

National Park Service (NPS) History Collection

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



Don Bressler
September 12, 1972

Interview conducted by S. Herbert Evison
Transcribed by Charles Kennedy
Digitized by Madison T. Duran

This digital transcript contains updated pagination, formatting, and editing for accessibility and compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Interview content has not been altered.
The original typed transcript is preserved in the NPS History Collection.

The National Park Service does not have a release form for this interview. Access is provided for research and accessibility via assistive technology purposes only. Individuals are responsible for ensuring that their use complies with copyright laws.

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

[Tape #120 – Side 2]

EIVISON INTERVIEW WITH DON BRESSLER

Denver, Colorado

September 12, 1972

[Tape # 120 – Side 2]

DRAFT

Transcriber: Charles Kennedy

12 – 07 – 77

[START OF INTERVIEW]

Herb Evison: This is the morning of September 12, 1972. I'm Herb Evison and again this morning I am in the Denver Service Center of the National Park Service and with me is Don Bressler who is a member of the staff of the service center and of particular interest to me in at least respect and that is his very long association with Grand Teton National Park. Now, Don, let's get on the record the facts that when and where you were born, what your father did, your schooling, and so on.

Don Bressler: I was born in Victor, Idaho, in 1922.

Herb Evison: What day and month? Please.

Don Bressler: February 5, 1922. This is about 25 miles west of Grand Teton National Park. My father was – started out in the Park Service as warehouseman and at the time of his death he was chief clerk at Grand Teton National Park. I grew up in Grand Teton. I went to school because the roads were closed in the wintertime for the first two years in Victor, Idaho, then I went back to Jackson, graduated from high school there. Next year I attended the University of Illinois and then I went to the University of Wyoming the next year. My education was interrupted by the World War II where I spent three years in the Marine Corps. When this was over, I went back to the University of Wyoming and graduated with a BS in civil engineering.

Herb Evison: Now somewhere along the line, am I correct, that you acquired a wife?

Don Bressler: In – after I graduated from college, I married my father's secretary, Zella Mae Ash, and this was 1947. We have four fine children, three girls and a boy. One of them is just graduating from college and is now married. The other daughter is in college at the University of California at Davis. My son is in high school, and my little girl is in the sixth grade.

Herb Evison: That would be here, of course.

Don Bressler: Yes, in Littleton, yes.

Herb Evison: In Littleton, yes. Now you mentioned the fact that you went to Grand Teton about the time that the park was established and how old were you in 1929?

Don Bressler: I was seven years old.

Herb Evison: Seven years old.

Don Bressler: Allen Hanks, who most people in the Park Service know and highly respect, was the only ranger we had there. Sam Woodring was the superintendent and Allen Hanks' wife was my second, third, and fourth, fifth grade schoolteacher. We went to a little log school located right above the present Moose headquarters. All eight grades were in the same classroom. Got a pot-bellied stove and it was really an old-time country school. This school was removed in about 1956 and is no longer there.

Herb Evison: How many grades did you go to that one room school?

Don Bressler: From the second through the eighth grade.

Herb Evison: Oh, all the way through the eighth grade.

Don Bressler: All the way through the eighth grade, yes.

Herb Evison: Yes. Well, now, by that time you'd have been about 14?

Don Bressler: Fourteen.

Herb Evison: And then you mentioned while we were talking, before we started to tape, having gone to school over in Idaho for a while.

Don Bressler: My grandfather lived in Idaho and in those days the roads up to Grand Teton were closed during the wintertime. When I was a junior in high school, why, the state decided they'd keep the road open, so I stayed home and went to Jackson High School where I graduated.

Herb Evison: But the first two years of high school you got in what town?

Don Bressler: In Victor, Idaho.

Herb Evison: In Victor, Idaho, yeah. Now let's get back to your start there in Grand Teton. You got in there right after the park had been established, not, an act not welcome, generally, by the people in Jackson Hole. Now I'd be glad if you would just go ahead with the discussion of those relationships, your personal relationships, or relationships of your family with local people and what you remember of local people's attitudes and the standing of Park Service people generally in that area at that time.

Don Bressler: Well, during the early, my early days in Teton we didn't associate too awfully much with the people outside the locality of Moose and that general area; there were several dude ranches there, mainly because the long winters in there when the roads were closed the associations were usually where the whole family would get on skis and ski to some ranch to spend the weekend where the adults would square dance and visit.

Don Bressler: Most of those people were dude ranchers and were not antagonistic to the Park Service, however, as I got a little bit older and got into high school where I associated with the local ranchers' children and some of the local businessmen and it was quite pronounced that there was a lot of people who were not in favor of the Park Service or having a park in that location.

Herb Evison: How did that evidence itself?

Don Bressler: Mainly, oh, they'd all say, "Well here's one of the Park children or park people are up there, you know, and they're leading their own life and they're really not a part of the community." I think one of the things that kind of broke the ice for our family was my father joined the Elks and became very active in this. As a result of this he made a great many friends and after he got into that organization, why, it seemed like our family was welcomed anyplace we went, but I can remember, for instance, Senator Clifford Hanson's sister was a classmate of mine. I had been to their house – home many times, and first time I went there I was treated quite coolly, but after while, why, they began to accept us as people rather than being part of the Park Service.

Herb Evison: [chuckles] Well, I don't want you to stop there. Any other things that you recollect about relationships or attitudes in that early period?

Don Bressler: Well I can remember the – I worked during the summer time on various ranches and I can remember back in when I was about in the eighth grade whereas we had the Snake River Land Company and they had leased a lot of this land from the Park Service, I mean back to the people after they bought it; and then when this was the extension of the park came in the Park Service rescinded these leases and the ranchers were told at that time there would be no more farming on those lands. Then the Park Service turned right around and re-leased the lands to other people, and this, of course, was very – caused a lot of bitter feelings. One of the ranchers who was very kind to me when I was going to school and saw that I always had a good job – this happened to him, so I know what I'm talking about is correct.

Herb Evison: You know that is – that's brand-new news to me. I didn't realize that the Park Service had ever done that.

Don Bressler: Well, the—

Herb Evison: Now under what superintendent was that action taken? Would that have been Paul Frank? Or—

Don Bressler: Let's see now, this would have occurred in about, well, let's see, '30, possibly '39, '38, now whichever superintendent was there at the time.

Herb Evison: Well now the park was extended in 1943 by establishment—

Don Bressler: Right!

Herb Evison: —of the monument. This dealt then with lands that had been included in the original park, the skimpy,—

Don Bressler: Wait a minute, I am wrong on that because that was after, that's right, that was after the extension was made. So, it would have to be sometimes in the '40s.

Herb Evison: Yeah.

Don Bressler: Right!

Herb Evison: Yeah, well I wondered about that. The first place I didn't re— I hadn't thought that there was any real involvement with grazing or use of the lands for agriculture in any form in connection with the original park. It just came down to the lakes and beyond them.

Don Bressler: As a matter of fact this happened in about 1951, now that I'm recollecting properly on that, because Amnesty James received the lease for all this land and he had the old Elk Ranch which was leased to him, plus land out around the airport and other land which had been previously leased to other ranchers.

Herb Evison: Now that you say, 1951. That was actually the park after the park had really been extended, the monument, most of the monument had been taken into it and they had what they called the new Grand Teton National Park.

Don Bressler: Right. That's correct, yes, that's right.

Herb Evison: Yeah, well by that time I wouldn't know there was quite a succession of superintendents and I have a hunch it was Dixon Freeland.

Don Bressler: Dixon Freeland was the superintendent there, yes, that's correct.

Herb Evison: Well, I'll have to ask Dixon about those when I see him. Now what – at what point in your career did you decided – decide that you wanted to go to work for the Park Service?

Don Bressler: Well, I really during – as soon as I graduated from high school, I mean from college, I contacted Grand Teton and asked them if there was a place for an engineer.

Don Bressler: At that time, they said, "Well, we don't hire engineers," however Allen Hanks did offer me a job at Theodore Roosevelt as a ranger and, well, I, I wanted to be an engineer so I just didn't accept that (chuckles). But in 1952 I was working for the state highway department, and I was, I'd got

about as high as I could go there and one day Howard Baker, one night, and asked me if I would be interested in going to Grand Teton as park engineer.

Herb Evison: All things come to him who waits, huh?

Don Bressler: So, I was going up there on a trip, and I told him well I'd stop in and look at it and at that time Howard, I mean, Dixon Freeland was the superintendent. I stopped in and talked to them and Howard Baker happened to be there also and so I agreed at that time that I'd take the job!

Herb Evison: Well now that was, you say, about 1952?

Don Bressler: Yes.

Herb Evison: What did the job of being park engineer in Grand Teton entail at that time? Were you essentially the maintenance – in charge of maintenance or was it something more than that?

Don Bressler: Well it – it, at that time, they had one maintenance man and the, with the extension of the park they had just taken over the road system, – it was a time when we were beginning to get a lot of visitation and it was actually the beginning of building a maintenance division for the park.

Herb Evison: Uh huh, with you as the head of it?

Don Bressler: Yes.

Herb Evison: Uh huh, how long did you occupy that Grand Teton engineer position?

Don Bressler: Well, I occupied it as park engineer until the Western Office of Design and Construction was formed and because of my experience in construction for the state, why, Tom Vint said, "You're going to San Francisco." However, I did return back to Grand Teton until 1959, through the summer of '58 I believe it was, as project supervisor and I handled all the construction and most of the design on the MISSION 66 projects in that area.

Herb Evison: Oh, yeah.

Don Bressler: Frank Oberhansley was probably one of the finest administrators that I ever had contact with. He wouldn't let me get rid of maintenance even though I was project supervisor when I was there during the six months period, he didn't do anything without first getting me involved to find out. It was a tremendous relationship. I really enjoyed it.

Herb Evison: Well, anything more that you want to put on the record about Frank Oberhansley I would welcome because he happens to be one of my heroes too.

- Don Bressler: Well, Frank, of course, knew that I knew most of the people there and at that time we were in quite a land exchange program, and so I used to go with him quite often when he would go on some of these land exchange trips to introduce him to the people; and Frank had that old Western lingo that he could go in anybody's house, within 30 minutes be their best friend, and I worked with him quite closely on some of these land exchange deals. He's the type of man who gave you the job to do and backed you 100 percent. Probably the most terrific person I've ever worked for.
- Herb Evison: Yeah. I remember back in 1955, yes, '55, when I was out at Grand Teton or '56 riding with Frank and Lucille down from Yellowstone to Grand Teton from the big groundbreaking ceremonies that they had up there for the development of Canyon and—
- Don Bressler: Right.
- Herb Evison: —I presume that if you knew Frank Oberhansley well, you also knew Lucille.
- Don Bressler: Oh, yes, they were great friends of ours.
- Herb Evison: And anything you want to say about her I would be glad to have on here because I think she's one of the great Park Service wives.
- Don Bressler: Well, she was very dedicated to the Park Service. She was an excellent leader in the parks as far as the ladies were concerned. A very considerate person and she was Frank's right hand – right arm you might say. There's no question about that.
- Herb Evison: She helped make him a good superintendent, huh?
- Don Bressler: You bet. She did.
- Herb Evison: (chuckles) Well did you have a hand in the design of the East Side Road by any chance?
- Don Bressler: I walked that probably four or five times. That – when I came there as park engineer, they had already run two or three locations, but I walked that with Tom Vint and Frank Mattson. Frank Mattson was landscape architect on the job for Yellowstone several times and was indirectly involved in it, yes.
- Herb Evison: Uh huh. Well, I'd say pretty directly involved in it if you tramped all that mileage all those times.
- Don Bressler: Yeah.
- Herb Evison: He must have a good sturdy pair of legs. That's a good long distance.

Don Bressler: Yeah, one of the interesting things was Jackson Lake Lodge. The architect and his wife and Tom Vint, Paul Miller and I forget who else, but anyway we went out before that with Bill and I took my transit and Mrs. Underwood, who was the architect's wife, she was my head chain man when we set the four corners of that to see (chuckles) to see how it was going to look.

Herb Evison: Well you know I was in there, oh, with Horace Albright just about a year ago and of course we went into that tremendous main room with the gigantic window and he said that Mr. Rockefeller's vision of that building centered around the window, but that the hotel, the hotel building was really built around that window, the location of the great window was decided on first and the rest of it—

Don Bressler: That's right.

Herb Evison: —developed around it.

Don Bressler: That's right. That is correct, yes. The view was the main thing that everyone was concerned with was to get that located so we could get a view of the lake. One of the things that always had bothered Tom Vint, that the face of the dam showed from the window; and so after we had the lodge under construction Tom came by one day and he said, "Don, if I get you the money," he said, "can you screen that dam out with some trees?" "Well, we'll sure try," and I said, "We'll get some good cottonwoods because they're fast growing and there's a spring creek running right along the base of the dam." So he got me a thousand dollars, which at that time was quite a lot of money, and I took a crew out and we really went to work and planted, oh, I don't know probably fifty or a hundred nice, big cottonwood trees and so Tom called me before he came out and he said, "Don, I want to look at the trees. I'm really interested in what you did." So, I went out and checked it and they all looked good. Well, the next week he came in, so I said, "We'll go look at those trees." So, we did, and what had happened (chuckles), we got down there and there weren't any trees because the beavers had moved in on that creek and they took every one of our trees. Was I embarrassed! (laughs)

Herb Evison: Well, that was a beautiful story (chuckling by both).

Don Bressler: But a – oh, yeah.

Herb Evison: That's just beautiful! Now you've mentioned Tom Vint several times, and in the book of a lot of people he's one of the Park Service's greats, so anything that you want to put on record about your contacts with Tom I would be glad to get on there.

Don Bressler: Well, during these initiation of Teton and the building of Coulter Bay and Jackson Lake Lodge, of course, this was Tom's idea from way back. This was Tom's whole idea and he was greatly interested in this project and as a result of this spent a great deal of time out there and myself being an engineer and, being oriented toward strictly engineering, I needed some training; and Tom spent many hours with me out hiking, showing me how to locate roads, how we should do things Park Service way, and I owe him a great deal for any success [that] I've had in the Park Service or any of the aesthetical things which today I know better than not to do. He's a great person. Every professional person in the Park Service that I know that had contact with Tom Vint respected him very highly. Another person who played a large, important part in Grand Teton was Paul Miller, who was the chief engineer. Paul was the man behind the scenes who got the money, come out, went over the project with you to be sure that everything was okay, that you got what you needed, and he also had a very large input into the development there.

Herb Evison: I had the great pleasure of taping Paul down in Florida about a year ago, a little over a year ago. It strikes me that as an old Grand Teton person you've been kind of lucky in being assigned there so much of your professional career for various jobs. I suppose you feel that way yourself.

Don Bressler: Yes, I do. Of course, that's home to me. I don't think there's another place that's as beautiful and of course I have a personal interest in seeing the things that I designed and helped build many years ago that see how they continually operate. I also have several other little interesting things which you might like to know. For instance, the Moose headquarters – how did we get Moose headquarters where it is? In about 1955 there were about three locations selected for the Moose headquarters: one was down on the Gros Ventre, one was over at Blacktail Butte, one was to leave it as is at the old site. The director came out, and he said we've got to have an answer and so he went out and looked at all three sites and came back and waved his arms and said, "This area." So, Tom Vint and Red Hill and myself went down and looked over the area, and as a matter of fact we stayed up half the night drawing some sketches, and Tom left the next day and he said, "You get a blade and you get down there and put those roads in." He says, "Then they can't move it."

Don Bressler: (laughs) Well, that's how we located that headquarters; and then of course the bridge used to be above there that was gradually taken out, and one of the interesting stories that I might tell on Connie Wirth is that he came out and Ted was his son – his son was the park landscape architect, and so during the construction of the houses we had asked Ted to select the colors, and he did a fine job on all of them except two. Two of them he

selected a pink, a real bright pink, and so Connie came out and he said, “I want to drive down and look at those houses.” So, we, on the way down there he looked. He never said anything, and about four o’clock that night, after we had finished the day he said, “Don, change the color of those two houses. I don’t care what color but change those.” But since that time, I’ve been involved only from a kind of distant standpoint more or less. Projects come up which I review or go out on the ground and review. I don’t do any design anymore.

Herb Evison: You don’t do any design anymore?

Don Bressler: No, mostly review of design and supervision and this type of thing, but I would like to get back in design. I really enjoy that.

Herb Evison: Yeah, well, now as I remember it that Moose headquarters area and I guess the visitor center and headquarters were developed early in the MISSION 66 program.

Don Bressler: We completed the visitor center in the summer of 1958. We completed the residences about a year, I think ‘56 we completed the residences.

Herb Evison: Really, that early.

Don Bressler: Yes. The shop buildings and that that came after I left there 1960, somewhere in that era.

Herb Evison: Yeah. I forget where the shop buildings are located, those are located over closer to the river and above—

Don Bressler: —Directly east of the visitor center complex out there. At the present time we’ve got some pollution projects going in Teton where we’re trying to – to take the sewage from the lagoon to Jackson Lake Lodge and take that up to Coulter Bay and put it in the existing Coulter Bay system. At Moose we’re going to put a percolating lagoon in which would be, I guess, west and maybe north.

Herb Evison: Oh, yes, now there is some – while we’re on it and we’ve been talking about people – there’s some very interesting people, very old friends of mine I might say, too, living down river from the Moose headquarters both named Murie. Well, I wonder what you could tell me about your contacts with Murie, perhaps, your judgment of Olaus and Ade and Marty and Louise.

Don Bressler: Well, of course we were – we were very good friends with the Muries. They had children my age and got acquainted way back in the ‘30s. Ade, when I was park engineer, he was the park biologist and he and Louise lived in their little log house located west of the present headquarters. I used to enjoy, whenever we had a party, gettin’ Ade behind the stove and

getting him to expound on some of his research work he was doing, because he was tremendous. I saw Ade about two weeks ago and he looks like a million dollars. He's still walking to Moose for his mail and is doing great. They're tremendous people and got a very good input in what was done at Teton. I think – they're on the conservative side. It takes people who are on the real conservative side to keep people who are on the radical side and the middle and that was the influence that I think he had on some of us other people that, you know, didn't really – we were young; we didn't have the values that he had.

Herb Evison: In speaking about them it brings me to the vastly enlarged concern of the National Park Service with ecology and the environment and especially making its developments conform more closely, more religiously, we might say to ecological principles than they used to and you as an engineer and especially as an engineer concerned with review of projects; I'd be interested in knowing how this vastly enlarged concern of the Park Service has effected the things that you do.

Don Bressler: Well I think it has affected them tremendously because it doesn't take long going back to Teton, for instance, I can remember 25 years ago going up on Huckleberry Ridge where you can look out over the whole valley, and three years ago I took the same opportunity because I wanted to see what it looked like and what you see is kind of discouraging as far as what's happened to the country, and I think that the input that we have our young people, particularly; they're more ecology minded than the old people. I don't know as they're more minded; they talk more about it. Let's put it that way, but this does have a tremendous influence on how you review, how you look at something over what it used to be. It used to be an engineer – the shortest distance between two lines – now this is an entirely different picture. What we're trying to do is to take our roads and fit 'em to the ground and keep them so that they're pleasant to drive.

Don Bressler: When we put a utility system in, we're trying to put in something that doesn't use up a lot of land. Something that won't wreck our streams and the same way with our – with our structures, we try to keep them so they don't intrude, you know, and many of the practices that we used to use today are absolutely taboo.

Herb Evison: Of course, actually when you get right down to it what you say about what we try to do nowadays, theoretically at least, was always what the Park Service tried to do, but they—

Don Bressler: —This is one of the interesting things. Two or three years ago I had the opportunity of being – going up on the Mineral King Road in Sequoia where we had the conflicts.

Herb Evison: Oh, yeah.

Don Bressler: The landscape architects and I went up to review it for Mr. Bowen and give him our comments. Along with this we had an ecologist from Sequoia who was a young, energetic individual, and after we had reviewed this, we compared notes. Really, we were thinking the same thing, we had the same things in mind and these are the things that we've always had in the Park Service, you know, I mean it's not new to us; it's different words, different terminology, but we need to be made more aware of it.

Herb Evison: It's just a – really not a difference in viewpoint, but a difference in emphasis, wouldn't you say?

Don Bressler: Emphasis yes and probably terminology I'd think where they use the word ecology, well, I think we've always considered. We haven't put as much emphasis on that particular word.

Herb Evison: Yeah. Well now what we've been talking about has largely been events and developments that came in the middle and late 1950s. Well that's beginning to get to be a quite a long way quite a long time away and how about the '60s what you were engaged in then?

Don Bressler: Well, at, in the '60s, I – after I left Grand Teton, I was put in charge of the Park Service roads. That's the roads that we built ourself. We got involved, I got us involved in the data processing, tried to get our road system worked out to where we knew which way we were going instead of fighting over each one we'd try to come up with a standard which we would use. We built many projects throughout the West. We built a big job in Big Bend, Canyon de Chelly, Lava Beds, oh, all over the area. I was involved in this, oh, for maybe five or six years, something like that; then we had a reorganization where we had the office of – we had to set up for the office of project management or something like this.

Don Bressler: Anyway, I was chief engineer for two or three years, and then we reorganized into the system just before we came to Denver and there I was supervisor of project planning where I handled all the projects beyond master planning or I did the management of them and so forth.

Herb Evison: Now you mentioned two or three roads that you were concerned with during this period when you were the top roads man. One I am particularly interested in, as you mentioned, is Canyon de Chelly, in which, I take it, is a road along the rim generally west of the main canyon of Canyon de Chelly.

Don Bressler: Yes.

- Herb Evison: Did that road involve any particular problems? Of course, I can think of one that you were building a road on Indian land—
- Don Bressler: —That was the first one.
- Herb Evison: —and I'm interested in knowing what you can tell me about the relationship with the Indians in connection with the building of that road.
- Don Bressler: Well, we had – we had one point in our favor when we started. Meredith Guillet was the superintendent at Canyon de Chelly and probably is one of the best negotiators in the Park Service with the Indians. We went out over the project, discussed various alignments, and so forth. Then we left that up to Meredith to settle with the tribe because he was the one individual who spoke their language, who they would listen to. The Indians themselves I think really wanted the road because when it rained in that country ten miles to the west or to the east you didn't get in with a car, and so they were quite happy about getting the road built. A lot of it was built over slick rock. We did have some construction problems. We tried to fit the road to the land using sweeping curvature, breaking the hori— the vertical alignment with a lot of vertical curves so that you couldn't see a car any distance ahead of you and we felt that when this was done that we – we did have a relatively good Park Service road or road that we would like.
- Herb Evison: Yeah, well now I've been over that old road that preceded this one. I would judge that you must have taken it back farther from the edge of the canyon and perhaps built spurs to overlooks.
- Don Bressler: Yes. We built – I think there were, it's been a long time ago, but I think there are three or four spurs that go out to the overlooks. What we tried to do was to keep the road back and sweep out to where, when the visitors got a look at it, it was a good look.
- Don Bressler: There are many, many views off the canyon that are not very good and so we kept this in mind, and we do have some overlooks directly off of the main road – most of 'em are off on spurs.
- Herb Evison: But there are numerous places on the road itself where you get good glimpses of the canyon too, huh?
- Don Bressler: Oh, yes. Yes, uh huh.
- Herb Evison: That must have been an interesting bit of work in design to decide where you would come over relatively close to the rim and where you would go back from it a little ways.
- Don Bressler: We put a lot of study into it and did a lot of work on it. That's the way we should do on all our roads. We shouldn't build one unless we really study

it – know exactly where we want to go. We’ve done too many road jobs, I think, where we haven’t considered this. We go out and say we want to go from here to there and somebody runs the alignment and we build it. That’s not the way to do it in the Park Service.

Herb Evison: (chuckles) No, and you would say that isn’t the way it’s done, huh?

Don Bressler: Well, that’s – we do it that way sometimes but not of our own choice. Then we’ve had – we built about a 30-mile job in Big Bend – goes up on Castellon from and, well, goes down – takes off on the main road swings over the top and back down with it. It’s pretty rough country and it was also very interesting job to build.

Herb Evison: Very interesting one to design, too.

Don Bressler: Yes, that’s right.

Herb Evison: Yeah. Well now I would like you just to look back over those years – the ‘60s and up to September 12, 1972. Of course, we – and we should get on the record where you were at the time that this office was set up and what it involved for you. Were you in San Francisco?

Don Bressler: Yes. I was supervisor of project planning which involved all design beyond master planning in the San Francisco office. There was a lot of conflict among the people as to whether it was a good move or a bad move. I personally felt it was a good move and was very happy to come to Denver. My assignment in Denver is planning and design, chief of planning and design services.

Herb Evison: Now what does that entail?

Don Bressler: Well, we’ve been shifting trying to; whenever you go into a new organization you have to keep adjusting until you finally get people in the right slots. You get your organization to work where it really produces something and this is very difficult to do on paper, because no two people are alike; and you might put two guys on paper but it doesn’t necessarily mean that they can do the same thing. To start off with I had all the people out in the pool, which was about a hundred, I guess something like that, and these people were assigned to our team managers on a short-term basis. This didn’t work because the job would get half done; we’d assign ‘em to somebody else and back, so we’d decided that the best way to go was to assign people on a full-time basis is what we did; so we assigned the designers or the board people. Then, in addition to that, we have all the consultants: sanitation, electrical, mechanical, roads, landscape people and so forth that act as consultants for the rest of the office for specifications and they assemble and distribute specifications. Our estimating section – they’d provide all the estimates for everything in the service center. Well

under the present system it's our job to provide estimates to work with the teams on a consulting basis; to see technically our water systems, our sewer systems, our roads and everything of this nature are in accordance with good practice – meet all the criteria for the states and other agencies and assist anyone in the office who needs help in that particular facet of work.

Herb Evison: Now you must be involved rather closely with Public Health Service.

Don Bressler: Yes. We have a Public Health Service consultant who is assigned full-time to this office and he signs all the drawings we use and he's on part of our reviewing process.

Herb Evison: You find him a useful man to have at your elbow, I judge?

Don Bressler: Oh, yes, very much so because they not only have a input from the standpoint of getting a drawing reviewed, but most of those people have a pretty broad experience and can also have quite an input in our design; help our designers.

Herb Evison: Well, you – I gather from all this – you feel that gradually this organization has taken down into something that can work reasonably smoothly and effectively.

Don Bressler: Oh, yes, I think that any time you – any time that you take and change one procedure, a professional person has a hard time adjusting to it, so it takes a little time, but it's beginning to shake down now. The team captains were, or team managers were all – this was a new experience for all of those people. They're getting their feet on the ground with a few other adjustments.

Don Bressler: I think we're going to have a fine service center because I don't believe – and I deal a lot with A&E's and people outside, but I would compare our people to the best A&E that I've ever run across. We've got brilliant people, hard workers, dedicated, with the proper guidance will do anything.

Herb Evison: Well that's – I'm glad to get that opinion of yours on the record because, of course, there's a wide spread impression that a lot of people came here very unwillingly and that their morale still wasn't quite a hundred percent and I guess that's so that there are some people in the organization who still aren't very happy with having been uprooted.

Don Bressler: Well, it's – there, yes, there are people who are unhappy. There's no question about it, but I think that if we can get organized to where they go, go, go. We get it to where people find and get proper guidance; we're going to have a whale of a service center.

- Herb Evison: And you – you feel that the one service center is a good idea, I take it.
- Don Bressler: I think it is. It does one thing. In other words, we were duplicating efforts – as an example: specifications, we had a standard, the east had a standard. It came to drawings there were two standards going and you also had the administration that took two offices. I don't know why we can't run with one office and cut down on a lot of overhead from an economical standpoint. I think it will broaden our professional people to where if they do ever have to go East, they know how things are done in the East or vice-versa to the West. I think it has many advantages. It gives some people a lot more to do, a lot broader area to cover, but I'm all for it.
- Herb Evison: Well, we've brought you right up to date. We may have skipped over some periods of your career that you would like to offer some reminiscences of; certainly, I don't want to hurry this or have you feel that, well, I've got to end this one of these times.
- Don Bressler: Well, I suppose some of the highlights of my career if you can call them that were – the first one was when I went to Grand Teton as a park engineer. I felt the challenge was really great to build a maintenance organization, which I think we did quite successfully under guidance of Frank Oberhansley. The next real great thing in my career was the development of Teton as a national park, and by this, I mean when we developed all the facilities. When I first went there, if you wanted to start a pump you took some baling wire out you know and now everything is modern so that the people can take care of it. The development there was a tremendous challenge to all people involved. Going beyond that, I guess the service center has really been my life and I've really enjoyed every bit of it. I'm a Park Service employee and very devoted to Park Service.
- Herb Evison: You're not a bit sorry to have made a career of it, huh?
- Don Bressler: No, I would not change if I had that opportunity.
- Herb Evison: Yeah. Well of your own accomplishments looking back over those years would you single out one that you'd say you were proudest of?
- Don Bressler: No, I wouldn't, because I've been involved in so many jobs which to me, I think are good jobs.
- Herb Evison: Yeah.
- Don Bressler: Because, you know, I've been in the service center about 18 years and I can go to almost any park in the West and see where that you've had some input. Teton, of course, was a big input but others have also had some input and so I just feel gratified to think that I've been able to do this and had this opportunity.

Herb Evison: Well maybe that makes as good a place to bring this to an end as any but – however, we’re not going to end this right here. It happens that this marks an interval when we thought we had this finished but after we had turned it off Don made some mention of other members of his family who are either working for the Park Service or in jobs very closely connected with it and I would like to get a brief statement about those two brothers of yours, Don, where they are and what they are doing.

Don Bressler: Well, my younger brother, Dow, he started in the Park Service during MISSION 66 at Grand Teton and there he became trail foreman and then he transferred to Mount Rainier as assistant chief of maintenance and from there he went to Lassen National Park – National Volcanic Park where he was chief of maintenance. Just recently he has transferred to Mammoth Cave as chief of maintenance. He’s kind of like I am, he really likes the Park Service. Enjoys every minute of it. I have another brother at Grand Teton who works for the Teton Lodge and Transportation Company. He handles the boats and all the guiding service there. He lives directly across from the headquarters there in the Post Office Building and he really likes what he’s doing also.

Herb Evison: Yeah. And he’s been lucky in being able to latch onto a job right where he lives.

Don Bressler: Well, he – he graduated in wildlife management. Went to work for Fish and Wildlife. They sent him to the University of Washington where he got his master’s as a fish doctor. I don’t know the term that you call it, and then he went back to work for them. The Lodge Company knew that he was quite a fisherman and also really knew fish, so they talked him into going to work up there and I think he’s real happy about it.

Herb Evison: Yeah. Well I’m very glad to have gotten that addendum.

Don Bressler: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]