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

Frank Barnes
August 23, 1971

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

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

EVISON INTERVIEW WITH FRANK BARNES

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

August 23, 1971

[START OF INTERVIEW]

Herbert Evison: This is the 23rd of August 1971. I'm Herb Evison and this morning I'm in the conference room of the Northeast Regional Office in Philadelphia and with me is Frank Barnes of the staff of the regional office who has the title of Interpretation and Visitors Service Specialist which is a pretty high sounding title and I hope it carries about a grade eighty in salary.

Frank Barnes: I'm overpaid as it is.

Herbert Evison: Frank, let's get down on the record when and where you were born, something about the family you were born into and where you went to school and college, what degree you have, or degrees?

Frank Barnes: Well, you really want all that?

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Also, if you're married, I want something, want to know when and who your wife was and any children.

Frank Barnes: Well, I was born the day after Christmas in 1917 on my father's birthday, December 26th, 1917, and my father is still alive in Hartford, Connecticut, at the age of ninety.

Herbert Evison: He is still alive?

Frank Barnes: Yeah, I saw him only last weekend. He played fiddle duets with me, resting his arm on cushions because he has arthritis, tremendous! Anyway, so there I was in Hartford and when I was about five, I guess, we went to suburban Bloomfield, a little place that's now catching on. It wasn't then the best place to live. I went through the Bloomfield schools, graduated from Bloomfield High School in 1935, Trinity College in Hartford in 1939; and, let's see, that was just two years before the war, so in that two years period I had a great deal of trouble making up my mind what my career was going to be, because of conflicting home interests and interests of my own. My father was a frustrated violinist, always wanted to be a violinist, and I had always had that other string to my bow. Do you want all this?

Herbert Evison: Yes.

Frank Barnes: And so, it was always a great challenge as to whether I'd be a violinist, at which I must admit I was pretty good, still am really, (chuckles) when I can get to it; or whether I should seek an academic career, maybe aiming at teaching, you know.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: So, I kept up my music all the way and I studied with a pretty good teacher, Harold Berkely, from the Julliard School of New York, who happened to come to Hartford. On weekends I played in his orchestra so after I graduated from college I'd already had a debut of sorts in Hartford, through the violin, and he got me to go down to Julliard for two years and at the same time, as a result of my association with the Trinity College Glee Club, I'd already made a contact with a school down on Long Island, the Woodhull Day School run by the local Episcopalian Church; so I worked out an arrangement to teach school in the mornings, weekdays, for somewhat of a salary. It wasn't much in those days; I think nine hundred dollars a year (chuckles).

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: And I was able to get in courses and violin work at Julliard and at home on the afternoons and on Saturdays and Sundays. I had a pretty close schedule for two years and by the time that 1941 came around and my draft number was called it was almost a relief.

Herbert Evison: 1941?

Frank Barnes: 1941. It was almost a relief to be drafted, and at that time I had made up my mind I was going to go into music as a career. I really persuaded myself that I could do something with that and also something with history which I also liked, but the war changed my mind, and after I came back from the war, I had a renewed interest in history. I had a great desire to find out more about the past and what had brought on that war for one thing, I went back to Columbia – Columbia University in New York and got my Master's there and unfortunately – fortunately in some ways – I met two wonderful professors or there, one of my professors. One was Allen Nevins, of course. The other one that – well the one that really excited me about – re-excited me about – American history was John Krout, who was on the NPS advisory board at some point, I think.

Herbert Evison: Yes, That's right.

Frank Barnes: Well, his lectures were the most stimulating things I've ever heard, and his re-interpretations of American history really turned me on; and between that and Henry Steele Commager, who, of course, gave the Constitutional history I had and who I once heard sound almost like a preacher when he was talking about the Treaty of Versailles and the Aftermath.

Frank Barnes: The combination from all of that and taking a seminar with John Bartlet Brebner, whom nobody knows, but was really a distinguished scholar and a tremendous interpretive type historian, a combination of all that made me decide that I really wanted to get into history, you know, and teach

history, but for various reasons, mostly personal, I didn't go on to the Ph.D. I was at Columbia about a year and a half, maybe a little more and on the G.I. Bill of Rights pay, which wasn't much, and I felt that I had to get out and start earning a living so – and teaching jobs for history teachers in those days, probably the same today, were not exactly plentiful. The science field was the one that was trying to get teachers.

Frank Barnes: So, I went to the Columbia University Placement Office and they did have, this was May 1947 or roughly there – they did have a couple of research jobs and I kind of liked research. These were at Air Force headquarters; one of them was First Air Force which was then located off New Rochelle, Long Island, on David's Island, which is now, I think, a city park; Fort Slocum, an old Civil War post of some sort. Well, they had an opening for a research historian First Air Force Headquarters to write the command histories and I looked upon it as a way of getting in, somehow getting started, and I kind of hated the job in some ways.

Frank Barnes: I'm not exactly a militarist, but I found it invaluable experience on research and making contacts with people, interviews, writing, and I wrote most of the history they wanted and they liked it and from that I accidentally fell over to the Park Service, which I'm very glad happened and that's an interesting story in itself, if you want it.

Herbert Evison: Well, want it, yes.

Frank Barnes: Well, it turns out, after I had been at the Air Force for about a year and a half, I was getting sort of frustrated with the fact that I really wasn't dealing in the kind of history that I was excited about. I was dealing with really current history on military affairs which really wasn't my bag. And I was beginning to feel around for other possibilities. There were still no great number of teaching jobs available and it so happened I was allowed to recruit for a secretary in the second year at First Air Force Headquarters; and one summer day a middle-aged woman – I guess she was "young middle aged" – was referred to me. I think her name was Peterson and you may remember her. It seems she had just come from a job in Ronnie Lee's office, believe it or not, in Washington. I think I have the name right.

Herbert Evison: No, I don't remember her.

Frank Barnes: Well, afterwards I found out she'd had a sort of seasonal job. She raved about Ronnie Lee and how he made ten thousand dollars a year, and that was big money in those days. I think I was making thirty-four hundred as a GS-7 First Air Force Historian, they called P-2. Instead of my selling her on working for me – and I really wasn't that taken with her – actually, she proceeded to sell me on the Park Service and how I should get into the

Park Service. So, I immediately started writing. That was December 1948, or let's see that was the summer, and it was that fall that I started writing around and wrote to the Park Service and never thought I'd have a chance, you know, really. I didn't know anything about the Park Service except as a boy I had read all about the scenic parks, you know.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: You know, the same old story anybody will tell you. Nobody knows about the historic sites, especially then; so anyway, I wrote to the Park Service in Washington and much to my amazement I was a – they liked me and offered me a job. First at Shiloh Battlefield. This was in about December 1948 or November and I was living in Westchester County, New York, so I indicated I would take that job; and then nothing happened for about a month and it turned out that another guy who is one of my friends in the service today, Albert Dillahunty of course, I didn't know him then – he had beat me out because he had ten points preference as a veteran. He was wounded, a bad wound I guess.

Herbert Evison: Oh, really.

Frank Barnes: I think he was a paratrooper, yeah, 101st Airborne, I just heard it the other day; and so he beat me out for Shiloh and I was just as glad in some ways – you know, Shiloh way out there in the Wilds of Tennessee – but the Park Service indicated they were still interested and that I would get the first crack at the next thing that came along and, lo and behold, that was Fort Sumter, and Fort Sumter had just been established I think in the last part of 1948 and, gee! I thought that was terrific. It was a brand new assignment, you know, and I had a chance to get in on the ground floor and do all the research, so I studied up on Fort Sumter, you may be sure, before I left New York and I found out some surprising things; I found, for instance, all about the years that it was in Confederate hands that most northerners don't know a thing about, and I didn't, for one, so I was all primed on that and it was a good thing I was, because the first week I got into Fort Sumter, in February, I had to go to dinners and banquets and act as if I knew all about it; so anyway I went to Fort Sumter. That was the next thing offered to me and I landed at Fort Sumter February 21, 1949. That was my E.O.D.

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Now was Bill Luckett the superintendent?

Frank Barnes: Bill Luckett was the superintendent and I remember his giving me the cogent advice that I've heard everywhere else in the Park Service. He said the first thing that visitors are going to ask you is: "Where are the rest rooms?" All right; but you want to know about my wife, don't you?

Herbert Evison: Yes, I want to get that in.

Frank Barnes: My first wife — my first wife was Marjorie Smyth, whose parents lived in Garden City, Long Island. That was her home. They were from Brooklyn, or Richmond Hill outside of Brooklyn, originally. She went with me to Fort Sumter. She was a graduate of New Paltz Teachers College, New Paltz up on the Hudson and we had our – let's see, we'd already had one child at that point, Geoffrey who's now twenty-five, I guess, and at Charleston we had our second; that was Nancy who is now in Cincinnati and married. Married to a Procter & Gamble rising young executive I guess, I hope; but we also had sadness there because it wasn't very long after she gave birth to Nancy that she had a case of cancer; and the summer of 1950, my second year, I think possibly this was done with her in mind, lo and behold: much to my amazement, with me quite pleased with my job down there, doing a wonderful lot of research and enjoying it and getting to meet the public occasionally, Roy Appleman came down on a routine visit and astonished me by asking me if I'd be interested in going to New York City as historian for Castle Clinton which was then a coming thing and had just about arrived right now; and first I turned it down. I really thought, well, who am I, you know? And I think Roy was a little miffed and then I got to thinking about it and, well, talked it over with my wife who was then, you know, going through the treatment for cancer and so forth and we decided it was probably a wise move. For one thing, she'd be nearer up home in case anything happened, which it did finally, and so we took it, and we went to Castle Clinton – September 1950 that would be, or roughly thereabouts, and the following year she died up there. I found myself historian for Castle Clinton with an office in Federal Hall and frankly Federal Hall, I had been told by Roy Appleman, was a great museum project and there again twenty years later is just beginning coming alive as a museum as you know (chuckling) which is the case.

Herbert Evison: It was a museum?

Frank Barnes: Yeah. That came while I was there (that is, the Zenger freedom-of-press exhibit) although I wasn't involved on the research for that. That was installed, I guess, the second year I was there. Anyway, I was only in New York City in that capacity for a year and a half – again much to my amazement – and this was after Marjorie died and I was floundering around, a widower with two young children and really having problems. Fortunately, I had recruited a very fine young housekeeper through the Want Ads; as a matter of fact, very lucky. Well anyway I was just beginning to get adjusted somewhat to the situation and lo and behold I was in Washington once in Ronnie Lee's office as I remember, and I was taken into the inner sanctum with Ronnie and Herb I was asked whether

I'd be interested in going down to the South which was then the Region One Office as assistant to the Regional Historian who was then Jim Holland. That must have been the tail end of 1951, early '52, somewhere in there, and I was really flabbergasted because, to be frank, I'm basically a modest guy and I never thought I was that good a historian, so anyway Roy Appleman apparently liked my work, and I always felt my fiddle was an influence too. He collected fiddles, you know, and he loaned me a violin. That was another thing that flabbergasted me. He barely knew me. I stopped off at his house once and played, and found he collected violins. He offered me a thousand dollar violin to play and I played on it and he never forgot it apparently, but I hope it was more than that, anyway; so, as I say, I was surprised and dumbfounded and took the job and that created problems, but somehow I got down to Richmond and that must have been February 1952, yeah. Dan Tobin had just arrived, or I think maybe he arrived a few days after me, as Assistant Regional Director there. And, of course, later on I followed him to Philadelphia in 1955 where we helped open up the Region Five — now Northeast Regional Office. You asked about wives again. I'm very fortunate, very lucky in that regard to have worked that out very beautifully. It worked out wonderfully well. When I was in New York, mutual friends introduced my present wife to me. She had gone to Barnard College. She had been there when I was in graduate school. Of course, I didn't know it; but mutual friends introduced us in Levittown, Long Island, and I thought she looked all right, you know, I had problems, and she was a young girl, she was ten years younger than I and I guess I shouldn't put that on the record, but I did, didn't I? Anyway, her name was Ann Hasker, Ann Kern Hasker, and she was the son of—

Herbert Evison: She was the daughter, I suppose.

Frank Barnes: The daughter, right, of I can't think of her father's name, gee! Everett oh, Everett Linwood Hasker in Richmond, Virginia. So, a curious coincidence I met her in New York and not more than a month after that I was offered a transfer to Richmond. She was teaching school in Springfield, Massachusetts, and, of course, then she married me. We were married in June, and everything worked out fine, so we—

Herbert Evison: She went – she had a home?

Frank Barnes: She had a home in Richmond with her family, right. But we had our own place, of course.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: And we were in Richmond three and a half years and until the Region Five office opened in July 55 and I was here on July 21 about twenty-one days

after George Palmer. Now he and I are probably going to close the office out one of these (laughter).

Herbert Evison: Yeah, well now here's one thing that I want to ask you.

Frank Barnes: Uh humm.

Herbert Evison: You went to Richmond just about the time that Dan Tobin did.

Frank Barnes: Right.

Herbert Evison: You served your rest of the time in Richmond under Dan, and you came up here and worked under him.

Frank Barnes: Right.

Herbert Evison: Now I don't know how he is in your book, but in my book, Dan is one of the best administrators the Park Service ever had.

Frank Barnes: Oh, I would think so, I think so, he was the right man for that period in—

Herbert Evison: —but I would like to get on the record. I taped him about eight or nine years ago out in—

Frank Barnes: Did you?

Herbert Evison: Out at his home in California, but I would like to get on here anything that you can remember about Dan, about his habits as an administrator or about his relationships with people, the degree of his consideration of individuals and so on.

Frank Barnes: Well, he was, I think – the nicest thing about him – he was a friendly shoe! I remember we used to be invited to his house, everybody, it was open house for anybody and everybody at his house over there in on Broomall on the main line area out there. That was one thing about him. He used to dress comfortably in old sports shirts and so forth around the office and I'm emulating him today. That was one thing. He wasn't exactly a warm personality, but he was warm, he was humane in his attitude and his handling of people.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: But other than that, the other thing I liked very much was the summer, let's see, it was the spring before this office opened up and really before we knew what was going to happen, I may be wrong on that. I made a trip with him and Mrs. Tobin to Hopewell Village from Richmond and this was a meeting concerned with goals for Hopewell Village and how far we should go in the way of preserving houses and reconstructing houses and that sort of thing and I was very pleased on that day that he was interested in more than pretty architecture or architecture of substantial families,

substantial homes, he liked the history of the common man. That's my forte too. I'm oriented the same way, so that made me very pleased because, of course, right after that we came to Philadelphia. But other than that, I'd have to stop and think about instances there. Gee.

Herbert Evison: Well, let's leave him a while and we may come back to him.

Frank Barnes: You see I was – I was – come in the fall of that first year. I was working under Murray Nelligan, who was Chief of Interpretation. I was Regional Historian, so I was, you see, about four layers down. So, my contacts with Dan were somewhat limited.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: You'd get more out of Murray perhaps.

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Well, I didn't remember that Murray Nelligan was in Richmond, too?

Frank Barnes: No, Murray Nelligan was in National Capital Parks. As I remember it as a sort of research historian. He had an office in the Library of Congress, isn't that right? You probably know more about that than I.

Herbert Evison: Probably so.

Frank Barnes: And then he went to become historian in Lee Mansion and that was his bag down there and then he came from National Capital to Independence Park the year before this office opened. That would be 1954 and he headed up the research program at Independence Park, so when this office opened, he was tapped, after Ed Riley turned it down. Ed Riley went to Colonial Williamsburg. Ed Riley was slated to become the chief and he turned it down and he took the job of research man at Williamsburg, and I was supposed to be Regional Historian under either one of them, so I got here in July and the vacancy existed in the Chief of Interpretation spot. The fall of that year, 1955, Murray comes down.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: So, he was chief, and he was chief, and I was under him for about eight and a half years. When I became chief, and this cause some problems psychologically and everything else, friction, you know.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: I got his old title in effect and I'm sure that, understandably, didn't sit very well with Nancy and he became the man for historical landmarks and research program and that sort of thing and he's still basically that today except research has come back to me.

Herbert Evison: Is that it?

Frank Barnes: Yeah, and it's because of the way we're computerized these days and the close relationship of research with interpretation and—

Herbert Evison: Yeah, yeah.

Frank Barnes: So that's the story on that.

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Well, now is there any family from your second marriage?

Frank Barnes: Oh, yes, I'm glad you asked that about 'em. I'm very proud of 'em, all of them. I've got a wonderful family. We have two from the second marriage the oldest is a girl Susan who is a real doll and a beautiful piano player. She plays for me, plays sonatas and she's going off this fall just about three weeks to Earlhem College in Indiana—

Herbert Evison: Yes.

Frank Barnes: Which I hope is as good as it's supposed to be. It's a Quaker school. And my youngest is about fourteen. He was the only one born here. He was born in Pennsylvania. Timothy Hasker Barnes, and he's a boy of many talents, many tendencies. He's very good with his hands. He kind of puts me to shame. He takes after his grandfather who was a toolmaker. My father was a toolmaker, very skilled workman, an immigrant from England in 1911. Also, a man with a brain. He reads and he plays the violin and does wonderful things for the age of ninety; he's still working with tools. He painted the ceiling this summer, I mean the ceiling in the kitchen; and an amazing man, a man who had equivalent to a high school education and made a path for himself and much to be emulated. Makes me feel ashamed of myself for being too much of a bureaucrat. Okay, (laughs).

Herbert Evison: Well now you'd been in two regional offices for a period of about twenty years all together.

Frank Barnes: Well, that's right, sixteen years this summer here and three and a half in Richmond. You're right, I had forgotten, gee! (laughs) Terrible!

Herbert Evison: Now what kind of chores did you find yourself assigned to during your period in Richmond?

Frank Barnes: Well, in Richmond, assistant to Jim Holland, the Regional Historian. It was pretty much concerned with research programming in those days. I used to get out to the parks when there were specific missions, when there were specific things to do; and there I got very much involved in auditing of personal services. Things like that. I don't remember getting involved on interpretive planning to any degree and that's been a large part of my job here. I recall getting involved in a lot of special studies, new areas; for

instance, the Thomas A. Edison proposal when that came up. That was a real rush job and Nelson Royal and I and a landscape architect who is now dead – we were the team and things were done differently in those days. We didn't have a separate office with separate people in coop activities to do new studies. They were farmed out to staff people who were otherwise involved, usually, so I was the one to get involved in those and studies of surplus properties, which took a lot of work. Those are now done through the Service Center and people assigned just for that job.

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Well, now I would like to put a little flesh on this Edison assignment. The kind of contacts involved, where you went to get the material that you were looking for and so on.

Frank Barnes: Well, Dr. Ronalds, I think, was the liaison on that. He was the one that had the contacts. That was his principal role up there and he was a past master at it. Then the team was set up and Nelson Royal and I went up to the house, Glenmont, and stayed two or three nights in the house just to get I the environmental effect, you might say today, which was a wonderful idea. We slept there, we ate meals there served by the butler and (laughs) I was quite over-awed by the whole thing. And of course, research: the archives are there at the Edison Laboratory and as I remember most of my digging, what limited digging you can do on a survey like that, was for original things in those archives, working with Norman Spieden of the predecessor Edison Foundation, who until two years ago was with us as archivist-curator at the site; but my interest, and I think the primary need on that study was to evaluate significance, you know.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: Significance, and how this West Change site compared with other Edison sites, so I was involved in going to the site of the Edison Lab in Menlo Park, most of whose buildings had long been since removed by Henry Ford, you know, to his park in Dearborn. That was part of it; and then you look over their museum and think, well, is it a good museum or should we do something better with it? That's part of the job, too. It's all part of an evaluation, the feasibility. You look at the buildings and you find out what you can by talking to the staff people, but then coming back and dealing with significance I found that fascinating. This is always what fascinates me. I'm always interested in getting at the deeper meaning of things and why it's important; and that involved library research back in Richmond and thinking, and writing, and worrying all night, and all that sort of thing, but we turned out a report which is apparently still coming in handy today.

Herbert Evison: Yeah, well good enough. You didn't have to go to the archives in – well, you wouldn't have gone to the archives in Washington, of course, because

they are governmental; but I was wondering about the Library of Congress?

Frank Barnes: I don't remember particularly going to the Library of Congress, no. The things I required in evaluating significance I could find in most any good public library.

Herbert Evison: Oh, I see.

Frank Barnes: And Richmond had that certainly. And I really – it's always an adventure these assignments – I used to love them because it gave you another angle to pursue in American history and you added to your dimension, you know, and – the same old story – seeing a historic site always stimulates me to think more and to look for more and come out with more, I hope.

Herbert Evison: Yeah, yeah. I think that's a very good statement too.

Frank Barnes: Well, I still think the historic sites in themselves are the best living history we have. (laughs)

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Did you have any other assignment like that, comparable to that while you were in Richmond?

Frank Barnes: Well, I can't remember any big ones. That was the biggest. I had one big surplus property deal and that was Twin Lights, this tremendous lighthouse at the foot of Sandy Hook which is now a state park. That was a surplus property deal that was very complicated; and there I did have to go to the archives in getting the lighthouse record. This was complicated because of the property tangle so I perhaps spent more time on that than I should have but I think it paid off (laughs) in terms of settling the thing. This was being applied for by the local community, which was really having some financial problems, but they were so proud of that lighthouse, and they got it as a result of this study. Since then, it has gone to the state of New Jersey. I haven't been back, but it's a tremendous lighthouse. I still think it ought to be in the National Park. This was the gateway – this was a gateway light of New York harbor and it's the lighthouse that was used as a symbol for the Corps of Engineers insignia.

Herbert Evison: Oh, yeah—

Frank Barnes: You ought to go see it someday, right—

Herbert Evison: Well, that's a—

Frank Barnes: Oh, but up here we had the biggest one of all. After I got to Region Five, I had the biggest job of that kind I ever had and that was practically a year-long assignment interspersed with other jobs around here. This was the result of legislation being passed authorizing ten thousand dollars for a

study of the burial ground of the Maryland troops that fought in the Battle of Brooklyn, the Battle of Long Island, do you remember that one?

Herbert Evison: Oh, yes, yes.

Frank Barnes: Well, I'm the one that did the report.

Herbert Evison: Oh, yes.

Frank Barnes: Well, apparently, I did the job; I never had a comeback on it; I really (laughs) worried that one to death.

Herbert Evison: Yeah. I believe the question was whether that burial ground belonged in the National Park system or not.

Frank Barnes: Yes. First, we had to authenticate it.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: So, we had indoor archeology on that one. I had to arrange for an archeologist on the outside and he did indoor archeology in zero-degree weather through the basement of the building because the site was covered with buildings.

Herbert Evison: Oh, for heaven's sake!

Frank Barnes: Well, that was a fascinating study, and I really earned my money on that one, but we got the answer. I disproved it just from the historical evidence alone. I disproved the story of the importance of the Marylanders action, and I had involved calculating time, time of movement of troops and whether they could be where they were supposed to be.

Herbert Evison: You know it strikes me that the research historian – perhaps maybe other researchers, too – but the research historian really has to be a pretty good inductive detective.

Frank Barnes: He sure does, right. And this is one of Murray Nelligan's fortes. I still think Murray Nelligan is one of the best historical detectives I've ever met.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: Yeah, you really have to – it's almost like a political sense you know—

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: You've got to get an angle on something, somebody – well, he's got more of that than I. I'm not really a politician (laughs) he has more of it than I do.

Herbert Evison: Well—

Frank Barnes: You have to have a questioning mind to be a good historian and a lot of historians don't have enough questions on their mind.

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Well, you know, I have been a reporter on several newspapers in my time and actually I think the good reporter – and I never was one frankly—

Frank Barnes: Oh, I doubt that.

Herbert Evison: The good reporter has to have the same kind of enquiring, constantly curious, incurably curious mind—

Frank Barnes: Right.

Herbert Evison: And a tremendous amount of imagination.

Frank Barnes: Right, putting two and two together.

Herbert Evison: Not that I mean by that he is expected to write out of his imagination, but he has got to have – and I think the historian, too – he has to be able to think whether this or this or this was the most likely to happened.

Frank Barnes: Right

Herbert Evison: He's got to use—

Frank Barnes: Oh, yeah, you have to deduce an awful lot.

Herbert Evison: Yeah

Frank Barnes: Especially when the records are sparse as they are for some periods. Castle Clinton was the case where really, I really labored my brain on that one.

Herbert Evison: Yeah, well now I think it's interesting that you were involved there. Where did you find material?

Frank Barnes: Basically, the archives, the war records division; but they had very little material. And then the thing that gave me enough to raise questions about, I went down to Cameron Station, Virginia – I'm not sure of the outfit. I think it was quartermaster records down there and I think it was fiscal records of some sort. Didn't have much time. You're always rushed, you know, in Park Service research, but there I found enough in the account record that gave me leads – for instance, one little item made a reference to a dark hole at Castle Clinton. I don't think we ever know to this day exactly what it was, but it's just the reference itself was intriguing and made you think of at least a prison quarters which was probably underneath the officers' quarters – that sort of thing; and you find bills for certain quantities of materials, you know, and then you start putting two and two together and you come up with something, but you have to do an awful lot of deducing (laughs).

Herbert Evison: Yeah, yeah.

Frank Barnes: But it's coming out and Castle Clinton, as you may know, is just about done right now.

Herbert Evison: No, I didn't; I hadn't—

Frank Barnes: It's only taken twenty years, but (chuckles)—

Herbert Evison: I remember that when the Park Service wanted to get it agent by the name of Robert Moses—

Frank Barnes: Right.

Herbert Evison: Was very much opposed to it.

Frank Barnes: Right.

Herbert Evison: He wanted to destroy it; as a matter of fact, I think, in connection with that tunnel terminal.

Frank Barnes: Right. Yeah, and it was stopped by a court injunction.

Herbert Evison: And he really got licked on that one.

Frank Barnes: Right, and much to my amazement I was offered the job of doing the research and I haven't regretted it.

Herbert Evison: No.

Frank Barnes: Yeah, Robert Moses resurrected an old quotation from somebody, about 1824, which described the castle as an ugly wart on the main axis to the Statue of Liberty and (laughs) tremendous.

Herbert Evison: Well, you know Robert Moses was a man of tremendous capacity of a certain kind.

Frank Barnes: He had a holy Moses approach.

Herbert Evison: Yes, and he had no sense of history.

Frank Barnes: Yeah, I think you're right.

Herbert Evison: One of the first things – that happened after I came back East in 1929 was the New York State Council of Parks, under his leadership, agitated to get all of the historical areas in the state park system transferred over to the State Bureau of Education where they still are.

Frank Barnes: Right, right,

Herbert Evison: In other words, he wanted to divest the state parks people entirely of any concern with historical areas. They have some nice ones, too.

Frank Barnes: Yeah, they do, and they do a pretty good job, but there is that gap in there, right.

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Well, this has been a very lively account so far, Frank.

Frank Barnes: Well, I'm giving you too much, I don't think it's that important, but anything you say.

Herbert Evison: Oh, I think this is wonderful background on how things happened and how they function.

Frank Barnes: Of course, I've always felt and said my career was accidental. It was in the falling in and as it evolved. I've had virtually no training in the Park Service. Everything I've done I have learned on the job, starting at Fort Sumter.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: Which I think is almost a commentary. Of course, I think today they overtrain, and for the wrong thing (laughs).

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Well, that's very possible, too. Now I would like to get back to that Fort Sumter thing again. I would like to get on the record your remembrance of that occasion when I met you first and—

Frank Barnes: Well, this is curious. This was about June 1950, wasn't it? Just before the Korean War.

Herbert Evison: Somewhere in there.

Frank Barnes: Yeah. And as you said, this was the start of a – supposedly the start – of a national campaign to get people to deactivate dud bombs and relics of World War Two. Might have been souvenirs that they brought home, and it was a safety thing.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: And so, to dramatize this the idea, was to kick it off at Fort Sumter. I guess you know more about the background than I do, but I can remember the occasion. I was still pretty green, and Fort Sumter had virtually no visitor services up to that point, so I was pretty green as a visitor-service type historian. I had to hurriedly get a uniform. We had about one week's notice and as I remember something went wrong with the mail. There was great confusion. The mails were delayed, and we had phone calls one day—

Herbert Evison: Could have been.

Frank Barnes: And I think I was acting for Bill Luckett when it happened and we had about one day's notice to get the word out to everybody that there was

going to be this shindig, so I had to get on the telephone, as I remember – and the Fort Sumter office which was then in the Chamber of Commerce Building downtown not on the island – and telephone all these people and invite them to this ceremony and get letters outs or what not. I remember getting a scolding from Bill Luckett. Do you want that sort of thing on there?

Herbert Evison: Yes.

Frank Barnes: After it was all over I kind of got a scolding because I had invited people on behalf of Fort Sumter National Monument, and he was right. He said: "You should have invited them on behalf of the National Park Service." But I was green at this sort of thing. Well, anyway, as we said downstairs, it involved getting a couple of boatloads of very distinguished generals, and admirals and whatnot out to the fort and I was supposed to give them a talk while they were waiting for the festivities to begin, and I did put together a talk as I remember and talked about Fort Sumter and its activities. Well, anyway, I remember the boat coming into the dock – a great big boat and all these distinguished people coming off and I was the one representing the Park Service, so I felt I had to welcome them and I did. Individually, I shook hands and said I was Frank Barnes, historian of Fort Sumter and felt very insignificant really and this went all right until I got one civilian type and I said: "I'm Frank Barnes, historian, Fort Sumter." He said: "I'm Hillary Tolson, Associate Director of the Washington office," and that was the first time I met Hillary Tolson, and I was dumbfounded: but other than that the duds, you know, we had planted a lot of dud shells around the parade ground because as it turned out in the course of their brief stay the army types that were working here had been unable to find any, you know—

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: So, there were some duds planted and in the course of the operation some of these were fired off somehow. You probably remember more than I.

Herbert Evison: Well—

Frank Barnes: It was all a great big fake.

Herbert Evison: Ostensibly anyway we had discovered over on the sandspit south of—

Frank Barnes: The sandspit, yeah.

Herbert Evison: The island, they had found a dud and having discovered it and suspecting that it was alive hooked it up to an electric line so that when they pushed in the plunger it set off the shell and this made a very nice show.

Frank Barnes: Right.

Herbert Evison: One hundred percent faked, but still it got its message across.

Frank Barnes: Right.

Herbert Evison: I suppose that's a case where—

Frank Barnes: Well, we got into "Life" magazine.

Herbert Evison: Yes.

Frank Barnes: But the Army did the whole thing of course. It was only about a week or two later, or maybe it was a little longer – the Korean War broke out and there we were again.

Herbert Evison: Yeah, yeah. Well, I remember that the guy in charge of it was a Navy man from Navy base around Washington or Maryland. I can't remember the name of it – but he was a demolition expert. He was the one who discovered the shell and who attached the lines to it, and I think set the explosion off.

Frank Barnes: I must have been up on the parapet at that point you know, I don't remember the details, other than that.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: But that was an interesting affair.

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Well, do you remember other occasions, and special observances in which you were a participant?

Frank Barnes: No special observances. I've always remembered one tour I gave down there as a historian interpreter. People used to come in on the Gray Lines and I can remember one day taking a group, maybe twenty-five people, around and talking at some length about the first shot business which I always thought was the most important part of that fort. Of course, Charlestonians think differently and at one point – it must have been on an anniversary of the firing – there was publicity – in the Charleston News and Courier – which was a very Confederate type newspaper and I can remember that paper having one sentence editorial amidst all of this saying – "Fort Sumter is a Confederate National Monument," which I've never forgot. Well, anyway, somewhere around there I was over on the island taking a tour of twenty-five people or so and I was expounding on the first shot business and it so happened that the first monument that you came to in those days was the monument to the garrison that was there on April 12, 18, in 1861, and certainly most important so – just purely – by the way the tour was arranged we got to that one first – and we didn't get to the plaques that were on the other side of the sally port that commemorated the Confederate garrison until later on, so naturally I

talked about that first monument and that story first – apart from the fact that it is the most important part of speaking as a damn Yankee now, but some lady in that tour chided me afterwards, and she was a local Charlestonian she said: "I can't understand why you spent so much time on the Yankee garrison here. They were here after all only thirty-six hours and they gave up. They surrendered while the Confederate force never surrendered." So that was an embarrassing situation – and a lesson of some sort – and an indication of how you would have to deal with public in the Park Service.

Herbert Evison: Yeah, especially in the South.

Frank Barnes: Right. Good training. You had to be somewhat politic.

Herbert Evison: Yeah, well you said that your research at Fort Sumter got you to nosing into the period after the fort was surrendered to the Confederate and their occupancy during the whole remainder of the Civil War period.

Frank Barnes: Right.

Herbert Evison: Now what did you uncover that was of interest there?

Frank Barnes: Well, the Confederates occupied that fort from right after its surrender by the North in April '61. They occupied it all the way down to 1865 and frankly I had never heard that from any schooling or had never read it and it's natural, because it isn't, you know, to northern eyes the most important thing; but they put up a fabulous defense there and the fort was bombarded as you know and there was a fleet of ironclads that went in. This is partly the result of the fact that in the northern schools you don't study the Civil War – at least when I went to school – and it may be different now – but the South always has, because they experienced that war.

Herbert Evison: Still very alive.

Frank Barnes: Right. And of course, we have to tell all of this. That's part of the Park Service story. It's written up in the handbook which I wrote, which is still selling, and I still think that handbook is one of the best places you get that whole story. The whole story, not just the Yankee part – but the Confederate part, too. And on the basis of my research, a lot which was based on War Department records and Confederate records at the Archives – on the basis of that research there has been archeology done over the years at Fort Sumter; as you know, they cleaned out gun casemates and they've excavated guns that were left inside so this all added up to the Fort Sumter of today.

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Well, do you approve of the Fort Sumter of today? Do you generally approve of what has been done down there?

Frank Barnes: Well, I haven't been there in maybe five or six years, but – and this was before we added Fort Moultrie, where I think our headquarters is now – so I'll speak as of five years ago. As of five years ago when I went back and saw the results of the archeology and restoration, & stabilization, the museum that they put in the old battery Huger – you know, the Spanish-American fort that went down through the central part, which they made into a museum. I liked it very much and I had wonderful talk, though, I was amazed and shocked to find that the signs that I had written the text for in 1949 or thereabouts were still up. (laughs) It's high time they got revised. I'm not proud of that entrance sign. It's way too long, but that was one of the jobs I had. Yeah, I liked what I saw then. I went to Fort Moultrie, but of course we didn't own it then. We were just getting it and I don't know what they've done since. Now Fort Moultrie has bothered me a little bit because it isn't the original fort, you know, that figured in the—

Herbert Evison: Revolution?

Frank Barnes: Sumter story, that didn't figure in the Revolutionary story. The real importance to that Fort Moultrie island site is the Revolutionary War. The battle at – I forget the name of the fort, what is now Sullivan's Island.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: That related very much to Moore's Creek Bridge, and it related to Independence here in Philadelphia, and we make something of it in our Moore's Creek literature. Now, they make nothing of it here in Philadelphia. Maybe it hasn't been researched enough. It's a tantalizing story and I'll bet we don't tell it down there. (laughs)

Herbert Evison: What?

Frank Barnes: I'll bet we don't emphasize that now at our Fort Moultrie interpretation.

Herbert Evison: Well, generally speaking, do you feel that the Park Service does a good job in telling the story at its historic areas?

Frank Barnes: Generally speaking, I have a feeling in recent years that – to be absolutely frank – that the story is playing second fiddle to the way it is put over.

Herbert Evison: I see.

Frank Barnes: In other words, like Marshal McLuhan you know, the medium is the message.

Herbert Evison: Yeah, yeah.

Frank Barnes: Now, this is my own frank opinion; and I also feel that increasingly that – oh – they don't really care too much about the story and that—

Herbert Evison: Do you think there's any tendency to over-dramatize as part of that method?

Frank Barnes: They over-dramatize and under-research.

Herbert Evison: Huh.

Frank Barnes: Is this going to be quoted anywhere? (laughs)

Herbert Evison: Well not, not any of it that you don't want quoted.

Frank Barnes: It's part – well, I don't care. They know my feelings on it, anyway, some of 'em do. It's part of the result of the split between interpretation and research that took place in 1964, part of which was good. Now, I'm for interpretation and I feel we are there to put a story over to the visitors, but I still think we have to have a little more research, factual input, and interpretation and I mean by that relating the facts to themselves so that you come up with an interpretation, detailed meaning. Too often our interpretations have come out as a sort of homogenized, romanticized, version of the actual thing.

Herbert Evison: Uh-huh. Which is the last thing in the world that the Park Service should be getting.

Frank Barnes: Right, right, right. Now remember there's a little prejudice there, perhaps, but I've been through enough interpretive planning meetings and have had to fight enough for the story, the story line, the facts, that I think I know something of what I'm talking about.

Herbert Evison: Yes, I think you do, too.

Frank Barnes: And I know that I get in people's hair because I'm constantly conscious of I'm cutting words out or I'm adding words or I'm adding facts and this slows up the process, you know.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: And I know that this irritates some people. (laughs) It's my job. I wouldn't be true to the mission. I didn't.

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Well, since you've been in the Park Service you worked under a regional director in Richmond under whom you also worked up here, but you have worked under I don't know how many other regional directors here – Ronnie Lee and Lon Garrison and Hank Schmidt that I remember – but who – there was somebody else.

Frank Barnes: Well, Tobin, Garrison, Ronnie Lee, and Hank Schmidt, who just Friday night had his departure.

Herbert Evison: Yeah, yeah.

Frank Barnes: And today our new Regional Director is sitting in—

Herbert Evison: Yes, Chet Brooke.

Frank Barnes: And he's our fifth amendment who is tremendous, I think, I'm looking forward to—

Herbert Evison: Really! I'm glad to have your reaction.

Frank Barnes: Oh, I think he's tremendous.

Herbert Evison: Yeah, wonderful.

Frank Barnes: He's done, he's the best thing that ever happened to Independence, I hope that doesn't break Anderson's heart. Anderson was the right man at his period, but I think for the development period that is now upon us, Chester is the man and got the park humming. I think he's going to get us humming and I'm not trying to make points. I just like him.

Herbert Evison: Yeah, well I think it's wonderful that you do. I have not known him very well and really can't say that I've been acquainted with him, so that I am delighted to get so favorable a reaction.

Frank Barnes: Well, he's a historian to begin with and I've always felt this region of all regions should have a historian at the helm.

Herbert Evison: Well, now—

Frank Barnes: Well they can—

Herbert Evison: That opens up the question of the historian turned administrator, of which there have been many – and quite successful ones, too – in the Park Service. Certainly, if any region deserves to have a capable historian who is a capable administrator, too, it's this region.

Frank Barnes: Right, I think so—

Herbert Evison: But above all things it needs a regional director who has the feel of history, who is in complete sympathy with what's the needs of this.

Frank Barnes: And it's more than that. He's also got to be a regional director who is attuned to contemporary trends, especially in the urban society which is the northeast.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: And we haven't always had that.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: Chester's got it, Chester is very active right here in this area, right in Society Hill, working through his church on problems of minority groups; this is fine.

Herbert Evison: Ooh, wonderful. Wonderful.

Frank Barnes: See. You see, it's more than being a historian. It's got to be somebody historian, administrator, and somebody who's socially aware of and is with it in contemporary terms, okay.

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Well I think you have—

Frank Barnes: In other words, excuse me, I've got a wonderful line here which came from the contract man who did the prospectus for Independence Park. He was an imaginative type. He came up with a wonderful line what we're after in Independence Park and what we're after in all our historical site work, I think is developing a sense of Then, a sense of Then, – T – but with Now meaning.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: I like that.

Herbert Evison: That's, that's; yeah, that's a wonderful. Have you been involved to any extent with the Independence thing since you've been here?

Frank Barnes: Mostly since Chester Brooks arrival and since things started to get on in terms of the Bicentennial. In other words, I had a fairly heavy committee involvement, you might say, on the interpretive prospectus that was produced a couple of years ago. I had some involvement on the master planning, not as much as I should have. I was amazed in that one. Lon Garrison pretty much handled that himself, you know. Real top-level stuff. I got involved on the review, but curiously I was not consulted as much on the master plan as I think I should have been, but since then I've been involved in programming and I think they appreciated it over there, I keep an eye out for their interest, but prior to Chester Brooks' tenure I wasn't terribly close to the park. The park has always been as independent as its name and you see Murray was over there as chief and he had a good tie with the park staff – Dennis Kurjack, M. O. Anderson – and as a result of that – I don't think it was meant to be an offense of anything like that. That's just one of those things.

Herbert Evison: Yeah, well now here's another person that I was wondering if you had any contacts with, a guy that I taped at length about five to six months ago. That's Charles E. Peterson.

Frank Barnes: I haven't had very much in recent years and not too much over the years actually. He's a controversial guy.

Herbert Evison: Yes. I know he is. Wonderful.

Frank Barnes: Yeah, right, entertaining. I enjoy him. His – the real battles and the controversy are between him and Murray Nelligan, I think. You ought to get Murray on about, Murray's here you know.

Herbert Evison: Yes. I'm going to tape him this week.

Frank Barnes: Oh, sure, well he and Murray were the people that had the contacts and battles.

Herbert Evison: Yeah. (both laugh)

Frank Barnes: Yeah. Murray to this day does not recognize a professional historical architect.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: Oh, no. Only historians can do research. I think he's wrong. (chuckles) Okay. Well, really let me qualify that immediately by saying that Murray has a great understanding of the research that is needed on historic structures, so whatever else you might say about him or anybody else might say about him – and I've said plenty – he has faults like all of us – but his big contribution, I think, has been in the historic structures research field, Murray Nelligan, I think.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: And I don't think it's recognized the way it ought to be. So, I think he set the groundwork for whatever we have today and that's another thing the service doesn't recognize. Research has been downgraded, down pedaled in recent years, but they couldn't have done what they're doing right now at Independence Park and other areas around here, except for the research that was done before 1964 when we had a different set up.

Herbert Evison: Yeah, yeah.

Frank Barnes: And that's a fact.

Herbert Evison: I remember having talked with Ed Riley when he was up here about all of the research that he enlisted; I suppose you know the story of that along with the University of Pennsylvania people that he tied into there.

Frank Barnes: Yeah. And that got forgotten.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: I don't think that panned out the way it was hoped, but it was a noble idea.

Herbert Evison: Now he's one of those former historians whom I haven't taped yet and I hope to tape him because if nothing else I want to get the story of research.

Frank Barnes: How about – thinking of Dr. Pitkin at all? You know Tom Pitkin?

Herbert Evison: I have a date with next Monday.

Frank Barnes: Good, because he – you know – he can tell you the whole saga of A.M.I. which is about to get finished, I think.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: But Tom Pitkin's a wonderful man.

Herbert Evison: I never met him. I'm looking forward to.

Frank Barnes: You should. He's colorful.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: He's had a fabulous career, you know, and you ought to get him talking about his career. He was in the Army – Indochina and various places.

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Yeah, I hope to get it all on tape.

Frank Barnes: That's right.

Herbert Evison: I'll have a plenty of time to do it.

Frank Barnes: Good.

Herbert Evison: Guess I told you I wrote him the other day and I made this date for about nine-thirty Monday morning down at his apartment and I'm not making any other dates until after three o'clock in the afternoon.

Frank Barnes: Oh, right. He's a good national parker and he was in New York a long time.

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Well, that's one of the things that I really look forward to. Well now we're getting near the end of this side of the tape. I don't want to cut you off at any place 'cuz I got lots more tape.

Frank Barnes: Well, you don't want lots more o' me though. (chuckles)

Herbert Evison: Well, I'd be glad to have all the more of you that you would like to put on the tape – if you have any observations, if you have any remembrance of people, events – I would like to have you think over your Fort Sumter

experience as far as distinguished visitors or distinguished contacts that you had in connection with your research anywhere.

Frank Barnes: With research?

Herbert Evison: Yeah. I have one thing that I would like to ask you. You mentioned.

Frank Barnes: I met Dr. Blegen – I have always remembered that at Fort Sumter.

Herbert Evison: Dr. Blegen from Minnesota?

Frank Barnes: Yes. I remember him coming down. He was then on the NPS Advisory board.

Herbert Evison: Yeah, that's right.

Frank Barnes: I always remembered that – and I remembered his point of view. I had told him the story of Fort Sumter and so on and I remember his chiding me a little bit. He said: "Now, don't forget the Union victory down here needs to be interpreted from the Union standpoint." I got the feeling that he thought I was being a little too sympathetic to the South, which is easy, you know, to do down there.

Herbert Evison: How could it be, how did he make any such statement as that?

Frank Barnes: How could he?

Herbert Evison: That it was a Union victory?

Frank Barnes: No, I shouldn't have put it that way. He meant that the primary focus was the first shot business, you know.

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: The starting of the war.

Herbert Evison: The noble defense in spite of the fact that it only lasted thirty-six hours, eh.

Frank Barnes: That's what I meant – I didn't say that quite right. I remember him. Contact of importance? Gee? I don't – you know, I don't do research anymore and I haven't really been in research for several years now. You know, I was chief of interpretation in 1964 and I'm always aware of the research input and the story angle. That's my forte, I think, I don't do research and the last couple of years I've been programming, trying to program research and it's getting to be a bigger job again, which is good, but I don't do research, no.

Herbert Evison: Yeah. But now historical research or general research is under you again?

Frank Barnes: Yeah. All of it's under me, although I can't profess to be a real expert on natural history research, there I do some consulting first, yeah, with the areas and with Bob Linn; he's down in Washington,

Herbert Evison: Yeah.

Frank Barnes: And actually, the guidelines on that are a little vague now.

Herbert Evison: Are they?

Frank Barnes: Yeah. (chuckles)

Herbert Evison: Well, on the first if they were defined, they might be changed next week.

Frank Barnes: Well, they might. All life has changed as the Director reminds us, but we're changing a bit too fast. (chuckles)

Herbert Evison: Yeah. Well, I feel that I've gotten a very good tape out of you, Frank.

Frank Barnes: Well, I'm delighted. I didn't think it was that—

Herbert Evison: For one thing you talked very readily and had some extremely interesting things to tell.

Frank Barnes: Well, I've got one—

Herbert Evison: And while we're not quite at the end, we don't have to fill it, so if you don't think of anything more, I'll just say thank you much and turn it off.

Frank Barnes: It's been a very interesting career the last couple of years, I've begun to lose some of my enthusiasm I must say. I've been very upset by the way they have failed to define the term environment when it comes to historic sites, and it really bothers me; and I have tried to write and talk about it and do something about it, but I haven't got very far. I feel that the service has missed the boat on environment when it comes to historic sites in terms of the scene, scene pollution, that's our bag, but you see very little about this. Right?

Herbert Evison: Yeah, I think you have a point. I'm glad that you—

Frank Barnes: And another thing I notice, and I'll say it for the record. The Centennial Commission for the Park Service doesn't have a representative of the historic sites field on it and its members and I think that's terrible.

Herbert Evison: All—

Frank Barnes: How do they expect all these two thirds of the Park Service to enthuse about things. (chuckles)

Herbert Evison: That astounds me. Well thanks again, Frank, for a—

Frank Barnes: Well, I enjoyed it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]