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Al Bicknell
December 15 ,1962

Interview conducted by S. Herbert Evison
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AL BICKNELL
REEL CII

[START OF INTERVIEW]

Herb Evison: This is Herbert Evison, and this morning, which is December 15, 1962, I am in Coolidge, Arizona, and sitting on the – what would you call it? Is this the porch? – the patio of the retirement home of Al and Bina Bicknell. Al Bicknell is with me, and I can introduce him this way, by saying that he retired in 1960 after fifty years' connection with the National Parks and forty years of actual employment by the National Park Service. Isn't that correct, Al?

Al Bicknell: Yes, that is correct.

Herb Evison: Now, let's get this under way, if you please, by giving me a run-down of your employment in a national park and with the National Park Service, remembering that you worked in Yellowstone for about ten years before you actually went to work permanently for the National Park Service. The floor is yours, Al.

Al Bicknell: You want a run-down from the time I went into Yellowstone? Well, I entered Yellowstone in 1910, was employed by the hotel company in the engine room for that season; then in the fall, construction had started on the new Canyon Hotel and I moved from Mammoth to the Canyon and operated in the engine room there. I might also add there that I operated the last shift in the old Canyon Hotel, and, on my shift, we changed in and I operated the first in the new plant.

Herb Evison: Well, now, you refer to the engine room in both of these places. Just what was the function of the engine room?

Al Bicknell: The function of your engine room, back in those days we did not have commercial electricity, heat, or anything of that nature and we supplied it all, even your laundries were operated from your own plant. And I might add that (for) the boilers the fuel was wood, cordwood. We made our own electricity and so forth.

Herb Evison: And that was what you were up to, both at Mammoth and at Canyon?

Al Bicknell: That is right. And I worked at Canyon until the next spring, and I moved then to the Lake and operated for the hotel company at the lake, at Lake Hotel. At the lake is where I spent a great deal of time, because I moved into the lake in the spring of 1911 and I was with the hotel company there for three years, I guess it is, and in 1911, from 1913 to 1921 with the boat company.

Al Bicknell: And at that time, this came up in rather a strange way: I was at Mammoth with the transportation company after the season closed, and Jimmy McBride, who was chief ranger then in Yellowstone, and I were walking

down towards the headquarters building and he asked me what I was going to do for the winter. I said, "I am going to Seattle." And Jimmy said, "Well, why don't you stay with us this winter?" That's how I happened to first join the Park Service. I expected to put in about six months, which I did, and then went back – I was released, by the way, by Mr. Albright for the job with the boat company, and I was in charge at that time. I rather think he wanted me there to handle special parties he might have coming on, that has been my conclusion in later years.

Al Bicknell: And then in 1922, I think Mr. Nichols and Mr. Albright rather argued the question and Mr. Albright told me I could make my choice between the two, and of course naturally I took steady employment with the National Park Service. Going into the depression, it was rather to my advantage to do so.

Herb Evison: Before you go on, Al, I would like to get a little better picture of this boat company employment. You say you worked for the boat company. Were you the captain of a boat? Were you the engineer of a boat, or in what capacity?

Al Bicknell: Well, to start with, in 1913 I operated the 45-foot Bushay, it was called, and in so doing I made trips to Southeast Arm, to and from, special trips, I took care of; in fact, I have had many people across, even to – in later years – Mr. Albright, Secretary of the Interior—

Herb Evison: Lane?

Al Bicknell: No, that was after Lane's time; over here in New Mexico, what's his name?

Herb Evison: Secretary Fall.

Al Bicknell: Secretary Fall. And on his trip there of course I camped in the Southeast Arm while they went up the Yellowstone and hunted Moose; and on their return trip we made the return trip with them. And I'll never forget a remark that Mr. Albright's partner made. He said, "Horace, horses look good on coal wagons, but you're not going to get me on another unless it has a pneumatic saddle." And that was the first words I heard him speak after he got back on the boat. And then I believe in 1915 I had Madame Pavlowa into the southeast arm. I have had a number of noted people and characters. I have even slept with newlyweds over there, when it comes down to that part of it. Is that about what you want to learn?

Herb Evison: Yes, except I am curious about what a boat on Yellowstone Lake in 1913, 1915, would have been. Was that a steamboat, a small steamboat?

Al Bicknell: No. To start with, your concession on Yellowstone Lake was held by E. C. Waters, and Waters lost his franchise and was taken over by the Yellowstone Park Company, one owner in Philadelphia, Mr. Childs, and I have forgotten the other; and they put in gasoline-operated boats. First, their large boat, the regular passenger boat, was an 85-foot with heavy duty motors, and that's what brought me into the picture there. I finally became engineer on that job in 1914. And then we had a cabin cruiser, a 33-foot cabin cruiser at that time; we had two 45-foot boats besides our small fishing boats – 16- and 18-footers – and of course rowboats; that was our operation there.

Herb Evison: I would offer this comment: that very few people alive today can remember having seen an 85-foot boat on Yellowstone Lake.

Al Bicknell: Well, of course the old steamboats were a little larger. That was a 150-passenger boat, and that operated, oh, let me see – up until 1915 or 1916, I would say. War travel then of course made the difference and it was laid up and later done away with.

Herb Evison: I am sure that you would remember from your later days at Yellowstone changes in this boat operation; I mean changes in the popularity of it. Isn't it a fact that in the 16's many more people were making boat trips on the lake, excursion trips, than was the case thirty years later?

Al Bicknell: Oh, yes, that's true, of course. The automobile comes into the picture there, and that's where your change would come. Then it became – oh, you had a central – that was after my experience closed there – but you had your operations at the Thumb as well as at Lake. Of course during my time, the ice took our dock out, or the end of our dock out, one spring, so I just floated on down and tied it up at the bridge crossing the Yellowstone, and put in a phone down there and there's where I moved my rowboats. That's what started your development there at the Fishing Bridge. That's when I wanted Howard Hays to get a concession there and let us go in on that concession, but Howard could never see it; but he saw it later. And I told him at the time that that would develop into the largest automobile camp in Yellowstone, and I believe it has.

Herb Evison: Now, that would have been right about the time the automobile was first admitted to the park?

Al Bicknell: Well, your automobile was admitted first in 1916, wasn't it, as I remember? I believe it was in August, the fore part of August, August 8. The old Franklin and Buick, which was driven by the butcher from Gardiner, and of course Mr. Childs in the Franklin, arrived at Yellowstone Lake. And then of course the following year we had yellow cars, ten passengers; and then your cars had to stay off the road and horses had to –

oh, no, by the way, we had the cars, but we still had the stages too. We had cars in the park, and the stages, then the yellow bus came a little later; and of course, the regular automobile travel around the loop had to stay off of the road while the stages were in operation between different points.

Herb Evison: Now you're talking about the horse-drawn stages?

Al Bicknell: Yes, horse-drawn stages which then I believe about around '17 the yellow buses came in, and then your Monida combined with – that Monida Western Stage Line combined with the Yellowstone Park Transportation Company, which I also worked for. Back during the war, I had charge of the hotel, as the Lake Hotel you know was closed, and the boat company, and the Yellowstone Park Transportation Company. I did work for all three of them during that period.

Al Bicknell: And then I believe that would bring you up to about the time that the two camp companies joined force – Shaw & Powell and Wylie, and that's when I first became acquainted with Howard Hays. In fact, when the camps company bought Shaw & Powell out they had a camp over in Bridge Bay, and Howard was looking for mattresses and I said, "Why don't you go over and get those that are stored over here at Shaw and Powell's camp?" He said, "There aren't any mattresses over there; cleaned that." "Well," I said, "there is still a cabin full of mattresses over there." And we went over, and they were there. They were very much in need of them at that time.

Al Bicknell: Howard and I have known each other quite a while there. I did him a few favors, and they were operating on a shoestring, and he did the same by the government after I took a job with him; the favor was returned many times. I have to thank Howard for that.

Herb Evison: Al, let's get into this business of your employment by the Park Service, when it started, and a little record of your assignments while you were there at Yellowstone.

Al Bicknell: Well, my first assignment was at Lake Ranger Station, which is now abandoned – the old station. That used to set down by the Camps Company – the Wylie Camps. And then the following winter after I returned to the boat company for the three months, I went to Bechler River, and I was at Bechler River from 1922 until 1930.

Herb Evison: You spent nine seasons down there in the Bechler River?

Al Bicknell: Nine years at Bechler River Ranger Station. In fact, it was called my park for a while, and it was a very interesting station. It's a very interesting part of the park; more water there than in most of our areas.

- Al Bicknell: While at Bechler River I had the opportunity of taking a field trip with Mather, Demaray, and several of our Park Service people; I believe our chief landscape architect was on one of our trips up, in his first season with the Park Service.
- Herb Evison: Who would that have been – Dan Hull?
- Al Bicknell: No, that was our first landscape man. It was his assistant, who is now—
- Herb Evison: Tom Vint?
- Al Bicknell: Tommy Vint. And also had a good many interesting people down there: Doctor Van Dyke and his daughter and son, as well as people from the Saturday Evening Post, that were summering out; and came in contact with more Union Pacific people who liked to get away and get out of the limelight; no one really knew when they were in, but they would just simply let me know, or headquarters would let me know that they would be in, after we had telephones. Of course, that was before we had telephones.
- Al Bicknell: And then finally I wound up my experience in Bechler River by operating the first bud crew, mountain pine beetle, in the park. And after they had moved in, I had a fine assignment running a survey on snowshoes during winter and then taking the crew in and operating the crew. Then I was relieved, you see, of my duties in charge of Bechler River, to operate this.
- Al Bicknell: And then I went to West Yellowstone, the West District, which comprises Gallatin in the wintertime, Old Faithful, Madison Junction, and then south to the boundaries of the Bechler District.
- Al Bicknell: And then I transferred to Craters of the Moon in 1933.
- Herb Evison: As custodian?
- Al Bicknell: As custodian. Then from Craters of the Moon to Coolidge, Casa Grande National Monument, where I finished my service, retiring—
- Herb Evison: Didn't you first come down here to Coolidge on a sort of back-and-forth basis?
- Al Bicknell: No, I'll tell you about that, Herb. I think they thought I was having it too easy at the Craters of the Moon; but you were not required to stay at the Craters of the Moon in the wintertime, providing that you left someone in charge of the buildings. And so, after I went down, I made my headquarters in Long Beach at my home.
- Al Bicknell: At Long Beach, California. And so, the next year I was notified that they needed help badly at Casa Grande National Monument and for me to get in touch with Mr. Pinkley and make arrangements for spending the winter

at Casa Grande. So, I was not real sure that I was coming down here and make the change, but finally, after taking my vacation, I came over here in January 1936, and stayed until about April, going back to Craters of the Moon. Pinkley asked me if I would consider work down there, and I told him no, the summers are too hot. And so it went on until that fall, and I got a wire in the fall stating that, since we had monuments in the northern part of the state of New Mexico and one in Colorado, as well as Arizona, that if I couldn't take the hot weather down here in the summertime, (they would) give me an assignment in one of the northern monuments, then move me back down in the fall, which, going into a hard winter up on the Lost River country, sounded pretty good.

Al Bicknell: So, I came down; I put in the first summer. At that time, we had to wear field boots, and I filled those every day of the summer, and they would run over; but I got through the summer. The second summer went by and I got through that. Pinkley inquired if I was getting along all right. "Oh," I said, "I think I'll make it." And then going into the fourth year, I came up to the office one morning and heard someone laughing. I had been having trouble keeping in a blouse, but that morning it was chilly, and I had my hands in my pockets and my neck right down between my shoulder blades. Hugh Miller was laughing. He says, "I've just been waiting for this, when you began to chill off a little bit." So, I've been able to put on a coat now with the rest of them, even at this late date here on the desert.

Al Bicknell: So that was my experience with the Park Service.

Herb Evison: Now, I want to go back quite a ways. You talked of having guided, I think you said Secretary Fall, Horace Albright; Mather was not along on that trip that you took those two on?

Al Bicknell: No. Albright was with that party. That was a hunting trip up the Upper Yellowstone, up in the Thorofare country.

Herb Evison: But at some time or other in your career you were out on the trail, I judge, with Stephen Mather.

Al Bicknell: Oh, yes. He was one of the most interesting people I was ever out with.

Herb Evison: Tell me something about going on, I suppose, a saddle trip with Stephen Mather; where did you go?

Al Bicknell: Well, I might give you this. Bechler River, as you know, of course, is an isolated area at that time. It took about an hour and a half to bring an automobile up over the road from Green Timber, which is only about twelve miles.

Herb Evison: An hour and a half to go twelve miles?

- Al Bicknell: Yes. And Chief Ranger Sam Woodring had been down in our country and he had bought two mules; had them delivered into Marysville, just east of Ashton, and left them there for me to pick up. I went down and got them – I had been notified that Mr. Mather and Mr. Demaray were going to come back and they would like for me to bring the mules and pack one of the mules with their belongings – and so I went down and got the mules and brought them up. One happened to be an outlaw. They never did break him. They had him in Yellowstone for quite a while but he finally got away from them, and God knows where he is; I'm sure he's up in those jack pines with a bullet in his head, if you want my opinion on that.
- Al Bicknell: But nevertheless, I got the two mules finally to Bechler River. But just to give you a little sidelight on this outlaw, he had about forty feet of rope stringing to his halter when I went down after him, and I knew then that something was wrong. But nevertheless, I had to keep on a long trot with him or he was pulling me backwards. I came very nearly wearing my horse out, getting the mule to the station.
- Al Bicknell: But after we got up there, I held him for the day, and Mr. Mather and Mr. Demaray appeared after dark the next day, the next night; and apparently they had been told that we lived in a log cabin with a dirt floor, because when they came in they were very much surprised to find the Army barracks there, a frame building, and we did have floors and it wasn't too uncomfortable.
- Al Bicknell: So, after spending the night, I got up and packed their mule the next day and started up, the three of us, for Old Faithful, (through) Bechler Canyon. Well, the flies were quite bad, the mosquitoes were quite bad, and were giving the horses and mules some trouble. And you know, probably, Mr. Mather could take care of himself any place, especially with horses; Mr. Demaray of course had no experience with horses, and I didn't know that.
- Al Bicknell: So, running through the brush, I tilted the pack just a little and I wanted to straighten it up, so I gave this outlaw mule to Mr. Demaray and asked him to hold him until I got this pack straightened out. Well, they had ridden on up, or I just told them to ride on and I would catch up with them. Well, before I got the pack straightened up, the little black mule passed me, or got back, too, so the both of them then took back down the trail, and I after them; and I ran them into a pasture, and after catching them and getting the pack back on, I found that Mather and Demaray had gone on up to the ford on Bechler River and were taking a swim.
- Al Bicknell: Well, we got aboard then and started out, started up the canyon. Of course, it is a beautiful trip; there's waterfalls all the way the through to Three

River junction, and at Three River junction we camped overnight, and we hobbled our horses. Mr. Mather had a mosquito tent with him.

[END OF SIDE 1]

[START OF SIDE 2]

Al Bicknell: They insisted on putting this mosquito tent right down on a flat, open spot, and they wanted me to move in with them but I refused; as I told them, I thought we would have some trouble with the mosquitoes down there. “Oh, we have a mosquito tent.” “Well,” I says, “you don’t know our mosquitoes.” And I moved up on a little ledge and we had a nice little breeze and I was quite comfortable; the mosquitoes didn’t bother me. But when I did wake up during the night, I could see flashlights coming on all the time.

Al Bicknell: Another interesting thing about our stop there: We have a little hot spring that flows right into the stream, and you can turn the cold water through into this, and by throwing in a few rocks down here, you can get any temperature of water that you want; which I did. And it was known, as long as I was in Yellowstone, as Mather’s bathtub. Mr. Mather, the next morning, insisted that we not build a fire for breakfast; he said we would use the hot springs for our meal, which we did. And he also told Mr. Albright that he would give us \$1,000 to build a snowshoe cabin. Whether that has ever been built or not I don’t know. I do know, talking to Mr. Albright later, that he was going to have to do something about that or Mather would be down his neck.

Al Bicknell: Well, then leaving Three River junction there was an interesting experience. I had packed up the pack mule, a mare, and we were just about ready to leave when Mr. Mather threw the bridle to Mr. Demaray and said, “Go get your horse.”

Al Bicknell: Al was ready to get out of here; and so, Mr. Mather and Mr. Demaray – Mr. Demaray went and got his horse, and his saddle horse was up where I had been packing, and Mr. Mather’s saddle was down where he had unsaddled the night before. While he was saddling, I managed to get out of Mr. Mather’s sight and get Mr. Demaray’s saddle on for him, so he could make the trip for the day.

Al Bicknell: We got started then—

Herb Evison: Wait a minute. Did Demaray go out and find and get the bridle on his own horse?

Al Bicknell: He never got the bridle fully on his horse, I’ll say; he got it on over one ear. Nevertheless, Mr. Mather never knew about that.

Al Bicknell: And then we had tied the mule up there, the outlaw; we just tied him up when we got in, any place, and there is where he stayed until next morning. He may have got a little hungry during this trip, but nevertheless we got him through to Old Faithful.

Al Bicknell: Leaving that morning, we dropped down on Shoshone Meadows there, and Mr. Mather wanted to go down and see the lake from that end and see the snowshoe cabin, and so we tied this outlaw mule up at our camp where we stayed overnight, and went down and back, and looked the country over there, and he enjoyed that little trip. Coming back, picking up the mule, we went on into Old Faithful, and they went to the hotel and I took the mules over to turn them over at the barn, to the rangers at Old Faithful. I told them when I went in not to go in along the side of this mule, leave him alone, just feed him and water him and just leave him alone. And of course, the naturalists jumped onto me about that; they said, "The trouble with you rangers is that you don't use a little kindness."

Al Bicknell: Well, I had used all the kindness that I felt he was entitled to, and I think I know horses and I think I can handle them, and I think I am good to a horse – in fact, better than most people. And so, the fellow I was talking to, he went up, and here was a manger, you see, and he was on the other side, and he went up and started to rub his nose. That's the one thing you couldn't do with him; he just got the end of his finger, like – what do you call it, down there at Old Faithful? That lost his toes?

Herb Evison: I never heard about that.

Al Bicknell: Oh, that was a naturalist, back in Washington.

Al Bicknell: He went up this tree after this bear and got a better picture of some darned fool picture he wanted – no, I guess the bear treed him and went up after him and got his toes, that's the way that happened, turned out.

Al Bicknell: Well, that was our trip up the Bechler with Mr. Mather. And Mr. Mather told my wife about that mosquito tent, he says, "If it keeps the mosquitoes out, I'll send it back to you." You know, we were always razzing Mather about what he did for Yosemite, in Yellowstone. So, he came back, and he sent us a raincoat for the saddle – a slicker, you see. Then he told my wife he would send that mosquito tent back to her if it worked. Well, it didn't work; he didn't send it.

Herb Evison: One thing before we get ahead here: Were you married when you moved in there at Bechler River, or when you started with the Park Service?

Al Bicknell: I was one of the three men that was. No, there was Raymond Little – I'll take that back. An old ranger down there at Mammoth, then the ranger over at East Gate, were married.

- Herb Evison: But the general run of rangers in those days were single men?
- Al Bicknell: Well, at that time the law was laid down that no married men go on the force; and then after we came under Civil Service, why, Civil Service told the Park Service, "We can't help that; it's your problem to provide housing for them. We'll send you the men; you can't discriminate against married men." However, I was taken during that period that there was discrimination.
- Herb Evison: Al, on your trip with Mr. Mather and Mr. Demaray, who did the cooking?
- Al Bicknell: Well, Mr. Mather and I did the cooking. However, he was just a man that believed that no man should go any place or do anything where he couldn't take care of himself. Well, in fact, I think I have heard him say that.
- Herb Evison: It would be the natural thing for him to say, anyway. Now, let's get down here to Casa Grande National Monument.
- Herb Evison: When you came down here the assignment to Casa Grande brought you into close association with Boss Pinkley, and I wonder if you wouldn't like to get on the record something about your association with Boss Pinkley.
- Al Bicknell: Well, I came down here with the impression that I would not get along with Boss Pinkley, from what I had heard about him. Everything had been good, praising him highly, and I says, "I can't work for a man that is that good;" in fact, I made the remark, "I doubt if there is any use in me going down there." I, however, came down, and I believe the party that I told that to, I had had to admit that he was all that everybody had said about him, and I don't believe they had said quite enough. He was just too good for his own good.
- Al Bicknell: That was Boss Pinkley's trouble when it comes right down to it. He always thought there was an easy way of passing things over and getting by, and that is just the reason I think the Boss didn't get into the fights that so many of us have had, trying to get stuff. And first, if there was anything new, why, the field got it. It was a disgrace, during CCC days, to see the automobile the superintendent of CCC camps drove up, and he was driving around in an old broken-down Ford, and I know, because I repaired it a good many times. And that was the way and the shape our equipment was in.
- Al Bicknell: However, he didn't live long enough to really see what equipment we did get later. I will say this, that it was I think shoved down my neck just a little bit out here. Of course, Casa Grande was pretty well built up; we had good housing at that time. And the Boss, as well as myself, have

relinquished our appropriation because over here at Tonto they didn't even have a house to live in, they lived in tents. But that went on too long. They forgot that we ever needed anything at Casa Grande.

Al Bicknell: And so, I'll say that for Boss Pinkley: he went through and took the hard knocks that he should never have had to take. That is all.

Herb Evison: I gather from that that you think a man can be a little bit too good.

Al Bicknell: Yes, that's right, you can; you can be too good. Now, you can be too good, or you can be too one-sided. If there was a regulation, Boss Pinkley said we will observe that. When I came down here, they had fireplaces for heat – and it gets cold down here, where you need heat in the wintertime – and Hugh Miller was out with a wheelbarrow wheeling the wood into his porch for his fireplace. Well, I prevailed upon them to get a pickup and let's make deliveries. That's carrying regulations a little bit too far.

Al Bicknell: We had a regulation out there that nothing would be built above the houses or no changes. All right. Everybody observed those until late years. The first thing that came along was our television aerials. You see a forest of them here in this town. And so one of the boys wanted one, and I said, "All right, you've got a house where you can keep your television low and it won't be seen from the ruin, and we'll make application to the Washington office for a permit, get their permission. It's a regulation we can't go into the area above." However, we never heard from it. Finally, I got a man out of the Washington office and I asked him why, and he said, "Well, I don't know." He wouldn't give me an answer. "But," he said, "if I lived here, I would have a television." I said, "That's all I wanted to know."

Al Bicknell: Will you tell me why it is that we can't get an answer on a simple question like that? Regulations are regulations. Are we going to throw them away one by one, or like White did when he was in Washington? "We don't need this report, throw them in the wastebasket." Maybe it's a good thing, I don't know. Maybe too many things are known when we make reports.

Al Bicknell: Oh, I don't know. I had a good life with the National Park Service. I enjoyed every minute of it. No, I'll take that back; I didn't enjoy every minute of it, but I have enjoyed my fights as well as the good times that I have had. I am glad I got out at a time before everything became mechanized, and they quit trying to please the visitor by contact. It won't be very long until it will all be mechanical; we'll be shouting at them from every corner on the trail: "You have now walked half a mile, and you will see this and you will see that."

- Al Bicknell: That is a remark that I have had so many people give me, is that here we feel as though we can ask a question. So many places we go in we don't dare ask a question. Why should we bring out that problem? Why not at least have a few of our areas left where we have personal contact? Some of our people appreciate it.
- Herb Evison: I think that's a good question. I think that it is one that the Service ought to explore, as to whether, because in certain places it has been almost inescapable that they mechanize, they haven't just accepted that as something that is universally necessary.
- Al Bicknell: There are plenty of places, if they will cut out a lot of unnecessary work, which I tried to get here, such as unnecessary reports; have a screening office, screen out those. Now, you see, we used to do all of our work, all of our reports; now we have to have a man – it has just got to the point where we have to have a man for no other reason than to just keep making out reports.
- Al Bicknell: Of course, I'm not trying to put anything over, or anything of that sort; but I still think that our visitor pays our salary, and we ought to do all in our power to please that person. That's the way I feel about it and that's the way I felt about it before I ever joined the National Park Service. I was handling visitors, you know, for a good long time, and I came into a lot of it. I realize times change and we have got to keep up with the times, and I have tried to keep that away from the young fellows coming on; my thoughts along that line are that we are living today, and not back in the past. But I think we have gone too far with it.
- Al Bicknell: That is, I think we have gone farther than is necessary, because you have got a lot of little areas where people would just be tickled to death to come in and get to talk to a ranger. You get up and lecture to them: they have no opportunity of coming back at you.
- Herb Evison: That, you don't consider personal contact: get up in front of an audience and lecture? It isn't person-to-person, anyway.
- Al Bicknell: No, it isn't person-to-person, and it makes a lot of difference to lots of people. A lot of people don't want it. We have got to screen out what's wanted and what's not wanted.
- Herb Evison: Here's a good leading question: Do you think that the Park Service itself exerts enough effort to find out what people want and what they don't want?
- Al Bicknell: That's their problem, and I am out of that and I don't think – I have tried to tell you what I thought while I was with the Park Service. I don't think I have any right now to try to tell the Park Service how they operate.

- Herb Evison: Al, when you were talking about your service there at Bechler River you mentioned the fact that you took out on a saddle trip Doctor John R. Van Dyke and his son and daughter. How about giving a little detail of that experience of yours?
- Al Bicknell: Well, I arrived from a trip through Bechler about noon.
- Herb Evison: You arrived where, at Mammoth?
- Al Bicknell: At Old Faithful. And I ran into Mr. Albright, who was then our superintendent, of course, not director; and he notified me that he had a party waiting for me to take back down through the canyon, stating it was Doctor Van Dyke and his son and daughter. And he also told me that Doctor Van Dyke was in his eighties. I said, "If that's the case, we won't be starting in the morning; we'll be starting this afternoon, because we can get ready and we'll make short trips, because it's just too hard a trip for a man of that age."
- Herb Evison: He was going to go from Old Faithful to where – Bechler River?
- Al Bicknell: He was going by Bechler River to Snake River. I would accompany him to the Cascade Divide between Bechler and Snake; or, in other words, I would take him down the Bechler River, over across Mountain Ash Creek, and then on to Fall River on top of the knoll between Snake River and Bechler. There we were met with cars.
- Herb Evison: About how many miles would that be?
- Al Bicknell: Oh, in the neighborhood of sixty miles.
- Herb Evison: Quite a saddle trip for a man in his eighties?
- Al Bicknell: Quite a saddle trip in a country of that terrain. And so we made our first camp at Shoshone Meadows, north of the lake, and there I happened to get a tip before leaving – I should have mentioned this – from Mr. Albright's chauffeur, that I wouldn't have any trouble with the party, only the daughter; she would never be on time, she will disappear, and so on and so forth. So, I was forewarned.
- Al Bicknell: So after camping here at the meadows all night, the next morning I got up and went out and got the bell mare of our pack train and led the bell mare to camp, and I had told them the night before we would get started as early as we could and take it as easy as we could. And so, everybody seemed to get up.
- Al Bicknell: Well, we got all packed up, had breakfast, and Miss Van Dyke was not anywhere to be found. So, the pack-master said, "Well, what do you want to do?" And I said, "I want you to get on down the trail there and make

time, pay no attention to us; leave Miss Van Dyke's breakfast on a plate here and leave her a cup of coffee, and I'll put the dishes in my saddle bag." And so, they did. About half an hour later she showed up, came walking out of the timber. So, I told her to have her breakfast, that we would have to catch up to the rest of the party, they had left about three quarters of an hour before. And so, we did.

Al Bicknell: I just took a little old hard jog trot until I caught up with the party, and we went on down. We were to have lunch at Three River Junction, I talked to Doctor Van Dyke and I said, "Well, how are you feeling?" "Oh, fine. I can go fishing." I said, "If that's the case, it's a little better fishing right down at the next falls. There's a little set of falls down here, a nice place to have lunch." It was down about a mile or a mile and a half, so we had lunch there, mounted up again and started on down the canyon, and we had gone just about forty minutes and Doctor Van Dyke began to get cramps in his knees.

Al Bicknell: So, I saw what was happening, all right. I went out and got him down off the horse and I said, "Let's rub your knees for you. Maybe it will loosen them up a little bit." Then we got up, and I said, "Would you like to walk a little ways, lead the horse?" "I believe I will." We walked until I thought he would probably get pretty well limbered up, and I got him back up into the saddle again, and then he had no more trouble until we made camp right on Bechler River down on the meadows.

Al Bicknell: I had expected to spend a little more time there, I thought he would enjoy going over and seeing the imprint of the old cattle trail, you know, the old cattle corrals that they had in outlaw days there from the lake up in Montana, you know, into the Teton country, the Hidden Valley country. That went right through Bechler meadows there and you can see the imprint of the logs. Well, I didn't think I should put that much more on his back. But, you know what he did? He got out his waders and his fishing tackle and he went up and fished for about an hour and came in with a nice mess of fish.

Al Bicknell: The next morning, we got up and we headed out and we went and camped on Mountain Ash Creek that night; went up to Union Falls and back, and there we had run out of cigarettes. That's when Miss Van Dyke came around; I did have some Bull Durham and some papers with me, and I can't roll a cigarette, I never smoked them; and we got in the habit of trying to keep that tobacco and this paper, and she smoked homemade cigarettes the rest of the trip. She would come around for her cigarettes.

Al Bicknell: And the next morning of course we went on through and met our cars at the top of the Divide crossing Fall River, and that's the last I saw of the

Van Dyke car, which I know was a little more comfortable for them. However, it was a rough trip on those roads at that time.

Herb Evison: I am interested in your reference to his going out there while you were camped, getting on his waders, and going out and getting a nice mess of fish. If I remember rightly, he was the author of a book called "Fishermen's Luck," wasn't he?

Al Bicknell: I believe he was. And there's another odd thing there: At the end of the trip, Doctor Van Dyke knew that we didn't accept tips, apparently, and he came over to me that morning before leaving and he said, "We have had a wonderful time, and I want to give you something. I want to give you this old [inaudible] of mine," and you could just take one look at it and you knew he wouldn't part with it for any amount of money. But he said, "It's so beat-up," he says, "Here," and he shoved this in my pocket, and I never thought anything of it: it might be a dollar. So I happened to be in Ashton a few days later and I was broke; my check hadn't come, as was always the case with Park rangers as a rule, and I just happened to think that he shoved something into this little pocket, my watch pocket, and I pulled it out and there were two five-dollar bills.

Al Bicknell: But I have had wonderful trips; I wouldn't take a lot for them.

Herb Evison: Well, I really think you have had quite a wonderful life, too, Al.

Al Bicknell: But you know when it hit, when I got the record of 66 of the old Riverside Station February 9, 1933, I thought it was time to get out of that country. Sixty-six below. That's when I made my move to the Craters.

Herb Evison: Craters of the Moon, and from there ultimately to the Southwest.

Herb Evison: Thank you very much, Al. It has been swell sitting here and talking with you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]