of biological research, especially, the Service lagged, partly because the Bureau of the Budget thought that the National Park Service could rely upon the professional staffs of the United States Geological Survey and the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife to perform the basic research in geology and biology and that we could be staffed pretty thinly and still do a good job. That proved, especially in the field of biology, not to be the case.

Herbert Evison: I wonder if you would care to comment in this connection on research. There was a good deal of complaint that first, there was not enough research, especially in the life sciences, biology. And second, that when it was done and it pointed to things that needed to be done, all too seldom use was made of the results of this research. Do you have any feelings about that?

Ronald Lee: Well, I'm sure that it's true that the Service did not perform the research that it would be necessary to perform to grasp a basic understanding of what was going on in some of the big natural parks, ecologically speaking. The Service performed some research that was useful in itself, but which also revealed how little we knew about a great many other things that we

should know about. Now why the research was not performed, - I think I've given the basic reason, which was the attitude of the Bureau of the Budget after World War Two toward the Geological Survey and the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife. Geological research never really posed the kind of problem that biological research posed, partly because the geological conditions and also because the Geological Survey had a quite well-developed program of research in areas of the National Park System.

Herbert Evison: Yes, a very fine cooperative arrangement between the two bureaus, I think.

Ronald Lee: We had a cooperative agreement with the Geological Survey and another one with Sports Fisheries and Wildlife. The Geological Survey one, I think, worked a little better than the one with Sports Fisheries and Wildlife, not because of any lack of interest on the part of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife, but they were pressed by many other demands on their staff, and they were simply not able to post biologists in the Park System the way the Geological Survey could post geologists in the Park System. Now, when the fruits of the research did become available, whether some of our superintendents were delinquent in applying the results I wouldn't want to say. I don't know. Knowing human nature, of course, there undoubtedly were cases of delinquency.

Ronald Lee: Generally speaking, I think that the modern park superintendent is well aware of the need to base management actions on thorough research and that's been the official policy of the Service for many years. I think that some of the very old-line superintendents looked upon some of the 90-day wonders who came out of the universities as not really understanding many of the practical problems of park administration and perhaps there was a little chasm there for a time.

Herbert Evison: Here's a question I'd like to have your opinion on. It's probably true that back in those early '50's, and even up to the early '60's, there was not an adequate amount of research done. There was need of much broader and much more thoroughly thought-out programs of research, but I always had the feeling that there wasn't enough done to publicize, to let people know what research results were available.

Ronald Lee: I believe it's true that the fruits of the investigations of the members of the professional staff seldom got into print, let's say. Often the results were embodied in technical reports, of which a few copies were available. Then it takes an effort to read a technical report and before long they became shelved It's always a problem to get the fruits of really serious study of any problem into the minds of administrators who are working on matters, as Newton Drury used to say, that are urgent but not important. We're moving into an age of technology and of science. I don't think any Federal bureau, certainly not one that's concerned with the ecology of the United States, can survive and do its job without full recognition of the big role

that scientists have to play in its work. And I think that's realized in the Park Service.

Herbert Evison: Yes, I do, too. Ronnie, I don't remember just when it was that you left this Division to become an administrator.

Ronald Lee: I came up to Philadelphia in January 1960. But I wouldn't say I left the Division to become an administrator. I would say that as Chief Historian, as Assistant Director, and as Chief of the Division of Interpretation, those responsibilities were all largely administrative. And being a Regional Director was perhaps a little broader type of administration. But administering a professional staff is a task of management just as administering a number of park superintendents is a task of administration.

Ronald Lee: I asked Connie Wirth if it was all right with him to consider me coming here to Philadelphia in 1960. I'd always been very much interested in the projects in the Northeast. I've been closely associated with those in New York City - Federal Hall, Castle Clinton, Statue of Liberty, and others, and with those here in Philadelphia, the Independence National Historical Park. But was also aware that new problems had arisen, and new deeds were going to have to be met in some way.

Ronald Lee: You may recall that in 1960 the Outdoor Recreational Resources Review Commission was nearing he completion of its task and had pointed out what was well-known, that the crowded areas of the megalopolis were situated along the North Atlantic seaboard and the national parks were all out in the distant West. And one thing that was needed was to try to provide more facilities nearer to the people than the open spaces of the West.

Ronald Lee: At that time, by 1960, the survey of our vanishing shoreline had been completed. It was clear that proposals such as the Cape Cod National Seashore and possibly others were going to be frontline issues in the years of the '60's. I felt a little stale in Washington anyway. So, after 25 years there, or 26 years, I made my escape from the new Capital in Washington to the old one here in Philadelphia.

Ronald Lee: I found the task of being Regional Director very interesting. I was Regional Director for six years. The first big project I worked on was the Cape Cod National Seashore. Even before I entered on duty, I traveled with the House Interior Subcommittee on Parks to the Seashore and participated and helped in arrangements for hearings up there. After the election of John F. Kennedy as President of the United States in November 1960, it was clear that the Cape Cod National Seashore was going to be a federal project. Between his election and his inauguration, the Interior Committee moved the project ahead quite rapidly.

Ronald Lee: Another project that came along very shortly was the Fire Island National Seashore, where Bob Moses contemplated building a road linking the

Robert Moses Memorial Bridge with the Smith Point Bridge some 15 or 18 miles away, going right down the center of a narrow sand strip of Fire Island. The local residents organized the Citizens of Fire Island. It was very interesting to participate in an effort to secure the authorization of a national seashore containing a plan to contain some 25 miles of superb beach backed in some areas by relatively unspoiled dune lands, in turn bordered on their side by the shallow waters of Great South Bay with various marine life that was interesting, all located within 50 miles of downtown Manhattan.

Ronald Lee: I participated and others of our staff in the Northeast Region, fellows with Cooperative Activities, - Al Edmunds and Elmer Martinson and Andy Feil. We all worked hard on that project. I happened to have special responsibility for that one and for part of the work on the Delaware Water Gap, while Al was working on Assateague and Sleeping Bear Dunes and Pictured Rocks.

Herbert Evison: You really landed right in a seashore and lake shore program, didn't you?

Ronald Lee: Oh, yes. We were most enthusiastic about it and I'm glad to say that by now all those projects have been completed. What is precisely the status of Sleeping Bear this moment?

Herbert Evison: I think it has been authorized.

Ronald Lee: It has been authorized. I don't know the boundaries of it. Apostle Islands was being studied then, which is another major project, although, again, the degree of its majority depends upon what the boundaries end up as being. We had also in this Region the problem of urban centers. Here we have in Philadelphia the Independence National Historical Park project, perhaps the single most important historical holding in the National Park System.

Ronald Lee: People at Colonial might quarrel about that, but here it is. And in addition, it's in the middle of a large city and adjoined by a part of old Philadelphia that contains today over 500 rehabilitated and restored historic houses of the 18th and early 19th Centuries, early churches, insurance company buildings, a square, Washington Square, that is one of the five squares laid out by William Penn's surveyor, Holmes, and generally a part of urban historic environment of great importance. But in urban environment beyond the circle of history lies industry, lie ghettos, lie all the problems that urban life affords, from water pollution along the Delaware River to air pollution everywhere.

Ronald Lee: We hope that Independence Park has made at least a modest contribution to enhancing the character and tradition of the City of Philadelphia, in add it ion to its importance for the State of Pennsylvania and its much greater importance for the Nation as a whole. We also know that this park is used by growing numbers of urban residents, including school groups from a

wide area, non-segregated school groups. We get all kinds of people. This is a living place because it's not what is called a historic house museum.

Ronald Lee: Independence Hall isn't a historic house museum. It's a symbol and an emblem of aspirations of people in the United States that becomes the objective of all sorts of individuals and groups. We have meetings, assemblies, demonstrations, parades. Every form of public involvement is present in Independence Hall and in its vicinity, on Independence Square and on the State Mall, ranging all the way from the review of the parade on Pulaski Day, let's say, or Saint Patrick's Day, to a demonstration on the day of the Civil Rights march to Selma, to a great gathering of young people on Earth Day in 1969.

Ronald Lee: It's far more than a museum. If the public events could be in some way seen in kaleidoscopic form that have occurred there, - from Golda Meir speaking in the square, to the Negro Cardinal from Africa, to the visits of dignitaries from all around the world, it's a truly significant place!

Ronald Lee: In New York City we have now a substantial number of properties. Although separated geographically from each other they compose a constellation of national holdings of great significance to the Nation, of genuine significance to the State of New York and very meaningful to the metropolis. To the Statue of Liberty now, with its original meaning of a memorial to the alliance of France and the United States during our Revolution, is added the meaning of the Statue of Liberty as a symbol for the oppressed of the world to seek a home in the free society of the United States. Now we have Ellis Island added as part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument. And we have the American Museum of Immigration being installed in the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty.

Herbert Evison: Well, now, Ronnie, let me interrupt you to ask you how well along is the Park Service with plans for the ultimate use of Ellis Island?

Ronald Lee: There is a master plan which I think has been approved. The problem has been to get funds to implement the master plan. I'm confident that it will come, but like so many historical projects a generation may elapse between the inception and the execution of the project. You get waves of enthusiasm, a wave to set it aside and then maybe a wave to restore it. But you seldom get a wave to maintain it afterwards.

Herbert Evison: That's a drab requirement that doesn't excite people.

Ronald Lee: We have Castle Clinton in Battery Park. We have the birthplace of Theodore Roosevelt near Gramercy Park, and his wonderful Victorian home, Sagamore Hill, at Oyster Bay on Long Island. We have the Grant memorial on Riverside Drive, long known to the American public. We have Hamilton Grange awaiting moving to a new site but commemorating Alexander Hamilton. The great New Yorkers and great contributors to life in the United States are properly represented in some of these holdings of

the National Park Service in New York. And we have Fire Island as I mentioned before, just on the outskirts.

Ronald Lee: And now there's a proposal for the Gateway National Urban Park in New York City which would add still other lands.

Ronald Lee: In Boston we had, as you know, the Boston National Historic Shrines Commission. They recommended the Minute Man National Historical Park, which was authorized and is well along now, although not completed. The downtown Boston part of the project has been pending in Congress for a long time and has never been carried out, although we do have a flock of registered national historic landmarks in Boston and vicinity. There must be 75 of them anyway. I suspect that one of these days Bunker Hill Monument will become a federal holding. The plans have called for agreements relating to the old Boston State House, to Faneuil Hall, to the old North Church, Paul Revere's house, and Dorchester Heights, all of which I think are registered landmarks now.

Herbert Evison: Well, Dorchester Heights, as I remember, has been a national historic site for a good many years.

Ronald Lee: It's been a national historic site for a good many years. There are other cities, of course, in this Region - Pittsburgh, Chicago, Detroit, and so on. But parallel programs of this kind have not yet materialized in those urban centers. We've had the survivals of epochal events of our national history, though, that don't lie in the cities but are there, from Saratoga Battlefield in New York State to Gettysburg Battlefield in Pennsylvania, Lincoln's Boyhood Home in Indiana, (And now there's a project for his home in Springfield, Illinois), and others - Hopewell, Fort Necessity; Fort McHenry in Baltimore has been an urban holding of very considerable significance to the City of Baltimore for a long time. And, of course, we have Hampton just north of Baltimore, Antietam Battlefield, and so on.

Ronald Lee: You could go through the whole list. There aren't national parks in this part of the country except for Acadia and Isle Royale. Acadia started out as the only nature monument proclaimed under the Antiquities Act of 1906 east of the Mississippi River and then became a national park.

Ronald Lee: Isle Royale you know all about. It's a part of the country that has antiquity about it. Everywhere you go you find organizations that have been there before you. If you go to Cape Cod, it isn't like starting a national park in the West. You're trying to create something in the midst of communities that have been there, some of them for 300 years. And you're surrounded with institutions older than the National Park Service, older than Yellowstone, and organizations, including governmental units, that have their own type of background and ideas. And weaving into that a program representing the Federal Government is an undertaking that is a little different than working out in the West, as I'm sure Lon Garrison, Hank

Schmidt, Dan Tobin, or any others who have worked up in this part of the country would be quick to agree.

Herbert Evison: Yes. It is a very distinctive region. There's no question about that. It's quite different in so many respects from the West.

Ronald Lee: A lot more ought to be done in this part of the country. It's a struggle to secure funds for the Northeastern part of the United States. It's struggle to secure personnel for this part of the country because people who have grown up in the Park Service in the West don't like the idea of being planted down in what they think of as some smoky, urban, ghetto area. But this part of the country has solved some of its own problems with its own resources which in other regions have been assumed to be the task of the Federal Government.

Ronald Lee: The Adirondack Forest Preserve, if it had been in the West, would have been a national park, but it became a forest preserve before there were any national parks, I think. I don't remember the date of it, but it's a great wild area in New York State protected by the State constitution as you know with the phrase, "forever wild".

Ronald Lee: Old organizations like the Trustees for Public Reservations in Massachusetts and the Hancock County Trustees in Maine, who started the Acadia National Park, societies—. Well, here in Independence Park we now provide space for the headquarters of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, the oldest horticultural society in the United States, itself admited only because it joined hands with the still older Society for the Improvement of Agriculture in Pennsylvania which dates its beginnings back to the middle of the 18th Century. We don't allow just anybody into Independence National Historical Park, you understand. They have to have a little tradition of their own, like the Carpenters Company which goes back to the middle of the 18th Century, too. Groups like that are all around us here and in New York and in Boston.

Herbert Evison: Well, now you mentioned their existence, but there is a phase of it that I think is right down the alley of your responsibility and that is, the National Park Service in order to function properly has to establish and maintain satisfactory relationships with this great variety of functioning organizations. Isn't that actually of great value?

Ronald Lee: Well, the biggest and most constant problem of the Regional Director of the Northeast Region is public relations. First of all, Federal officials come and go, and these older organizations know that. If they think the Federal agency has funds or authority or resources that's going to help the community or the state, they'll be right there, and relations are good. But otherwise, why should they bother with another Federal official who's arrived and who will shortly be going on again to some other assignment! Furthermore, the cultural resources tend to fall into the interests of the older, better established and, in some instances, more privileged groups in

our society. They have their own traditions and are naturally not going to immediately respond to just anyone who comes along. And it takes time.

Ronald Lee: It's taken time for the National Park Service to establish itself as a Federal agency in the Northeastern part of the United States. It takes time and it takes effort to maintain a standing as the custodian of the choicest survivals of the heritage of this part of the country. People value that heritage, and their participation is absolutely essential to its proper perpetuation. And that's why we have had a policy in this part of the country of having agreements and involving the participation of these groups wherever we can.

Herbert Evison: Don't you have a feeling that here you're under a lot more watchful eyes than would be the case in other parts of the country?

Ronald Lee: Well, I sometimes think so, although I know that when the President of the United States proclaimed the Jackson Hole National Monument in Wyoming, he discovered that he was under watchful eyes out there, too.

Herbert Evison: No question about that, but perhaps not so many of them or of such varied character and such long standing.

Ronald Lee: Well, a Regional Director here, and his associates, and the park superintendent - and I'm sure it's true in great or less degree everywhere - but it seems to be so present here that it's in the minds of everyone all the time. There are the local government authorities of which there are many. You take the City of Philadelphia, there's the mayor and the city council. There are all these suburban areas, and so on. Then there are the state authorities. There are the other Federal agencies, all of whom are also represented in the vicinity. Then there are these many, many societies that have involved themselves in conservation, in history, in nature and in environment, and so on. It makes for a very complex situation, but it makes for a very interesting challenge at the same time.

Herbert Evison: Yes, I should think so. Well, Ronnie, I think this is a pretty good time to call it a day on this. I am immensely obliged to you.

Ronald Lee: Well, it is interesting to think back on the old days.

[END OF INTERVIEW]