

National Park Service (NPS) History Collection

NPS Oral History Collection (HFCA 1817)
Harpers Ferry Center's 50th Anniversary Oral History Project



Wade Myers
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Interview conducted by Nancy Russell and Marissa Lindsey
Transcribed by Rev.com

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The release form for this interview is on file at the NPS History Collection.

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START OF RECORDING

Nancy Russell: 00:00:03 Today's date is July 17th, 2019. This is Nancy Russell, the archivist with the NPS History Collection, and I am here with Marissa Lindsey, our museum technician. We're here to interview Wade Myers about his National Park Service career. For the record, would you say and spell your name?

Wade Myers: 00:00:25 Sure. First name is Wade, W-A-D-E, last name is Myers, M-Y-E-R-S.

Nancy Russell: 00:00:32 Great. Wade, could you start by giving us a little bit of background information on your family and education before you started with the National Park Service?

Wade Myers: 00:00:41 Sure. I was born and raised in West Virginia, born in South Charleston, West Virginia, across the river from the State Capitol. I have a younger sister. I also have an older half-brother by my mother's first marriage, and an older half-sister by my father's first marriage. My youngest sister is what I refer to as my full blooded sister. We have the same parents.

Nancy Russell: 00:01:10 You went to school in South Charleston?

Wade Myers: 00:01:11 I did. I went to kindergarten. Walked to the kindergarten. Walked to the elementary school. Walked to junior high school. Was bused finally when I went to high school because it was more than two miles. Then I attended college also in West Virginia. I attended West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon, West Virginia.

Nancy Russell: 00:01:34 What was your major?

Wade Myers: 00:01:35 My major was history. I started out as a history major, and I have minors in anthropology and art.

Nancy Russell: 00:01:43 What drew you to history?

Wade Myers: 00:01:45 I'd always liked history. In the area that I grew up in, the Kanawha Valley in Southern West Virginia, the Adena culture, Indian culture was there. I lived in the town that had probably the largest ... I'm sorry, the second largest Adena conical mound in the state of West Virginia, the

largest one being the Grave Creek Mound up in Moundsville, West Virginia. The whole valley was full of Native American settlements and culture. I believe when Squier & Davis did their survey for the Smithsonian Institution, they counted something like 140,000 mounds in the Kanawha Valley.

- Wade Myers: 00:02:27 Unfortunately there's not that many left because of development and that sort of thing.
- Nancy Russell: 00:02:32 When you were growing up, did your family visit national parks?
- Wade Myers: 00:02:35 We visited state parks. Our families traveled throughout the state to state parks. That was our family vacations. We went to Myrtle Beach one year, just so we could say we'd gone to Myrtle Beach because people were always like, "Why don't you go to Myrtle Beach?" We did travel one year, I recall, when I was probably in elementary school, we traveled to Jamestown. We watched the building of the New River Gorge Bridge, so we were in that area around Hawk's Nest and the Gauley River in that area. My father's fascinated with the building of that bridge, so we would often go and watch the stages of that.
- Nancy Russell: 00:03:18 The progress?
- Wade Myers: 00:03:19 The progress, yeah. We didn't travel west. We didn't go to Yellowstone or Yosemite or any of those park areas. We stayed pretty much within the state or within some of the surrounding states, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia.
- Nancy Russell: 00:03:38 When did you become aware of the National Park Service as a career opportunity?
- Wade Myers: 00:03:42 Actually when I was in junior high school and high school. There was always a standardized test to see what your occupation might be, and I always tested out for U.S. Forestry or forest ranger or park ranger and that sort of thing. I always had had an interest in history, so it seemed a natural progression towards the National Park Service or working outdoors.

- Nancy Russell: 00:04:11 When you graduated with your degree in history, did you start working for the Park Service right away, or did you have other positions?
- Wade Myers: 00:04:17 No, I didn't get a job right away after graduation. My first government job, actually my first interview for a government position was at Walter Reed Army Hospital, but my first position with the government was actually with the U.S. Information Agency under the State Department. I worked for the Voice of America.
- Nancy Russell: 00:04:42 What did you do for Voice of America?
- Wade Myers: 00:04:45 I worked on what they referred to as Mahogany Row. I worked with the directors there, specifically I worked for the Director of English News and Broadcasting. The Voice of America had--this was during the Cold War--they were broadcasting in different languages. Might be Russian, could be Chinese, could be Armenian, and there was a script that the broadcasters had to follow and there were monitors for those broadcasters as well. I was working specifically for the Director of News and English Broadcasting. The scripts were always written up ahead of time, everybody got their script. There was translations that were done, and then the broadcast.
- Nancy Russell: 00:05:35 Were you writing the scripts or were you doing broadcasts?
- Wade Myers: 00:05:38 I wasn't actually involved in that end. I was actually filling in for someone who was out on maternity leave. There was information that was coming across the desk that was sensitive in nature. Depending on what your security clearance was, some of that material I couldn't handle, some of that material I could handle. There was an older gentleman, I recall, at the end of the day who would go around collecting the little bags for the incinerator. You were expected to put things in the incineration bag. Things were pretty secure and tight there, lots of combination locks and that sort of thing.
- Wade Myers: 00:06:23 It was interesting that we could actually--there was a television in the director's office and we could actually immediately turn that on and be connected to the White House Press Room to see what breaking news was happening so that we could get that out there and broadcast.

I only spent about three weeks there because my paperwork came in for the National Park Service.

- Nancy Russell: 00:06:48 When you say your paperwork came in, you had already applied for a job with the National--
- Wade Myers: 00:06:56 I had applied for a job with the National Park Service. I actually recall hand carrying my application to the National Capital Region office in February because there was a snowstorm, and I wasn't really dressed for the weather, but I walked from the Smithsonian Metro Station to the National Capital Region on Ohio Drive and dropped off my application there and got a call probably within a few days to a week afterwards offering me a position.
- Nancy Russell: 00:07:31 What was their reaction when you showed up in the middle of the snowstorm with your application?
- Wade Myers: 00:07:37 They made a comment about, because by the time I got there I was covered in snow. I think I might have been wearing a trench coat. By the time I got to the floor to drop off the application itself, they had the heat turned on, so I was dripping wet by the time I got into the office to drop off my application, but I had protected it in my trench coat, so it was dry. They commented, made some comments, something to the effect of "You must really want a job with the National Park Service." I said, "I really want a job with the National Park Service."
- Wade Myers: 00:08:20 Yeah, I got a job with the National Park Service. I was duty stationed on the National Mall.
- Nancy Russell: 00:08:24 Was that a job that you specifically--like you applied to go work on the Mall or you applied and got assigned?
- Wade Myers: 00:08:30 I applied and got assigned, yeah. I didn't have a car, so I was actually renting a room with a gentleman who worked for NASA in Gaithersburg. I would have to walk several miles to get to the bus stop, and then the bus would take me to a metro station. From the metro station, I would go to the Metro Center, switch to another line. Well actually--yeah, I was on the red line out towards Gaithersburg. I would switch to the blue line at Metro Center, get off at the Smithsonian Station, walk across the Mall, pass the Washington Monument, down the other side to what we referred to as the survey building. It was actually the

building that used to house the steam engine to--the original elevator in the Washington Monument was steam driven.

- Wade Myers: 00:09:21 We would show up there around 7:30 or before for what we would refer to as roll call, and that was also where we got our duty assignments, where we'd either be stationed at the Lincoln Memorial or Jefferson or Washington Monument or Vietnam Veterans Memorial. We'd also find out who had permits to protest, who had permits to film, what we could expect for that day.
- Nancy Russell: 00:09:44 When was it that you got your--was this a permanent or a seasonal position, temporary?
- Wade Myers: 00:09:48 It was a seasonal position I believe.
- Nancy Russell: 00:09:51 When was this?
- Wade Myers: 00:09:54 Let's see, I started work with the government on March 10th of 1986. I probably worked about three weeks with the Voice of America, and I was only on the Mall for about five months because I started working for Harpers Ferry Center on September 2nd, 1986.
- Nancy Russell: 00:10:16 Okay. When you were working on the Mall, you were functioning as a seasonal interpretive ranger?
- Wade Myers: 00:10:23 Yes.
- Nancy Russell: 00:10:28 What was that experience like at that time on the Mall?
- Wade Myers: 00:10:32 At that time on the Mall, and most of the time I was duty stationed at the Washington Monument, we had a crew of probably about seven individuals who worked pretty tightly as a team, and so one day of the week, we would be rotated off the Washington Monument for a break. We referred to the Jefferson Memorial as the Hilton because there weren't a lot of visitors there, but they also had a really great break room, break area. In my case, my day off from the Washington Monument wasn't much of a break because they put me on VIP duty. I would have to go to NCR and pick up a fleet car, government vehicle, and then pick up VIPs in Washington.

- Wade Myers: 00:11:27 It might be the parents of the Secretary of Treasury or something like that, and then take them around the Washington area and over towards Arlington to visit the park sites, park units or wherever they might want to go. Driving in Washington, D.C. traffic was not my idea of a break from the Washington Monument. It was fun, certainly, but it was also stressful. I was glad to get back to the monument after that day, but it was only one day of the week.
- Nancy Russell: 00:12:01 Were there any VIPs that stand out in your memory?
- Wade Myers: 00:12:06 The last VIP that I took was unusual because normally I would just be told who I was picking up and where I was picking them up and what time I needed to be there. In this particular case, and this is just before I was leaving the Mall to come up to work at the Harpers Ferry Center, I got called into the Director's office, and I was supposed to be getting special instructions for this particular VIP.
- Nancy Russell: 00:12:36 When you say the Director's office, you mean the National Park Service Director?
- Wade Myers: 00:12:37 Yeah. I had to go to the Main Interior Building. I'm waiting and I'm waiting and I'm waiting, and finally they just dismiss me. They give me a time and a location, and that's about it. This was unusual in that I had to take a van, I had to take a multi-passenger van.
- Nancy Russell: 00:12:59 Which is even more fun to drive.
- Wade Myers: 00:13:00 Which is even more fun to drive in Washington, D.C., absolutely. The individual I was picking up was from either East Germany or West Germany, I forget now, and this one was unusual because I had State Department officials and I had Secret Service and I had embassy officials along with the VIP. I'm still not given the whole story here, but a whole entourage of people arrive and come into the van, and then we go to the various sites that they want to go see. He disappears, I forget the gentleman's name. He disappeared at the Jefferson Memorial, and they stayed with him pretty tight, so I knew that this was somebody really important, but he got away from them at the Jefferson Memorial.

- Wade Myers: 00:13:57 The entourage got real panicked, real panicked, and a couple of them rushed up to me and said, "Hey, have you seen so and so?" I said, "No, I haven't, but I'll take a look and see if I can find him." I said, "What is going on here?" They said, "He received death threats before he left Germany and he's been receiving death threats since he's been here, and we're supposed to keep on him." I said, "And you're just now telling me this?" I'm not armed. As soon as I found him, he was off quietly enjoying the sites, I think finally getting a breather from everything. I said, "They're looking for you," and he said, "I figured." I said, "We need to go back."
- Wade Myers: 00:14:45 We got back in the van, that ended the tour right then and there. I head back to the Post Office Tower building, I'm told to stop in the middle of the street. This is now rush hour traffic in D.C. I'm told to stop the van, stop traffic, while they can get him out into another vehicle and take off. They literally bundled him into another vehicle that's already been placed there on the road, and they leave me standing there with all the doors to the van open, standing there trying to stop traffic in the middle of rush hour. Yeah, I'm like, "Wow, I guess that's the end of that tour."
- Wade Myers: 00:15:30 Then a couple of days later, I arrived at Harpers Ferry Center. Yeah.
- Nancy Russell: 00:15:34 I know you were only working at the Mall for about five months, but you mentioned that you'd get your morning briefing about who had permits. Were there any demonstrations or anything that happened while you were there that stick in your mind?
- Wade Myers: 00:15:48 The circus came to town one day.
- Nancy Russell: 00:15:51 Literally?
- Wade Myers: 00:15:51 Literally the circus comes to town, and so they're handing out flyers. The boundary at that time, the boundary to the Washington Monument was the flagpoles. Anything inside of the flagpoles was park property, anything outside of the flagpoles was okay to demonstrate and hand out flyers and that sort of thing. The circus personnel were handing out flyers, but they were also handing out helium balloons, and that became a problem in the monument because when the

elevator would rise towards the top, those helium balloons would explode.

- Wade Myers: 00:16:32 It would upset the kids, it would upset people in the elevator car obviously. I was told that this was happening, so I went out to the flagpoles and there were a couple of circus personnel that were dressed up as keystone cops. I said, "Guys, I don't mind you handing out the flyers, but if you could wait and hand out the balloons until the kids come out of the Washington Monument and come to you, that would be better because the balloons are literally exploding inside the monument and it's causing a problem." They said, "Sure, no problem."
- Wade Myers: 00:17:04 As I'm turning around and walking away, I get booed by the crowd. I turn around and the little people that are dressed as keystone cops have their arms out like they've been handcuffed and are walking behind me, and I turned around and I said, "Look guys, I'm having a hard enough time without you turning the crowd against me, so I'm just asking. I'm not saying you can't hand out the balloons, I'm just saying wait until they're out of the monument and then hand the balloons, and I need you to step back across the flagpoles."
- Wade Myers: 00:17:37 This was also a difficult time too because there was a crisis with Libya going on. This was during the Reagan administration. We had shot down a couple of Libyan fighters and Omar [Muammar] Gaddafi had threatened to bring terrorism to the streets of Washington. We were on high alert, we were getting briefed in the mornings by State Department and other officials as to what we could expect. There was rumors that there were already some terror cells in the country, and each morning it would be slightly different as to what we could expect. We were expecting plastic explosives to be left behind.
- Wade Myers: 00:18:22 One morning we got a briefing that there was a concern that they might steal vehicles from the government fleet over at NCR and approach the Washington Monument in government vehicles. There was no ticket system at that time, so you would have a line wrapped around the Washington Monument for people waiting in line for two and a half or three hours sometimes to get into the monument. The concern was that there would be mass

casualties if they were approaching the monument on various sides using government vehicles.

- Wade Myers: 00:18:54 Our maintenance and custodial staff would actually have to call ahead, tell us what vehicle they were going to be arriving in and what the license numbers were. If we saw any other government vehicle or any vehicle for that matter approaching the Washington Monument that didn't match that description, we actually had a red phone, sort of like Commissioner Gordon's red phone, and all we had to do was lift that handset off and within seconds, literally seconds, there would be Park Police and other law enforcement people coming in to find out what the problem was. We only had to use that a couple of times, and any packages or backpacks, briefcases or anything like that that got left for more than a couple of minutes, yeah, if we didn't get somebody to pick that up, we had to call bomb squads and they would remove it and take care of it.
- Wade Myers: 00:19:51 We were having a lot of bomb scares at that time too, so I might go off to lunch and come back and the monument's shut down and we would man a perimeter around--a safe perimeter around the Washington Monument to keep people from approaching the monument. It was stressful. There were more snipers on tops of government buildings at that time. It was a little unsettling that we weren't armed ourselves. We had these bright shiny new gold badges, but we weren't armed. My mother worried, because she was reading about this in the paper.
- Nancy Russell: 00:20:33 You weren't armed but you also didn't have protective gear.
- Wade Myers: 00:20:38 Yeah, we didn't wear vests. We didn't have walkie-talkies. We usually kept about four to five people on the outside of the Washington Monument always patrolling always watching. We'd relay information back and forth to each other, so there was somebody usually watching the visitors within the lobby area. There was obviously somebody keeping an eye on visitors when they were in the elevator, the elevator operator. Then there was always somebody at the top of the monument keeping an eye on people. We could relay information back and forth about keeping an eye on certain individuals.
- Wade Myers: 00:21:17 Language could sometimes be a barrier. We had a volunteer who came to us from Italy who spoke I think

seven different languages. English she said was not one of her strong languages, but it was actually very good. We still, even with her, we still had trouble with conveying messages to visitors, like "You can't take that suitcase to the Washington Monument, you have to leave it out here," and then finding out later that it's basically an oversized baby--they're using it as a baby bag. They have an infant, but you still can't take that into the Washington Monument.

- Wade Myers: 00:21:59 Also, during cherry blossom time, trying to convey to people you can't take the cherry blossoms. You can't rip the limbs off the cherry blossoms and walk around Washington with those. We would often have a huge pile of cherry blossom limbs or pieces of the cherry blossoms stacked up outside the entrance to the Washington Monument saying, "Leave them here, because if you walk away with this, you're liable to be fined," that sort of thing, cited.
- Nancy Russell: 00:22:32 When you first said that you got a day off of the monument to work, I thought it was maybe because of dealing with visitors, but it seems like there's a whole other level of stress on top of that.
- Wade Myers: 00:22:43 There's a whole other level of stress on top of that, because the Washington Monument had been specifically targeted by Gaddafi. It was very stressful for us. We were also, because I was working there starting in March and April, it was still cold most mornings and nights. We had to check the flood lights that would illuminate the monument at night, we had to check those to make sure there weren't any homeless people in there before we closed them up because they would stay in there for the warmth. We were also checking to make sure somebody hadn't planted a bomb there.
- Wade Myers: 00:23:25 I do remember one morning going up with Michael Merino to open the monument up, and we were checking those doors. We also had to check the doors, there was a--it would be like our server room now, a mechanical room in the bottom part of the Washington Monument. We'd have to check that, close those doors as well. I remember we had just closed those doors to the flood lights and we were getting ready to open up the monument, and visitors were just starting to come up the hill. One of those metal doors shifted, and it sounded like a bomb had gone off, and Mike

and I immediately hit the deck like somebody had thrown a grenade at us.

- Wade Myers: 00:24:11 When we realized we were okay, we're picking ourselves up and dusting ourselves off, a couple of vets had seen us do that and knew that something had happened and they said, "You guys all right?" I said, "Yeah, just a little jittery." It may have been one of those particular mornings where it was one of those briefings that was like, "Okay, everybody's just a little bit on edge here."
- Nancy Russell: 00:24:39 You had briefings and you had no defensive materials or equipment.
- Wade Myers: 00:24:49 No. Yeah.
- Nancy Russell: 00:24:50 Were you given any kind of specialized training at all, or is it just like, "Be on the lookout."
- Wade Myers: 00:24:55 Just be on the lookout. Yeah. If you see something, say something. For a while we had a law enforcement ranger with us on certain days. If things were really heightened security, we had at least one law enforcement ranger there onsite. I do remember one day I went up to relieve a new ranger to the crew. He'd only been with us for a day or so, and one of the things we were supposed to do--also, there was no air conditioning in the monument. When it got really hot, like in July and August, we had to rotate the rangers off the top every 30 minutes because the heat was just that bad.
- Wade Myers: 00:25:45 One of the things that you were supposed to do when you rotated up to the top was you check the trashcans, make sure nobody had thrown something in the trashcan. The top of the monument was--the walls were the thinnest at the top of the monument, so if you were going to do damage to the monument, that's where you would want to place a bomb or other device. He hadn't done that, so I went ahead and did it. There in one of the trashcans, underneath a rag was a small silver box with a number of colored wires coming off them. I'm like, "Wow, okay." The way it had been placed in the trashcan, somebody was trying to hide it.
- Wade Myers: 00:26:35 I called down and said, "You need to clear the monument, and we're calling in a bomb threat. We need to get somebody in here to check this out. We need to clear the

top. Don't bring anybody else up." When we do that, we're calling the person--one of the calls that we're making is to the operator of the elevator. If they're taking a group up, they have to reverse the elevator and take them down. We have to unfortunately close the monument, which makes people upset if they've already been standing there for two hours. We don't want to panic anybody. We don't tell anybody at the top. I said, "We need you to move from here as quickly as you can. The elevator's waiting," so forth and so on.

- Wade Myers: 00:27:22 I waited up there at the top for what seemed like an eternity. They sent a law enforcement ranger who was actually normally duty stationed at C&O Canal, a horse patrol. I'm waiting for somebody to come up from Ft. Myers or somewhere else. It was either Ft. Myers or Fort McNair. She just yanks the thing right out of there, and I'm thinking, "Okay, this is it. This is what my mother feared." It didn't go off. We take it downstairs, and they checked and found out that there had been maintenance done on the elevator the night before and the maintenance guy had simply removed something and tossed it in the trashcan without thinking.
- Wade Myers: 00:28:16 The officials did say, "Yeah, we would have called. It looked so much like a device."
- Nancy Russell: 00:28:21 It was suspicious.
- Wade Myers: 00:28:22 It was suspicious enough that you did the right thing, but I'm like, "I don't know why that ranger did what they did, and yanked that thing out of there without making sure that it's not going to go off." We had to make sure. I stayed up there at the top to make sure that everybody was cleared, everybody was out and just as the elevator was going down with the last group of people, the law enforcement officer had come up with the elevators.
- Nancy Russell: 00:28:53 I was going to ask you about why you left the Mall, but I think it's pretty clear.
- Wade Myers: 00:28:59 Well actually, I left the Mall because I got a phone call. I had a message. We would take our lunch breaks sometimes down in the survey building, and I noticed that somebody had passed me a telephone message that Vince Gleason had called me from Harpers Ferry Center. I said, "Does

anybody know who Vince Gleason is," and they're like, "Oh, no. What did you do?" I'm like, "I didn't do anything. He called me." He goes, "Don't call him back." I'm like, "Really?" "Yeah, don't call him back." I'm like, "All right." I didn't think anything about it, but he kept calling.

- Wade Myers: 00:29:40 Then he wound up calling the house where I was staying, and basically he was asking me to come in for an interview. I should mention that I didn't have a car. I was one of the few rangers that was duty stationed at the National Mall that did not work weekends. I only worked a Monday through Friday schedule.
- Nancy Russell: 00:30:03 That's related to public transportation?
- Wade Myers: 00:30:05 That was due to public transportation. The buses didn't run to the metros on the weekends. I told Mr. Gleason, I said, "Well Mr. Gleason, I can't get to Harpers Ferry. I don't have a car." He said, "You're in Gaithersburg, right?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well I'm in Chevy Chase. I'll pick you up on my way into Harpers Ferry, and I'll take you there and we'll do the interview." I said "OK." We arranged for me to meet him outside of I think it was a hotel or something there in Gaithersburg. I walked over to it. I'm standing outside the hotel, and I remember this little man just running. Not running, but walking very quickly, with a hat pulled down over his head and he goes, zoom, right through to the lobby.
- Wade Myers: 00:30:51 I'm like, "Wow, he's in a hurry." A few minutes later, he comes back out and he goes, "Are you Wade Myers?" I said, "Yes." He goes, "Vince Gleason. Let's go." He was very short and clipped. We walked to the vehicle, and it's a Manhattan. Now a Manhattan is what is basically the old cabs of New York City, the big honking cabs, only this one isn't painted yellow, it's gray. It's almost like primer, but it's the finish before they're painted yellow. We get into that, and it's like driving in a tank. You sit up and you're looking down on most everybody else except for tractor trailers. We basically conduct the interview in the car on the way up to Harpers Ferry. He's asking me all sorts of questions, because he had seen, when I had submitted my application and I had totally forgotten I had submitted the application to work at Harpers Ferry Center.

- Wade Myers: 00:31:54 It got spit out for a particular position they were advertising for, and I had submitted my transcripts, my college transcripts as part of that application. He had seen those transcripts and that's what he was focusing on. He was asking me questions about the courses I had taken and that sort of thing. We got up to Harpers Ferry and then he took me around the Publications staff and introduced me to them. We went over to the Hilltop House Hotel, which as it turned out was where he would stay during the week for several days when he was working at the Harpers Ferry Center. We're having lunch there, and the wait staff comes over and says, "Good afternoon Mr. Gleason. Would you like to have your usual?" He said, "Yes, I'll have my usual."
- Wade Myers: 00:32:46 I find out later that he brought his own food. He was on a special diet, so he brought his own food and they would just prepare whatever he had brought up for himself for that week. They had an art display there in the dining hall. I'm looking around at that and he goes, "Oh don't look at that art." He goes, "Our art is much better." We go back and he opens up what is referred to and I still refer to it as the vault, which was basically a converted coat closet up on the third floor of the IDC building, and that's where they kept the artwork. They also kept all of their handbook materials in there, their handbook production materials, but I also remember a number of manual typewriters being stored in there too. The place was just all jumbled.
- Wade Myers: 00:33:33 I'm looking at it going, "Oh my goodness, what have I gotten myself into?" He said, "Myers, I figure you'll be here about 12 months." I'm like, "Yeah, I think I might be here longer than 12 months. It's going to take me a while to clear all this." I obviously stayed there longer than 12 months. It was interesting. I remember there was a lot of buzz up on the third floor because Nick Kirilloff who was one of the designers for Publications, had broken through the black band, and I'm thinking what is this black band?
- Wade Myers: 00:34:12 Well the black band was part of the unigrad program that Massimo Vignelli had come up with, and everything was uniform in a set way. Nick Kirilloff had dared to break through the black band. He was working on the visitor information brochure for Yellowstone, and one of the geysers, the smoke or steam from the geyser had encroached into the black band. That was the buzz on the third floor was Nick had broken through the black band.

They weren't sure how that was going to go down with Vignelli or with Vince Gleason for that matter, but I think Vince thought it was good. It was time to break through the black band.

- Wade Myers: 00:34:58 When it came time to go back home, of course Vince stayed up in Harpers Ferry, so they had to--Gary Barkman, who worked as one of the cartographers there in Publications had to get a government vehicle and drive me all the way back down to Gaithersburg and then turn around and drive all the way back to Harpers Ferry because I didn't have a car. Vince then called me and offered me the job, and I said, "Well I still have the problem of I don't have a car." He said, "Not a problem. There's a dormitory here." In those days, Cook Hall was a dormitory for the Mather Training Center.
- Wade Myers: 00:35:39 He said, "You can stay at Cook Hall." I actually did. I stayed in Cook Hall for about two weeks until I found an apartment. I found a notice up on the bulletin board in the IDC building for an apartment, and I walked over to take a look at it, met with the landlord who worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It was a carriage house, it was a barn basically. It was a carriage house. He had two apartments. One was upstairs and one was downstairs. The downstairs actually wasn't finished, it was still a dirt floor. Eventually they would finish it off as a downstairs apartment.
- Wade Myers: 00:36:24 I took the upstairs apartment, and I took it immediately. I took it that evening when I saw it. It was on the corner of Ridge Street and McDowell Street, so I literally walked across Washington Street and walked across Fillmore Street, and I was right there on the campus of Harpers Ferry Center, which was perfect. I walked back over to the dormitory. I said, "I'll go over and get my stuff. I'll be back." I walked over to the dormitory and I had a small hard-sided Samsonite suitcase, a box with some canned goods and a pot, and that was it. That's how I arrived to Harpers Ferry. He said, "Is that all you have?" I said, "Yes." He goes, "Well I'll come over with a couple of wool blankets," because it was fall and the evenings were getting cool, but it was a semi-furnished apartment.
- Wade Myers: 00:37:23 It had a table with two chairs, a lamp, a piece of rug on the floor.

- Nancy Russell: 00:37:32 Not a carpet, a piece of rug?
- Wade Myers: 00:37:34 Yeah. It's just like cut out piece of--it wasn't even bound or anything, so it was unraveling. That was it. It had a dishwasher. Yes. That's how--yeah. I had no bed. Slept on the floor for a while. Eventually my mother shipped up my sleeping bag, so I was able to sleep in a sleeping bag on the floor. I think it was December, the landlord called to see how I was doing and he says, "Is there anything I can do?" I said, "Yeah, when are you going to come over and turn on the heat?" Where I grew up, we turned the pilot light on. We had to go and actually light a pilot light for the furnace. I said, "When are you going to come over and turn on the heat?" He goes, "It's electric. All you have to do is turn up the thermostat."
- Nancy Russell: 00:38:24 You had been freezing for months?
- Wade Myers: 00:38:24 I had been freezing for a while. I turned up the thermostat and the heat kicked on, like, "This is great. This is great. It's an electric baseboard heat." It was two years before I actually got a vehicle. I explored Harpers Ferry quite a bit. Didn't have a washing machine, so I washed my clothes in the bathtub. 7-Eleven had some grocery items, you could get laundry detergent and that sort of thing. I did on occasion take the bus. It was what they call a Pan Tram bus. I would take the last bus that would pick up the commuters from the train depot in Harpers Ferry. I would take that to Charles Town and I would go to the grocery store just outside of Charles Town, and then I would either walk back to our Harpers Ferry or I would call a cab.
- Wade Myers: 00:39:27 The cab service at that time was a single cab, and it was one evening I called and he had gone to Leesburg. I was going to have to walk. I often relied on people who were coming to visit to get me to a grocery store where I could get groceries and until the next visit or whatever.
- Nancy Russell: 00:39:49 Before you started at Harpers Ferry Center, what did you know of the place? What had you heard about it?
- Wade Myers: 00:39:56 I had never visited Harpers Ferry. You mentioned whether we had gone to any national parks when I was growing up. We never made it over to the eastern panhandle, so I'd only seen Harpers Ferry through pictures, historic pictures and that sort of thing. I really didn't know much about Harpers

Ferry. I do remember coming up to explore the area with my mother before I started the job, but I didn't know much about Harpers. I mean I knew about John Brown and the raid and historically about it, but I didn't know much about the Design Center or anything.

Nancy Russell: 00:40:34 There wasn't a reputation that the Center had that you were aware of just from having been--?

Wade Myers: 00:40:39 No, No. Vince had the reputation. Vince Gleason had the reputation, but the Center, no, there was no reputation about the Design Center itself. I know just from the park staff, Vince had a reputation.

Nancy Russell: 00:40:52 What was that first position that you were interviewing for?

Wade Myers: 00:40:58 That first position that I was interviewing for was actually a clerk typist position. I actually took--I was a GS-4 on the National Mall. I started at the Center as a GS-3 step five, which would have been the equivalent to a GS-4, step one. All of the rangers that I worked with on the National Mall, we were actually all eligible for food stamps. Our salaries were such that we were actually all eligible for food stamps. We didn't make a whole lot of money. We did it for the love, not for the money. At Harpers Ferry Center, the position that I had interviewed for was a clerk typist position.

Wade Myers: 00:41:42 Vince told me that that was just so they could get the position out, but that's not what I was actually going to be doing. They changed my title almost immediately to--what was it? It was changed to an illustrations research technician, was my title. With that, I was doing graphics research for the Publications program, which also included our handbook program, but I was also managing their commissioned art collection. They were part of the collection. Vince had actually had been able to get the position out because there had been an OIG audit specifically regarding the art.

Nancy Russell: 00:42:34 That early?

Wade Myers: 00:42:35 That early, and they basically were telling the Center you need people to manage your art. You're making a huge investment in this and you're basically tossing it into stairwells and coat closets and that sort of thing. You need

to manage it better. Vince jumped on that and got the position out there and hired me to basically do that, to manage their part of the commissioned art collection. Everybody else was kind of on their own, but Vince had actually moved forward and actually wanted a position on his staff that that's what they were doing, as opposed to making it a collateral duty for someone else on his staff.

- Nancy Russell: 00:43:23 Do you think it was your art minor that--
- Wade Myers: 00:43:26 It was, yeah. He told me that it was the art minor and the classes. He was looking for someone who had a liberal arts background and wasn't rigid, and had had a broad range of experiences and that sort of thing.
- Nancy Russell: 00:43:46 What was the organization of the Center at the time? You were working for Vince in Publications. What other branches were there--how was it laid out organizationally?
- Wade Myers: 00:43:54 Sure. There was the Division on Wayside Exhibits, which was managed at that time by Ray Price. There was Audiovisual Arts was in--there were different groups within Audiovisual Arts. They actually--the AV Depot was actually originally in the old Grandview School, which was behind the post office in Harpers Ferry. That was a separate audiovisual group from the rest of Audiovisual Arts that were actually producing and making films and movies. There was the--the Division of Exhibits was actually also in two separate branches. There was the Exhibit Planning and Design Group and there was the Museum Planning.
- Wade Myers: 00:44:52 You had Exhibit Planning and Design and you had Museum Planning. One was designing it, one was actually implementing the design. You had Historic Furnishings. You had the Division of Conservation, which was actually in the old Shipley School building at that time. Let me see if I'm leaving anybody out. Interpretive Planning, and I think that, and then of course Management and Human Resources. Human Resources at that time was actually in the basement of the Curtis Freewill Baptist Church.
- Nancy Russell: 00:45:36 Was cartography part of Publications?
- Wade Myers: 00:45:38 Cartography was part of Publications. Right. Actually, until Nancy Haack was hired, the cartographers had all come out of the Department of Defense. They were basically

mapping technicians but not true cartographers. Nancy Haack was actually the first cartographer that was hired within Publications that had a background in cartography, a degree in cartography.

- Nancy Russell: 00:46:12 Were other areas at that time seeing that professionalization of staff, or was it only that cartography had kind of lagged behind other areas?
- Wade Myers: 00:46:22 I don't know that cartography had lagged behind in other areas. Vince was a visionary. He wanted--the Publications program before Vince came on board was, for lack of a better word or phrase, two dimensional. It wasn't colorful. Most of the brochures slipped into your shirt pocket, and Vince wanted it to be more. He wanted it to be color. Actually, that reflected also in their commissioned art. They were going full color early on in the Publications program. Where most of the other divisions were still doing black and white work, they were going full color.
- Wade Myers: 00:47:08 Some of the divisions did black and white because it didn't cost as much. It didn't cost as much to produce, but Vince didn't mind that. The Division of Publications budget was a line item on the congressional budget, so their budgets weren't coming through the National Park budget. They had money that they could actually move forward into, in their program work. I forgot what you--the question.
- Nancy Russell: 00:47:49 No, you're doing great. Who was the director when you arrived?
- Wade Myers: 00:47:51 When I arrived, the director was Dave Wright. He had come onboard just probably a few months before I started. He had come from the Denver Service Center as a landscape architect.
- Nancy Russell: 00:48:06 Do you have any anecdotes to share about Dave Wright?
- Wade Myers: 00:48:11 No, I liked Dave Wright. He was the type of manager who would actually come around and visit with the staff. He knew who his staff were. He would check on how projects were going, but he got out of the office and moved about among the staff. When he got phone calls from the regional office or from a park superintendent, he was in a position where he could answer their questions or their concerns about what might be taking a while for a project to move

forward or something of that nature. No, I liked David Wright very much.

- Nancy Russell: 00:48:51 Anecdote, not necessarily criticism.
- Wade Myers: 00:48:53 Right. There was an occasion where I was accused of something, and he brought Vince down to his office and told Vince that this was what I was being accused of. Vince called me down to his office and confronted me with it, and I told him, no, that wasn't the case and explained to him what the situation was, why I had not applied for a couple of positions and the reason why I had not applied for those positions. He got a big grin on his face, opened up his office door, went over to Dave Wright's office and made sure that I could see him, talked to Dave Wright because I could see from Vince's office, I could see into Dave Wright's office.
- Wade Myers: 00:49:51 Very loudly so I could also hear him, tell Dave Wright exactly what the situation was really about. Came back in, closed his door, we had a big laugh. I think it would have been better if Dave Wright had confronted me directly with the situation, but I understand he was going through the chain of command.
- Nancy Russell: 00:50:21 In your earlier statement, you talked about how Vince had a reputation with the parks.
- Wade Myers: 00:50:27 Oh yes. Yeah. Vince had a reputation within the Center too.
- Nancy Russell: 00:50:31 Within the Center. Tell us some about Vince.
- Wade Myers: 00:50:36 Vince had actually had--Vince, during World War II, had actually worked as a civilian in the cartographic department at West Point. I only found out about this because I was chauffeuring Vince to Philadelphia late one night, and so he wasn't driving. I was doing the driving, but I found out a few personal things about Vince, and that was one of them. He grew up in Michigan, part of his farm was taken by the Ford Motor Company as part of their test track. He also got a chance to test drive the vehicles on part of the old family farm.
- Wade Myers: 00:51:27 He was hired by the Mission 66 Committee. He and Carl Degen were both hired that way. Carl had been hired out of New York, he worked for one of the major networks, ABC,

CBS, one of those. Vince was working for Ford at that time I think too in their design branch, and so he was working in the Publications office in the Main Interior Building, and even after he was coming up to Harpers Ferry Center, after the establishment of Harpers Ferry Center, Publications maintained an office in the Main Interior Building probably up until the early to mid-1990s.

- Wade Myers: 00:52:31 He had had a series of heart attacks before I started working with him. He was on a strict diet of what he could eat and he was supposed to stay calm. I would say by the time I worked for him, he was calmer. His wife made sure that he stuck to his diet and that sort of thing. Yeah, as I mentioned before, he was a visionary. He could look ahead down the road as to where he wanted his programs to go or where things were headed, and so he would move in that direction long before anybody else at the Center was heading in that direction.
- Wade Myers: 00:53:22 You might think to yourself, "Why are we doing this? This makes no sense. Why are we doing this?" And then it's like, "Oh, okay, that's why we're doing it. That's why we're doing this."
- Nancy Russell: 00:53:32 Did his vision play into the founding of Harpers Ferry Center?
- Wade Myers: 00:53:35 Yes, he was the one who had made the suggestion that the design element move out of the Washington Office, and out this way. He had suggested the Old Storer College campus as a possible location because particularly with the Publications group, they were getting bogged down with special requests from the DOI directorate. It was impacting the Publications program for the Park Service, and so for that reason, he wanted to get out of Washington so there could be a concentration of talent and business towards the NPS program work.
- Wade Myers: 00:54:27 The Audiovisual Arts group had already been up on what was now the HFC campus. They were working out of the Lewis Anthony building as early as 1965, so they were already there. As a matter of fact, they were the ones who filmed the construction of the IDC building. Yeah. We have stills and film of the construction of the building.

- Nancy Russell: 00:54:58 Talk a little bit about Vince's vision for developing the unigrid.
- Wade Myers: 00:55:04 He reached out to Massimo Vignelli who was a designer in New York who had designed the Bloomingdale's bags and Macy's bags and their logos and such, and reached out to Massimo Vignelli to see if there could be a design concept for the Publications program. What was happening was that a lot of times people didn't know whether they were visiting a state park or a national park, and so Vince wanted there to be a design that would be recognized by anybody that that was a National Park Service unit or that was a National Park Service publication.
- Wade Myers: 00:55:57 Even the Handbook Program wound up with a black band. The Wayside Exhibit Program eventually started using black bands across their wayside exhibit panels. The black band became the universal for the unigrid design.
- Nancy Russell: 00:56:12 Sometimes people steal them now from us.
- Wade Myers: 00:56:14 They steal that from us now, yes. They steal the Wayside Exhibit panels too. The stands were all--the concepts were all designed at Harpers Ferry Center, implemented through other contractors, but the plan for the stands, the frames, the panels themselves, whether they were fiberglass embedded or porcelain, those concepts all came through the Center.
- Nancy Russell: 00:56:47 Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.
- Wade Myers: 00:56:49 Yes, and that's the way Vince looked at it and he was fine with that, if that's the way they wanted to go. The black band wasn't a copyrighted trademark or anything of that nature. The arrowhead was, but the black band we couldn't say, okay, that's ours. He was fine to share that. As long as there wasn't a confusion, again, that you were looking at a National Park Service wayside exhibit, as opposed to a state or city wayside exhibit.
- Nancy Russell: 00:57:21 The development of the unigrid presumably had tremendous cost savings for the government?
- Wade Myers: 00:57:27 Yes. You could share that template with the parks. If the parks wanted to expand on an idea that we were restricted within the unigrid program, you had what we call an A

format and a B format. The A format was one panel wide, a B format was two panels wide, but you could go all the way up from say a B4 to a B12 and that was the number of panels. It's the same thing with the A format. Actually, the C&O Canal and the Appalachian Trail were longer A format brochures, but it also kept you from just throwing in all kinds of graphic images within that.

- Wade Myers: 00:58:24 It was always a team effort between the designers in Publications and the writer-editors within Publications. The designers were often looking for graphics to match up with the text or sometimes the text revolved around a particular graphic that the park would want you to use. Yeah, it was a huge cost savings, and we could share that. That unigrid format was easy enough for parks to pick up on, so as I mentioned, they could do other publications using that group format and expand upon ideas and such.
- Nancy Russell: 00:59:04 When you arrived at Harpers Ferry Center, was it a diverse workplace in terms of genders and different backgrounds? How would you describe it?
- Wade Myers: 00:59:13 Yes, I would say it was a diverse background. There were women in supervisory roles. There were those of us with disabilities, hearing mostly, as well as ethnic backgrounds and that sort of thing, so yeah.
- Nancy Russell: 00:59:41 At one point, weren't there four or five people with hearing issues?
- Wade Myers: 00:59:44 Yes. Charlie, myself, a couple of people that worked for facilities that were couriering work back and forth between the Center and the Main Interior Building.
- Nancy Russell: 01:00:00 Did the Center hire sign language interpreters?
- Wade Myers: 01:00:03 The Center did hire sign language interpreters. When Charlie was here, as well as the others, all employee staff meetings there was a sign interpreter, and then when I transitioned from the main campus to the Willow Springs facility, Charlie and I had a sign interpreter for our staff meetings, which was great. Once Charlie left, we didn't have sign interpretation any longer, which is unfortunate. We do have people now with body mics and that sort of thing, but it's still kind of difficult. I mean, I learned to read--I lost my partial hearing when I was in college, so I

started learning to read lips pretty early on. So did Charlie. As long as we were focused on the face and the person didn't turn away, we could pick up on those things.

- Wade Myers: 01:01:08 When we couldn't get our regular sign interpreter, who was Anne Bowers, they would sometimes send students up from the Frederick School for the Deaf, and that was just disastrous. That was really bad.
- Nancy Russell: 01:01:22 Were they finger signing?
- Wade Myers: 01:01:23 They were finger signing or they were finger spelling, and you can't do that really in a staff meeting, when the conversation's moving along. Charlie and I just basically said, "Look, if we can't have Anne, if you can't schedule Anne, don't bother to send anybody out. You either have to reschedule these meetings when Anne can come, or--yeah, just don't send us any more students." Closed captioning for Charlie was also an issue. We had to have, and still do, have to have mandatory ethics training and that sort of thing or EEO training, and I can't remember what the video was that he had to watch, but he and I came into the room to watch the video with someone from HR, and it starts up and I can tell right away this is the wrong captioning for the wrong video.
- Wade Myers: 01:02:28 Charlie actually gets up angrily and walks out of the room. They're like, "What happened?" I said, "You have the wrong captioning on this film." I said, "You're making him sit and watch this, but you have captioned it incorrectly. It's wrong. Now you're going to make him come back later and sit through this again," and they did. They made us come back and sit through it when it was correctly captioned. Yeah. They're making—they're better about that. This was early on when they were just starting to close caption films and videos and things that were introduced to the Center.
- Nancy Russell: 01:03:15 What about some of the other individuals that you worked with, like maybe Ray Price? Any stories to share?
- Wade Myers: 01:03:21 I didn't work real close with Ray Price. I worked-- Publications was when the other divisions were starting to work up on new projects, they would often come up to Publications and either pull the handbooks or pull the park brochures, and then come and discuss with me what was potentially available for reuse. That's how we interacted

with a lot of the other work groups in the Center, but I didn't work one on one with Ray so much. Now Vince and Ray worked together on different things, but I didn't work real close with Ray. He was well respected by his staff, but I didn't have a sort of one on one relationship with him.

- Nancy Russell: 01:04:22 Okay. When you were initially hired at that clerk typist and it changed, what did your job actually entail on a day to day basis at that time?
- Wade Myers: 01:04:38 At that time, I was doing quite a bit of graphics research for the Publications program, so I was seeking out, working with the writer-editors and the designers to find out what kind of images they were looking for, what they wanted to see, and then I would reach out to commercial vendors or commercial photographers or institutions to get that material in. In the case of the commercial photographers, they would submit a series of images, we would go through those images, select ones for further consideration, and I would send the others back with transmittal letters and such.
- Wade Myers: 01:05:18 I was also managing the commissioned art collection for them, so I was working with either providing that material for third parties or for the parks or for the other work groups within the Design Center and then creating an inventory of what was there within the Publications group.
- Nancy Russell: 01:05:45 About that time, how big was the collection?
- Wade Myers: 01:05:49 Oh my goodness, it was probably several thousand. It comprises the core of the collection now, the Center's collection now. And as I mentioned, a lot of it was full color even early on. Vince had brought up--actually I had a conversation recently with Linda Meyers who worked in Publications, different spelling of Myers. She told me that she had actually gone down to the Main Interior Building to a closet that Vince had the artwork in there before it came up to the Design Center. She and Vince had actually brought the artwork up to the vault, which is where I eventually saw it.
- Wade Myers: 01:06:43 That collection, because the brochures were going worldwide, I was getting requests from Milan or London or places like that for reuse of that material, so it was often handling foreign requests, or international requests as well

as domestic requests for the use of the artwork. How the collection wound up coming over here into a central repository was that Phil Myerly, who worked in Wayside Exhibits, had been struggling with getting a piece of artwork done for a Grand Teton project, and I had pulled for one of the cartographers a Grand Teton illustration that had been done by an artist by the name of Jaime Quintero. It was sitting out in that cartographer's office, and Phil walked by, stopped, saw it and blew a gasket as it were because they had just spent about \$40,000 to try to get a similar image for Grand Teton and it wasn't quite what they wanted.

Wade Myers: 01:07:52 There sitting in that cartographer's office was what they wanted and they didn't know that it was available. That initiated a task force that I sat on with Phil. Let's see, who else was on it? Tom Carter, who was the paintings conservator for Conservation for the Park Service. Sylvia Frye, or Sylvia Coleman at that time. Nancy Hatcher, who was working as the registrar for Conservation, and that might have been it. No, John Demer and there may have been somebody from Publications on that task force.

Wade Myers: 01:08:44 Anyway, the idea was that we would sit down and try to figure out how we could get the work into a central repository and make it available for all of the divisions within the Center, as well as the National Park Service so that we weren't spending money that we didn't need to spend and the parks weren't spending money that they didn't need to spend, that we were repurposing what we already had when we could.

Nancy Russell: 01:09:12 About when was this?

Wade Myers: 01:09:12 This was about '93 or '94, that the task force was put together. The decision was that it would be pulled into a central repository and the Willow Springs facility, which had been open to staff in 1992, seemed a reasonable place. We could get humidity controlled environments, temperature and humidity controlled environments. There was a large enough space to pull it all into a central repository. At that time, there was work in storage for the Center at the warehouse in Charles Town, stairwells within the IDC building, the bomb shelter, the vault up on the third floor, people's offices, map cabinets in central locations. It was probably about six different places.

- Wade Myers: 01:10:10 It was important that we bring it to a central repository, inventory what we had, figure out what we had, figure out what we could reuse and what might have restrictions on it, because unfortunately the way they did it was it was sort of a pillage and plunder. You go in, you open up the drawers, you pull the artwork out, you identify the park or project and you bring it over to the building. The paperwork was not part of that. It was a bit trying to go back and find the paperwork.
- Wade Myers: 01:10:51 Now in the case of Publications, they documented everything very well. No artwork came over to the repository without there being a memo, and that included measurements, copies of the contracts, so forth and so on.
- Nancy Russell: 01:11:05 I think that was largely the--Linda Meyers.
- Wade Myers: 01:11:08 That was Linda Meyers and myself doing that, yeah. I spent quite a bit of time with her making sure that everything was in order before it came over. The others, it required going back and trying to find that paperwork. In the case of Exhibits, unfortunately a lot of that paperwork got purged before we could get a hold of it, copies of it, so that's required going back and trying to find whether we have the contracting paperwork that we can go back and pull together. I did have an opportunity when they were doing the renovations in the IDC building, Bruce Kaiser who worked in Wayside Exhibits, turned over to me a number of record boxes, I think five in all, of job files, specifically for the artwork that had been commissioned for the various projects.
- Wade Myers: 01:12:02 They would finally go back and modify the database and finally put artists with artwork, put amounts in for how much we'd spent, when the work was completed and so forth and so forth. I went through the five boxes and probably sent two boxes of material back to them of material that was not related or I didn't need. Yeah, it was quite helpful.
- Nancy Russell: 01:12:30 At that point, after the task force and you then suddenly had a much bigger collection, is that when you transitioned to a technical information specialist and a grade increase, or did you-

- Wade Myers: 01:12:59 No, I actually switched to technical information specialist when I was in Publications and have a note here that September 23, 1991, first day as a GS-1412 technical information specialist. Yeah. I was reclassified while I was in Publications as a technical information specialist. For a long time was the only technical information specialist working at the Design Center. Yes, as a matter of fact, in one of our task force meetings I was called out along with a number of other individuals to go to HR, and we had to stop the meeting. I went over to HR, and was given the piece of paper indicating that I was being relocated or reassigned, realigned to Graphics Research.
- Wade Myers: 01:13:51 I'd looked at it. I was talking with Shirley Caniford, and she said, "Do you have any questions about this," and I said, "I have two. First of all, who's this individual, because they misspelled my name." They had also gotten my wrong middle initial. I said, "Have you notified Melissa Cronyn?" Now at that time, Melissa Cronyn was the head of Conservation.
- Nancy Russell: 01:14:14 The head of Conservation or Publications?
- Wade Myers: 01:14:17 I'm sorry, Publications. Because Vince was on a sabbatical, so she was the acting head for Publications. They said, "Yes, we've notified Melissa." I said, "Fine." The letter had indicated that I was going to stay in Publications. Well I was going to stay in my office in Publications, but I would actually be working with the staff over in the Willow Springs building. So I went and said, "I don't think this is going to work. I'm not comfortable staying in my office in Publications if I'm not working in Publications. If I'm going to be working with the Graphics Research people, then I need to be over at Willow Springs."
- Wade Myers: 01:15:04 They weren't expecting me, they weren't ready for me, they weren't even sure there was going to be a phone or a desk or anything. I said, "Just give me a beanbag chair and a phone. I'll make do." It turns out, they did not notify Melissa. I'm literally packing up my office, and she says, "Looks like you're packing up your office." I said, "I am." She goes, "Well where you going?" I said, "I'm going to Willow Springs." She goes, "What are you talking about?" I hand her the letter and I said, "They told me you knew about this." She goes, "I know nothing about this."

- Wade Myers: 01:15:40 She went down to talk to Dave Wright, and his decision was final. He was not changing his mind. She was pretty upset because we had just lost--Publications had just lost about 60% of its staff from the buyouts in '92 and '94. I was dealing with that because they had lost a lot of their mid-level management people, such as Bruce Hopkins and Heath Pemberton. I was processing their stuff when this was going on, and now I was walking out of Publications.
- Wade Myers: 01:16:24 The first day I show up here to Willow Springs there's a phone call, and it was from Dave Wright, and he wanted to know--he had indicated that I was to work with Phil Myerly on the commissioned art project. The commissioned art project at that time was a special program under the director's office, manager's office. I was to talk to Phil about what days of the week I was to work with him. I was to work three days a week with him and two days a week with the Graphics Research group. Phil chose Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, in the middle of the week. That meant I was working Mondays and Fridays with Graphics. That also meant that when I got started, I had to stop, go down the hallway and work with Phil, and then come back in on Friday and play catch up with what had happened while I was gone, even though I was literally just down the hallway.
- Wade Myers: 01:17:26 I was not to discuss my project work with Phil, with Dave Nathanson who was doing my evaluations, which put me in a very awkward situation. Phil was not talking to Nathanson about it, so I went to--after about six months of this bickering, I went to John Brucksch who was my ultimate supervisor, and I said, "Look, you got to get me out of the middle of this. I can't be between Phil and Dave Nathanson on this. Pick one of these groups and I'll work for them, but I can't work this way."
- Wade Myers: 01:18:09 He said, "Well what do you want to work on?" I said, "I want to work on the art project." He said, "Okay, I'll make a few phone calls." That's how it happened that I started doing working full time with Phil on the commissioned art collection.
- Nancy Russell: 01:18:24 Do you have a sense why Dave Wright did it that way or what?

- Wade Myers: 01:18:31 Yes. Nathanson felt that all of the staff that were involved in graphics research, no matter which group they were working with, should be working under the Library and Graphics Research team. And so he had been trying for years to get me out of Publications and on his team, and when Marilyn Wandrus and Doris Barber retired from the graphics group in the Springfield office and I didn't apply for their positions, he confronted me and said, "Why didn't you apply for those positions?" I said, "Because I didn't want to apply for those positions." He goes, "Well they're not going to be duty stationed in Springfield. The group is up now at Harpers Ferry Center."
- Wade Myers: 01:19:26 I said, "I understand that." I said, "I like working in Publications, and I like working for Vince Gleason," which I think was a hard concept for some people to understand, but I actually did like working for Vince Gleason. Nathanson wound up going to Dave Wright and complained to him that he felt that I was--how do I want to word this? He felt that because of his Jewish background is why I did not want to work for him. That was the confrontation, that was the reason I was called down to Vince's office. I said, "No Vince." I said, "I told him why I didn't want to work for him. It's nothing to do with his Jewish background. I don't want to work for Nathanson. I want to stay in Publications. I want to work for you."
- Wade Myers: 01:20:34 Vince used some colorful language. I had used some colorful language actually with Vince, which he then quoted to Dave Wright as to why I didn't want to work for Nathanson. I'd preferred to work in Publications. I liked the program work. With the Graphics group, you were working on other programs, Waysides, Exhibits and that sort of thing. I liked working for the Publications program. I liked working with the artwork within that Publications program. I would not have had that opportunity to work with the artwork had I gone and worked with Dave Nathanson.
- Wade Myers: 01:21:20 Dave Wright made that decision I think for a couple reasons. One, he--I think was trying to go ahead and push Vince out the door to retirement. They'd had some different opinions about things, and I think Dave Wright saw this as an opportunity to also get Dave Nathanson off his back because he'd been coming to him and asking, and begged--and I think he saw this as an opportunity: "Well if Wade's no longer in the picture in Publications, that's another

support that Vince doesn't have, and I can get Dave Nathanson off my back at the same time, then I've killed two birds with one stone," and I think that's why the decision was made that way.

- Wade Myers: 01:22:22 As it turns out, I think within six months I was working on the commissioned art program with Phil Myerly and not working with Dave Nathanson after all. It was difficult because I would work on a Monday, have to stop and come back on Friday. I couldn't take big projects on, which caused some resentment within the office and rightly so, but I just couldn't work it into my schedule, so I had to take smaller projects that I felt I could finish in a timely manner and keep on schedule, and it wasn't fair to other people to have to take large projects on when I'm in the office, why can't I take bigger projects on.
- Nancy Russell: 01:23:10 When did Vince retire?
- Wade Myers: 01:23:14 Vince, I don't have an exact date of when Vince retired. I actually was over here in the building when I got a phone call from Sharon Young, who was at one time Vince's secretary. She was now the secretary for Dave Wright, and she said that Vince was in his office, he was packing up his office, but Mike Alvarez and Bob Flannigan were standing over him while he was packing up his office, and could I please come over. I said, "I'll be right over." I went over and I walked in and I said, "I got a phone call. You guys don't need to stay here. I'll help Vince pack up." They said, "Are you sure?" I said, "I got a call from Dave Wright's office that he was packing, and I was to help him, so I'm here, so you guys can go."
- Wade Myers: 01:24:16 They left and Vince said, "Thank you so much." I said, "Sharon called me." He says, "Oh okay, good." He literally would open his desk drawer, pull a few things out and literally dump the contents of the desk drawer into a trashcan. I took some things upstairs for some things that he wanted to have upstairs in the vault or in Linda Meyers's office that needed to be kept within Publications, but he didn't pack up a whole lot and the gray ghost was parked--we called his car the gray ghost, the gray ghost was parked out front on the patio. He loaded up the car and drove away, and I never had any contact with him after that.

Nancy Russell: 01:25:00 It doesn't sound like he was leaving on his own terms.

Wade Myers: 01:25:02 He was not leaving on his own terms. He really wasn't. Now I kept in contact with him only through Linda Meyers, who kept in contact with him, but he never reached out to me by phone or letter or anything like that, and that was the last time I saw him was the day he drove off.

Nancy Russell: 01:25:19 That's a pretty sad ending--

Wade Myers: 01:25:19 It was very sad.

Nancy Russell: 01:25:19 --to--

Wade Myers: 01:25:22 It was a very sad ending.

Nancy Russell: 01:25:24 Basically the father of the Center.

Wade Myers: 01:25:26 The father of the Center, yeah. Certainly the father of the Publications program, that we know it to be. It was very sad, and I think one of the things that I think had upset Sharon Young, which is why she called me, was that they were questioning everything that he was packing that was his. He had a scale for instance that he kept in his office. I remember Bob Flannigan saying, "No, that's not your scale." I said, "That's his scale. That's not a government scale. That's his personal scale. He's decorated his office with it, it's his." I said, "You don't need to stay here. I'm here. I will help. I'll make sure that you get what you need back, if it's yours, but I'm here to help him pack," and I did that. It was really sad, sad day. Yeah.

Wade Myers: 01:26:27 I wish now we'd had an opportunity to ask him some more questions about things. Linda Meyers and I are still struggling with some things that he left behind that we just don't have answers to, we don't have the paperwork or the records, although Publications had fairly meticulous records, even from the mid-60s, documenting their program work. Yeah. It was really sad.

Nancy Russell: 01:27:02 Well that was a downer.

Wade Myers: 01:27:05 That was a downer, yeah. Thanks Nancy.

Nancy Russell: 01:27:11 Well we can't end this session on this note.

- Wade Myers: 01:27:16 Yeah, please let's not end the session that way, with him driving off into the sunset, as it were, in the Manhattan.
- Nancy Russell: 01:27:20 This is definitely the first of many interviews we're going to do, to capture a lot of your administrative knowledge.
- Wade Myers: 01:27:32 Since we're talking about the gray ghost, the Manhattan, he went through several Manhattans, but then eventually they stopped making that vehicle, and so he was forced to get another vehicle. He couldn't get--they no longer made the parts and it was getting more and more difficult for him to service the one that he had. So he researched and researched and researched, and he finally decided to get a Volvo, a white one at that, which I thought was an odd color for him, but he wound up getting a Volvo but he rarely drove it up here. He parked it in the garage, and he drove that Manhattan, and the day he left, he was driving the Manhattan and not the Volvo.
- Wade Myers: 01:28:20 He rented his house in Chevy Chase for--he never bought a house. Also, his kids didn't grow up with TV, and we were working on a program together. You asked me earlier when I was hired, what I did. I was his confidante and his assistant. Not only was I doing graphics research, I was his confidante and his assistant. We were working on a project together, and I mentioned something about Mr. Rogers or Sesame Street. He goes, "What's that?" I said, "You had kids Vince. You don't know anything about Mr. Rogers or Sesame Street?" He goes, "No." I said, "All right, I'm going to have to rectify this."
- Wade Myers: 01:29:11 I went downstairs to our AV guys and said, "I need you to set up a TV in the AV theater for me, and I need to schedule the use of the AV theater in the next couple of days." They said, "Okay." I took Vince downstairs to the AV theater, and we turned on the TV and watched Mr. Rogers and Sesame Street. He immediately calls--I think, or contacts--WGBH out of Boston and asked for stills of Mr. Rogers and Sesame Street, and he incorporated that into one of his presentations for his talking points, I think when we worked on this international design program. It just opened up his eyes that I said, "I can't believe you had kids and you never watched Sesame Street or Mr. Rogers? These were educational programs." He goes, "No. No." I said, "Well I'll take care of that."

- Wade Myers: 01:30:15 He hated lawyers, but at least two of his children became lawyers. He'd make no bones about the fact that he did not like lawyers, which is interesting that in his one interview with the oral history of Marc Sagan, that he threatened to file a lawsuit against Marc Sagan for whatever the tree issue was. Is he planting trees or taking trees out?
- Nancy Russell: 01:30:45 Wade, you and I were reviewing Sagan's transcript the other day from the 40th anniversary of HFC. I called you in to look at this because Sagan was recounting when the Center was first constructed, it got really hot and so they were looking at different options. People would get blinded when they came to the--
- Wade Myers: 01:31:04 Yeah, the concrete was real white, and they had a hard time with the glare, and then people coming into a darkened lobby space, it took them a lot to get their eyes to adjust. They were looking for ways to get rid of all that concrete that was out there.
- Nancy Russell: 01:31:27 Sagan recounts the story of how he was planting trees and they were going to brick it, and Vince accused him of defacing government property. He was going to report him to the cops and sue him and those kinds of things. Did that seem typical of Vince's personality?
- Wade Myers: 01:31:48 That would be extreme in Vince's personality. The architect of the Design Center, I don't know whether they had thought about what the outside of the patio area would look like, but on the inside of the building, he specifically did not paint the raw concrete. The pillars weren't painted, the cinder block walls weren't painted, the concrete walls weren't painted because sound is absorbed that way. They had originally had an open floor concept. You didn't have cubicle spaces. With the exception of the writer-editors up on the third floor and maybe a few of the offices in Wayside Exhibits that had basically cinder block stalls, everybody worked out in the open.
- Wade Myers: 01:32:54 All the drafting tables were out in the open. I think originally there was only one phone on the third floor, and a lot of the incoming calls and outgoing calls went through that one phone. Sound was in that open space, sound was a big issue. You wanted sound to be absorbed, not bounce off the walls. During the renovations recently of the IDC facility, they painted every surface that wasn't moving in

that building, and now the sound is just off. The acoustics in that building are something awful. You can hear conversations in the bottom of the stairwell, up on the third floor stairwell that you couldn't hear before.

- Wade Myers: 01:33:36 It just changed the whole look of the building and not the original idea and concept of the architect. With the exception of the three cinder block walls in the lobby, which were painted by the employees just before the open house that they had in June of 1970, there were no painted surfaces except for maybe a whitewash on a few of the walls. Most of the rest of the building was left unpainted for a reason. I don't know whether that concrete patio area was part of the original concept that the architect had, and that might have been why Vince was so adamant. Yeah, that was a bit extreme for Vince, although he was known to burst into Director Hartzog's office and lay into him about this, that or the other that he was upset about Hartzog doing and not afraid to use colorful language and call him all sorts of names.
- Wade Myers: 01:34:50 They had an interesting relationship, so it didn't faze Hartzog a whole lot, but it was different I think with the Center directors. He could get away with that with Sagan perhaps, and maybe even Everhart, but yeah, Dave Wright was not going to tolerate that kind of behavior, so they butted heads on occasion.
- Nancy Russell: 01:35:19 I know in Dave Wallace's oral history that was done at the 40th anniversary, he talks about painting those common area walls that you were just referring to.
- Wade Myers: 01:35:30 Yeah.
- Nancy Russell: 01:35:30 That the staff had to paint them.
- Wade Myers: 01:35:31 Yeah, the staff painted them. They were primary colors as I recall. One of the walls was yellow, for sure. Yeah.
- Nancy Russell: 01:35:40 Did you know why the staff painted those?
- Wade Myers: 01:35:44 I don't know, and I don't know who selected the colors. They were very specific colors. I don't know. That was the only place within the building that was painted was the lobby area. I think they just felt that the gray cinder blocks, as the first thing that you would see coming into that

building, it just needed something, especially if you're going to have an open house for the public. The public was not real happy when that building went in because it was so out of character with the rest of the historic buildings within Harpers Ferry. They had stripped all the vegetation off the hillside in order to build it, so it stood out like a sore thumb when you were coming down 340 between the bridges.

- Wade Myers: 01:36:34 They really hated it. They actually had demolished Lincoln Hall, which was the secondary dormitory that was there on the campus. Cook Hall is still there, but Lincoln Hall was demolished in order to put the IDC building in--the Interpretive Design Center. Yeah, it was not well liked by the public, which I think was one of the reasons for the open house was to show the public what we were doing, what the Park Service was doing within that building that looked somewhat intimidating.
- Nancy Russell: 01:37:06 Well, and initially the furnishings I think were cutting design. Herman Miller--
- Wade Myers: 01:37:11 Herman Miller, yeah, actually the first partitions, the first cubicle spaces in the Design Center were in Publications. Vince actually bought Herman Miller from a showroom in New York, all of it mismatched. Nothing matched. It was not unusual to have a purple solid panel and an orange and yellow striped panel up there on the third floor. Eventually they did get more Herman Miller partitions up there for the third floor and elsewhere that matched and that sort of thing. When I moved in up there on the third floor in Publications, we were still using some of the showroom floor display panels.
- Nancy Russell: 01:37:59 We also, didn't we have Herman Miller orange plastic chairs and white couches and things like that initially?
- Wade Myers: 01:38:05 We didn't have white couches, but there was a black couch.
- Nancy Russell: 01:38:11 Black couch.
- Wade Myers: 01:38:12 It was a black fabric and chrome couch that actually was in Vince's office in the Main Interior Building, and then eventually moved up to his office in Harpers Ferry, and that couch was worth a good bit of money after Vince left, and I think somebody told me that we still have that. I hope we

do because I know it was appraised at one point at \$150,000.

Nancy Russell: 01:38:39

Wow.

Wade Myers: 01:38:40

That's been a number of years ago. A number of famous people have sat on that couch as well, including the actor Vincent Price. Yeah, they had what we call the shell-backed chairs. They weren't fiberglass chairs. They had one of the egg--I think they call them egg chairs in the library that has long since disappeared and is gone. Yeah, they had a lot of Herman Miller chairs and furniture that they were using throughout the Center.

Nancy Russell: 01:39:22

Why was Vincent Price sitting on the couch?

Wade Myers: 01:39:25

Vincent Price had a column in the newspaper. He had an art column, so he was instrumental, for instance, in getting Sears and Roebuck stores to have an art gallery space and having various artists displayed within these art spaces including Andrew Wyeth. As a matter of fact, one of Andrew Wyeth's paintings were stolen out of the Sears and Roebuck store in Chicago. It's been recovered since, but it was stolen. He had heard that there was an issue with a handbook that the Design Center was involved with for the Custer Battlefield, now the Little Bighorn Battlefield. The artist, Leonard Baskin, had done a series of illustrations, one of which was a controversial illustration, showing Custer nude and dead so he was not the hero that all the Custer aficionados thought him to be.

Wade Myers: 01:40:26

They were threatening to stop the production on the handbook. Publications had contracted with Robert Utley to do the manuscript. The manuscript was written, the book was laid out. It was ready to go, and now there was a potential that it was not going to move forward. The government had made a huge investment in this project and Vince wanted to see it completed. Vincent Price had heard about the controversy. He happened to be in Washington for some of the business, came to Vince's office, sat down and said, "I've heard about this issue. Can you give me some background on it?" Vince gives him the background on it. He said, "Is there anything that I can do?"

Wade Myers: 01:41:13

Vince says, "Yeah, you can write this up in your column, in the New York Times." That's what Vincent Price did. I

believe that it brought all the parties back to the negotiating table. The outcome was that the first edition of that handbook would be printed with a blank page in it. If you knew about the nude dead Custer image, you could ask for it at the counter. They would reach underneath the counter and bring it out to you in a brown paper bag. It was like porn, and then you could affix it into your handbook either by taping it or pasting it or something of that nature.

- Wade Myers: 01:41:53 Subsequent issues of the handbook, and it went through several printings, were printed with the image in place, but if you find a first edition, it's either going to have a blank page in it or it will have something taped in or glued in in place in there, but yeah, that was the compromise was the first book was printed without it and you have to ask for it and they'll give it to you. I have a stack of those by the way. Not in the brown paper bags, but there's a stack of the nude dead Custer that would be inserted into the handbook, [inaudible].
- Nancy Russell: 01:42:31 Then that changed with the second edition?
- Wade Myers: 01:42:33 That changed with the second edition, and eventually they went into a full color unigrid handbook, no nude dead Custer appeared in there, but several of the original illustrations from I think it was 1968 did appear in the new unigrid handbook. Including one that was done in full color. It was the only watercolor that Leonard Baskin did of that series was finally shown in color in the new unigrid handbook. It was printed in black and white in the old handbook, and it just looks completely different when seen in color.
- Nancy Russell: 01:43:17 Well maybe nude dead Custer is a place to end this installment of Wednesdays with Wade.
- Wade Myers: 01:43:26 Sure.
- Nancy Russell: 01:43:26 Unless there's anything else you want to add today?
- Wade Myers: 01:43:28 No, I will give you one of the nude dead Custers for the NPS History Collection.
- Nancy Russell: 01:43:33 Excellent. Thank you very much.
- Wade Myers: 01:43:35 You're welcome.

END OF RECORDING