National Park Service (NPS) History Collection

NPS Oral History Collection (HFCA 1817)
Harpers Ferry Center Employees Oral History Project, 2015-2019

Edward Zahniser and Bruce Hopkins
November 4, 2015

Interview conducted by Elizabeth Ehrlich and Lu Ann Jones
Transcribed by Technitype Transcripts
Edited by Edward Zahniser and Bruce Hopkins
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 release form for this interview is on file at the NPS History Collection.

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

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

EDWARD ZAHNISER AND BRUCE HOPKINS

By Lu Ann Jones and Elizabeth Ehrlich

November 4, 2015

Washington, D.C.

Transcribed by Technitype Transcripts

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

This transcript has been edited and corrected by Zahniser and Hopkins.

START OF TAPE

START OF FILE 1

Edward Zahniser: Well, I showed up in a three-piece suit when I first came to work at Harpers Ferry Center, and quickly learned that things were a little less formal, but other than that, it was a good time. I enjoyed particularly all the staff meetings we had. They were just so enjoyable.

Edward Zahniser: So how much test do you need?

END OF FILE 1

START OF FILE 2

Lu Ann Jones: So today is November 4th, 2015, and this is Lu Ann Jones, and I am at Harpers Ferry Center in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia — or I guess I'm at Mather Training Center in the Storer College Room at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. There will be four of us participating in this conversation, so I'm going to ask each person to introduce themselves, and then we'll go from there. So, our interviewee, primary interviewee, please?

Edward Zahniser: Well, must be alphabetical, because my name is Ed Zahniser. I'm a retired senior writer/editor for the Publications Group of the National Park Service, and if you get the choice, I recommend retirement.

Bruce Hopkins: I'm Bruce Hopkins, also a retired writer/editor, supervisory writer/editor, and retired from the Park Service for twenty-one years.

Lu Ann Jones: Thank you.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: I'm Betsy Ehrlich, and I still work for the Park Service at Harpers Ferry as a designer in the Publications Group and worked with Ed and Bruce some years ago.

Lu Ann Jones: This recording is for our Centennial Voices Oral History Project as we head towards the Centennial. So, we're going to check the sound quality right now.

END OF FILE 2

START OF FILE 3

Elizabeth Ehrlich: All right. So, we're going to get started with some questions that focus more on your history as a writer and cover areas that in all the interviews and oral histories you've done in the past haven't covered as much, and things that we're interested in here at the Harpers Ferry Center and within the National Park Service, starting with what was kind of the most important influence on your development as a professional writer and how did you learn the craft of writing? How did you develop that skill, talent, and experience that you used here in your career in the Park Service?

Edward Zahniser: Well, the most important influences on my writing, some of it occurred before I became much of a writer. My father was a writer and editor and did a magazine, a quarterly magazine, and even as early as age ten or eleven, I used to sometimes go to the printer with him overnight as he was putting the magazine to bed. So, I got hooked on the printing world.

Edward Zahniser: All the guys in the print shop were very solicitous toward me, and their main message was, “Look, get a good education so you don’t end up doing this like we’re doing.” But that practical involvement with seeing things go from handwriting to printed magazine just really hooked me, that in itself. My father was so familiar with his magazine format that he usually wrote the editorials for the magazine while the rest of the magazine was being put to bed, final, and he would write them by hand, and invariably they were within one line of what would fit this space on the masthead page of the magazine.

Edward Zahniser: He was a collector of books. When he died when I was eighteen years old, there were about ten thousand books to deal with. He was also very supportive of my interest in creative writing. He got me out of my classes for three days in high school in 1962, so that we could attend the three-day celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Poetry magazine at the Library of Congress, and we got to hear thirty or forty of the most prominent poets of that time period read their work. So those things really interested me in writing.

Edward Zahniser: I was always amazed that even with handwritten things that I was writing for school, I would ask him to proofread them and he would say, “Do you want me to just point out the errors or do you want me to make any suggestions?” Even handwriting, he could just glance at the page and identify mistakes without reading the thing. It just baffled my mind. So those were great influences.

Edward Zahniser: I also had some very good teachers in high school — well, actually in junior high, high school, and college, I had some teachers that were very supportive of my writing. I was not a good student in French class, but my teacher let me, I guess sort of extra credit to get me through, she let me write poetry in French as a way of showing use of the language, and that forced me to be much more attentive to the French than I would otherwise be. I’m not a great memorizer. So even my French teacher was very supportive of creative writing, I guess out of desperation.

Edward Zahniser: Then I majored in English and history in college in a small evangelical church college in western Illinois. The three years I was at that school, I edited the literary annual and was a member of the creative writing class and did a lot of credits in course honors papers and departmental honors papers, so I got a lot of writing experience with that. I also typed a lot of papers for fellow students and usually made them grammatical and things like that as I typed. So, I was a professional writer during college, although the pay rate was minimal, but at that time it was a big deal just to have any kind of money.

Edward Zahniser: Then I was enrolled in a direct three-year Ph.D. program in English at the Johns Hopkins University right after I graduated from college, but my draft board notified me that they could only defer me until December of '67, and this was September, so I just dropped out of graduate school and got a job to earn some money before I went into the army.

Edward Zahniser: I don't know how to make this story short, but I knew I was going to get drafted and I thought, "That's fine with me." This was the height of the Vietnam — it was right before the Tet Offensive. But I panicked before I actually got my draft notice, and I went to a recruiter and I thought, "Well, I'll enroll in journalism school." He looked it up and he said, "Well, that's full for the next three years." So, I was quite discouraged. Then he said, "Well, you know—." I lived in Hyattsville, Maryland at the time, which was a suburb of Washington, D.C. He said, "Well, you know, the guy that makes those assignments is down at the Pentagon. I'll give you his phone number. Why don't you call him and go see him?"

Edward Zahniser: So, I thought, "Great." So, I called him, and he's on a thirty-day leave. And a week later, I get my draft notice. Nobody in my immediate family had ever been in the army or any military service, so I had no idea how things worked. But the guy called me back three weeks later and said, "Yeah, come on down."

Edward Zahniser: So, I put together a critical article, a literary critical article I'd written for a magazine, some articles that I had edited for a magazine and some other things, and my departmental honors paper, and I went down to see Major Barker. And I said, "Well, I think you should know that I've already been drafted."

Edward Zahniser: He said, "Well, that doesn't matter."

Edward Zahniser: So, I thought, "Ooh, good."

Edward Zahniser: So, he took a cursory look at the critical article, at the articles that I had edited. He picked up my departmental honors paper, which was in a hard-folder binding, thumbed through it, and he looked me in the eye, and he said, "Did you type this yourself?"

Edward Zahniser: And I said, "Yes."

Edward Zahniser: He said, "Well, where would you like to be assigned after basic training?"

Edward Zahniser: So, I thought, well, my fiancée at the time was planning to go to graduate school at the University of Indiana in Bloomington, and I knew that the journalism school was at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis, so I said, "Fort Benjamin Harrison would be my first choice, and my second choice would be Fort Meade, Maryland," which was in commuting distance of my mother's house.

Edward Zahniser: So that really headed me toward writing in the army, and that turned out to be a great experience, because as it turned out, my wife decided not to go to graduate school, and I thought, "What am I going to do in Indiana?"

Edward Zahniser: When my orders came, it was for Fort Meade, which was the headquarters of 1st U.S. Army. So, I was assigned to the Information Office there for what's called OJT, on-the-job training. That office happened to also produce, with a civilian editor, the fifteen-state civilian enterprise paper for all of the workers, many of whom, of course, were not military, throughout the fifteen-state 1st U.S. Army area. The editor was a trained, experienced newspaperman, and he offered me the opportunity to be his assistant because he was allowed to have one military assistant. So, he taught me layout, he taught me writing leads, and helped me write the tone of voice of that publication.

Edward Zahniser: Then he left, and my boss there, who was a full colonel, hired another civilian who had back-to-back bad automobile accidents, and my boss asked me to edit the paper, which I did. So, he was saving a GS-12 salary having this enlisted guy producing the newspaper for him. So, I learned a lot fast doing that.

Edward Zahniser: Then I got transferred to Korea and did a newspaper there, and we really worked on doing a newspaper for the troops, and that worked for eight months, and then we got a new colonel. He said, "No, I want you to do hometown stuff." He was more oriented toward the parents [of soldiers] in the army rather than the readers. So, we had to go out, travel around Korea, and do stories, hometown stories with people sitting on tops of mountains and missile sites where the trucks slid off in the mud in the spring. But we did a lot of interviewing and writing stories about all sorts of people, so it was great training.

Edward Zahniser: Except for a brief lull in my thirties, I've consistently written poetry since the ninth grade. That's good training for writing-to-fit, for compact communication. Novelist Richard Brautigan, asked why he spent so many years writing poetry, replied: "I was trying to learn how to write a sentence."

Edward Zahniser: So, I should shut up for a bit.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: Well, no, that leads actually nicely into kind of the segue way into your writing for and about national parks. So, for thirty-six years you wrote for and about national parks, so how did your writing evolve during that period of time, especially in the early years when you're transitioning into the Park Service and you're getting familiar with the requirements and the needs of the readers and the visitors and how it works with the parks? How did your writing evolve then?

Edward Zahniser: Well, I'll depend on Bruce here to jump in and remind me how much work he did on my writing, which was very helpful. But I think I learned a lot more about our reader, which was very important to me, and that even those experiences in the army had kind of set the stage for that. But I came here after working for a conservation group, editing their membership newsletter and being assistant editor and poetry editor of their magazine, and that was kind of a different audience than the Park Service. I mean, the values were very similar, but just the tone of voice of those publications were somewhat different.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: What organization was that?

Edward Zahniser: The Wilderness Society. I did some public relations work there, too, and that really helped me in the relationship with the people you work with in the Park and also with the knowledge that in public relations, you're not representing yourself; you're really representing the people you work for. And that helped me make the transition from the type of writing and editing I was doing for the conservation group, and then writing this material at a slightly different level and a different tone of voice for the readers of our National Park publications. But I'd like Bruce to chime in on that because I know he edited my work, and it was very instructive.

Bruce Hopkins: Well, Ed hasn't talked much about his background with the Wilderness Society, but I would say that was probably the big thing that attracted us in wanting to hire him for the Division of Publications.

Bruce Hopkins: Because of my newspaper background, I was hired to edit the editors and edit the writers, because the Publications Division before that tended to hire people with science degrees or history degrees and whatnot, and no offense there, but our boss felt like they needed to be edited for the common folk who visit the national parks. So, Ed's background dealing with the public was also important in why we hired him, I think.

Bruce Hopkins: Beyond that, he and I — oh, god — kind of hit it off right away. He understood the office dynamics without me saying anything. [laughs] We won't go there.

Edward Zahniser: Well, maybe we should. Bruce told me one reason that he hired me was that I seemed to intuitively understand the boss, who was a singular individual, and what he was looking for in an employee and how that fit into the organization. Typically, of some government hires, I interviewed for the job, what, three years or two or three years before I was actually hired because—

Bruce Hopkins: Probably two.

Edward Zahniser: Two. At least two, because between my interview at Harpers Ferry Center with Bruce and our boss, who should remain nameless until someone else mentions his name, although we can neither libel nor slander him, since he is no longer on our side of the sod, but then the boss failed to sign the paper expeditiously, and there was a hiring freeze. So, I was working then in a PR firm, and my boss and his secretary and myself shared an office. It was barely big enough to hold the three of our desks, but it was very lucrative work.

Edward Zahniser: I was sitting at my desk, working one day with my boss like three feet away, and his secretary three feet away, and it's Bruce Hopkins' voice saying, "Are you still interested in that job up here?"

Edward Zahniser: I said, "Is there somewhere I could call you tonight?" And he gave me his home phone number.

Edward Zahniser: So, there was a slight lag in that process, but that lag was good, too, because that public relations work, well, not only made me financially able to take a huge cut in pay to come up here to Harpers Ferry Center, but it was just invaluable experience of working for the clients. And also, the boss was relatively uneducated, but he had the most incredible instinct about what the client wanted and needed of any person I've ever met.

Bruce Hopkins: He's talking about the public relations job.

Edward Zahniser: Yeah, on my public relations job.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: In the Wilderness Society.

Edward Zahniser: No. No, this group was called Custom Text that I worked for. It was actually a group of five little businesses that served big clients, and the boss was a printing broker who just took three or four of his clients with him from the printing company and became a broker to the company. So that's what made the work so lucrative. But I learned from that work that the clients' needs are uppermost, and so I really saw the parks as clients when I came, but not in a sense that they were divorced from the needs of the Park Service, whom I was also representing. So that was very valuable work, that interim between the interview and being hired.

Lu Ann Jones: Why were you interested in the Park Service? I mean, had you applied for a particular job?

Edward Zahniser: Well, the answer begins by saying that my wife was born and raised in India. She was American, but born and raised in India, and she really didn't like living in the D.C. suburbs and D.C. So, we were spending a lot of time on the weekends traveling into West Virginia looking for land. This was the 1970s. So, I was working, and part of my job was working on the Wilderness magazine for the Wilderness Society, and we were buying some freelance photographs from a guy named Bill Bake, who worked at Harpers Ferry Center, and my boss at the Wilderness Society knew that my wife really wanted to get out of town. And he came in one day, he said, "Now, I'm not trying to get rid of you, but Bill Bake just told me they have an opening in the publications operation at Harpers Ferry." So that's how I got in touch with Bruce about this job.

Bruce Hopkins: I didn't realize that.

Edward Zahniser: Well, I've told you that before, but I'm sure you've repressed a lot of things I've told you. [laughs] So that was a specific job.

Edward Zahniser: But I grew up camping and backpacking because of my father's involvement and stuff, and I was surrounded as a young person by these people that were his colleagues, because — the conservation community at that time was a very small sort of interbred network of people, and since we were in Washington, D.C., this was the hub of it. So, when conservationists would come to Washington, many of them would stay at our house.

Edward Zahniser: Then when I was a kid — when I was fifteen, I got to go to the southern Brooks Range in Alaska with Olaus and Mardy Murie, who were primary leaders of the campaign for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge until it became — well, it had been led by two Park Service planners until it became a political issue. Then they had to turn it over, and they turned it over to Olaus and Mardy Murie. Olaus was also president of the Wilderness Society, for whom my father worked.

Edward Zahniser: So, I had youthful brainwashing in the values of protected natural areas and particularly in leaving them wild, which remains a problem today.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: Well, Bruce, you talked about how Ed was such a perfect fit in the beginning because he understood the office dynamics and—

Edward Zahniser: No, he said I threw a lot of imperfect fits in the beginning. [laughter]

Elizabeth Ehrlich: But can you talk about what you brought as a writer that was unique? I mean, obviously you've got all this experience and you've talked about feeding into it, but your voice or your approach to understanding the client, you've mentioned that. Was that different, Bruce, from, like, other writers in the office at the time? I mean, because you became a real leader in terms of helping establish kind of a standard and a voice and a way of thinking about writing in the Park Service, and I wonder if you saw that right off the bat and how you might articulate that.

Bruce Hopkins: Well, I don't remember in great detail about that, but it's mainly based on the experience of having dealt with the public from an editorial point of view. Some of the people who had worked with the Park Service or were working for the Park Service had science degrees or had history degrees, but not history for the layman. It was more like research or whatever, and there was a great inclination of our division at that time to look for archaeologists, say, to come work for us, and it was very hard to find people who had been writing for the public but yet had some science background or some understanding of science.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: So, you were the first writer, then, that was hired with that kind of writing, focus, and experience, is that—

Bruce Hopkins: No, no. I think Bob Grogg was probably the first — I mean, he had a history background, but he worked for the Department of the Army before coming here. I can't remember — Bill Bake had a photography—

Edward Zahniser: What about Earl Kittleman? He was later public relations.

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah. Now, was he before you or afterwards?

Edward Zahniser: Before. In fact, I never crossed paths with him at the Center. I met him later.

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah, he didn't stay here very long. But he came from a public information background in Washington, D.C., for the National Capital Region.

Edward Zahniser: So, he was also previously in government.

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah. And Bill Bake, I don't know how — he was mainly a photographer, but a writer also, and wrote for the public, but I can't remember exactly what his background was. But that was my bent, I was looking for people who were writer/editors, and previously people in the division had been looking for scientists or archaeologists or historians.

Lu Ann Jones: So, when you talk about that you saw the Park as your client, I mean, can you give me an example of that? What did that mean? Or a particular project that might illustrate what that means.

Edward Zahniser: Well, I saw my relationship to them as serving them as a client, but still keep in mind that the main responsibility should be to the reader as much as you can honor that in a large organization, and that you also have a responsibility to the National Park Service itself from a policy standpoint and from the attitude toward which you approach the material and the reader who's, unfortunately, called "the visitor" in National Park Service parlance, which is a kind of objectifying word that I never got comfortable with. So, I think the client thing involves understanding those three relationships that are going on and how you fit into that.

Edward Zahniser: So, I think some people, particularly the people who had an inner agenda about their scientific discipline, they look to these people as some people that should understand that we should do this because readers need to know this, they need to understand this. But I think I was trying to deal with the reader as someone who, if there was a should, that if they didn't now appreciate this, they should come to appreciate it. But it was like at a value level instead of saying that every person that comes to a national park should have a rigid concept that this place is nothing but a bunch of ecosystems that are fairly discrete, things like that.

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhmm.

Edward Zahniser: So that's not very articulate, but it's sort of —

END OF FILE 3

START OF FILE 4

Edward Zahniser: — what that means to me or meant to me.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: So how did you get from the public information officer that you referenced earlier the idea of really understanding the visitor so that you could write for that audience? Like, if you didn't go out to the parks for every job, how did you really kind of reach for that?

Edward Zahniser: Well, I think my — this is going to sound dangerous — my experience with creative writing made me comfortable with identifying similar experiences that I had had and similar places that I had been, even if it wasn't just like this, and trying to get back into my feelings about that place which is similar to this place.

Edward Zahniser: You have to remind me what the question was because I lost it there.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: Well, writing for the visitor, who you may not necessarily get to meet and know or have a firsthand experience with, how did you—

Edward Zahniser: Well, one of the strategies about writing that I learned early on was that a good way to at least get into a piece of writing is to identify someone you know who's fairly widely read, intelligent, and not very knowledgeable about what you need to tell them, so then write them a letter. So that helped me a lot. But I had been to a number of parts of the United States in wildlands, nowhere near everywhere, but I'd been to a lot of different types of areas, kind of arid areas and mountainous areas and riverine areas and Arctic areas, so I had a repertoire of feelings about places that I could work with in dealing with some place I didn't know. Because early on, we did quite a bit of writing about places we never saw.

Edward Zahniser: But then I think we eventually convinced Vince, our boss, Vince Gleason, that since an increasing amount of energy was going into design, and into refining cartography, that we needed writing that came up to those sorts of standards of communication. Actually, one battle we won with him — and Bruce is greatly responsible for this — was that Vince did not want to buy photographs. He felt like any money spent on photographs was coming out of his pocket. So, he wanted us to get crappy photographs from the park's files, so we didn't have to pay for good photographs, and, remember, we're dealing with some of the most glorious real estate in the northern hemisphere. So, we kind of shamed him on the basis of, "You're developing great design, but you're putting crappy pictures in there. You're developing great maps, but you're putting crappy pictures in there."

Edward Zahniser: So, then he actually eventually came to the point where a job had a theoretical picture budget, because initially — and this, I know, was a hardship on Bruce. I was glad it was a fight I didn't have to fight. It was that no job had a budget. If you wanted to do anything, if you wanted to buy a thirty-dollar picture, you know, for use in perpetuity, you had to get Vince's permission to buy that thirty-dollar picture, and you're just doing one job of twelve or fifteen jobs might be going on in the office at that time.

Edward Zahniser: So, Bruce, bless his heart, did that battle of getting an actual budget for a job — or at least the expectation that any job is going to spend x amount of dollars on photography. So that was one of the early battles to get publications that could sort of match the landscapes and historical places.

Edward Zahniser: But another thing we fought with our boss on — I think because of the leader of the history branch's, way of thinking — we fought to present these natural parks, so to speak, as cultural places too, because some of them had a cultural history that was greater than some cities. So that was a big breakthrough in treating parks holistically as a human experience, as natural experience, as humans as part of natural history, natural history as part of humanity.

Edward Zahniser: So that freed up a lot of stuff, I think, because — I'll be careful here because one of the parties is probably still alive. But one thing that my work with that public relations company taught me that was very valuable to my dealing with office politics at Harpers Ferry, I mean, within our group, not within the whole Center, was that my boss at the public relations job was somewhat uneducated, as I said, but this incredibly instinctual guy whom I really admired. But he had this sidekick who was a pseudo-intellect, and my boss depended for validation on this guy's pseudo-intellectuality, and this guy was a bag of wind, but he had the right vocabulary, you know, like a bellows with a mouthpiece on it that was created by someone who actually knew what the air was coming through. But at Harpers Ferry, Vince had that sort of relationship. Now, Vince wasn't uneducated, but he was very insecure. He was exceedingly insecure, and he had that sort of relationship, and knowing that helped me negotiate a lot of stuff with Vince. Well, that's enough said. You should say something.

Lu Ann Jones: I'm just trying to get clarification. You mean that—

Edward Zahniser: You'll never get it, sorry. [laughter]

Lu Ann Jones: You mean that you learned that you needed to flatter him in some way to kind of hopefully get what you wanted?

Edward Zahniser: No.

Bruce Hopkins: He'd tell me to go down and talk to him. [laughter]

Edward Zahniser: Yeah, right.

Lu Ann Jones: I see. Okay.

Edward Zahniser: I was hoping Bruce would say that.

Bruce Hopkins: It was you and Bob Grogg who prodded me.

Edward Zahniser: It was very helpful to me. Maybe Bob Grogg figured that out, too. It helped me see what had to be negotiated to get things done and that you needed to raise the level of discourse with Vince to compete with this pseudo-dependency that he had, which was based on his own insecurity. I only had one psychology course in college. It was too general for this job! [laughter]

Elizabeth Ehrlich: Well, you started talking a little bit about the work between yourself and the designers, and I'm reading into that in your talking about recognizing that you need really good quality graphics to match the level of quality of cartography and of writing. So, can you talk a little bit about your relationship with working with graphic designers and how that might have evolved when you were here?

Edward Zahniser: Shortly before I came, the protocol, I was told, was that the editors would write a manuscript and just sort of, in the parlance of publishing world, throw it over the transom to the designers, and they would lay that out as a brochure, and the size of the brochure would really depend on how long the text was or how short the text was. So they weren't that involved in the concept.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: The designers weren't.

Edward Zahniser: Yeah. They were, like, illustrating a piece of writing. I thought that the best thing that ever happened to the office was Massimo Vignelli, because he established the idea of a design platform, and that the more gridded that platform was, the less time you spent wondering what size sheet of paper should we use, should it be horizontal, should it be vertical, should it be this wide or that wide. He established that for printing economy, but part of design is recognizing that you're doing this on paper, and these papers go through presses, and presses are a certain size. So those sheets of paper were now all standardized in width and modularized so you could have a narrow brochure, and it would be half of the whole sheet, and then you could have different lengths. Also, Vignelli had this theory of horizontal thirds, which I think still stands; anything can be pleasingly divided, intellectually pleasingly divided into three parts, visually and intellectually.

Edward Zahniser: So that started to help you think about telling stories, because most places have more than one story. A place like Yosemite has a natural history, it has a human history, it has a National Park Service history, it has a controversy history, and it has, in my opinion, the most spectacularly concentrated, stupendous scenery that I've ever seen anywhere.

Edward Zahniser: So that set the stage, I think, for the writer and the designer and eventually the cartographer to really work together in advance of doing anything, to work together on what's the story, how do we tell it, how do we divide it up.

Edward Zahniser: Well, it became pretty apparent that you could only tell it in any length that would justify the story itself. You can only tell three or four stories, discrete stories in a brochure. So, there's a lot of design decisions made just in thinking that, so that the idea that storytelling has a grid, which, fortunately, matches this grid that is developed for the printing press and for design and layout. So that was very helpful to me and I think to the entire office. And one of the big helps was that it made it perfectly clear — for some of us — that this was the way to work on this — and we had seminars about this that brought in a lot of people from the outside world. I think we talked about some of these seminars earlier. People would leave their cubicles and desks and come here to the Mather Training Center and sit in the big classroom and listen to designers and producers and writers who were working on the world stage.

Edward Zahniser: So, they really helped us see what we were doing in different ways, and I think they helped us to be a lot more professional in the way we approach these things, not operate as though we're like a government bureaucracy or something.

Edward Zahniser: The seminar that sticks in my mind, philosophically, for this is the Word and Image, and I think that was the Eyewitness book series people, Dorling Kindersly—

Bruce Hopkins: Oh, yeah.

Edward Zahniser: — but also, Bruce Marshall of Marshall Editions in London, England—

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah.

Edward Zahniser: — and others from the former London office of the Reader's Digest Books group. They developed the book whose every two-page spread treated a single topic, which we adopted for the two-page NPS Handbook spreads that we called "graphic features."

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah.

Edward Zahniser: I can't remember his name. So, we had this real exposure to world-class movers and shakers in the world of print publications and—

Bruce Hopkins: We have to give Vince the credit for that.

Edward Zahniser: Yes.

Bruce Hopkins: He was always interested in bringing in outsiders, not only to hire, but bring them in as consultants or bring them in to conduct these seminars, and actually one of the highlights of my career was dealing with outside writers.

Edward Zahniser: As opposed to having to deal with me. [laughs]

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah, right.

Lu Ann Jones: What did — you said there was a particular seminar. I didn't catch the—

Edward Zahniser: Oh, it was called Word and Image, and it was about how they are the complementary vehicles that, in synergy, best tell a story, not separately or more the words or more the image. That was, I think, liberating to some of the designers who really did want to be part of a team doing something, rather than off in a cubicle trying to illustrate this manuscript somebody threw over the wall, you know. [laughs]

Bruce Hopkins: We came to realize that — and this took many years to come to the conclusion, kind of, and we have no proof of this, really, but—

Edward Zahniser: Well, except that we've outlived some of the people that would deny it. [laughter]

Bruce Hopkins: — that half the world is visually-oriented, and half the world is word-oriented. So, I think what Ed is saying, that this Unigrid concept that Massimo Vignelli came up with allowed the designers and the editors, together, to work on content both visually and with words.

Edward Zahniser: Yeah, I'd say content and communication — that it's not the words alone that are communicating or the image alone that's communicating; they are working together to project something.

Bruce Hopkins: I've found as a freelancer doing work on wayside exhibits, outdoor exhibits, that it's mostly a visual medium. The rule of thumb there is that some people will stand there for three seconds and look at an exhibit or thirty seconds, while the readers like Ed and me would stand there for three minutes — like parents trying to grab their kids from running down the path, so they can finish reading.

Edward Zahniser: I think those seminars were very influential in working toward creating a communications team, rather than a designer and editor and a cartographer working independently or together. And Bruce is right; Vince gets a lot of credit for that by recognizing that there was something more out there in both design and communication, although Bruce, I think — my impression is that you lobbied him pretty hard on some of those seminars about—

Bruce Hopkins: Well, he quite often turned it over to me to organize. He'd give me ideas on who to call, and then I would get other ideas from you or various people in the office or the Center, because we invited other divisions to attend these seminars.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: Well, the term "design-driven publications" is sort of the way we talk about the Unigrid today, and it's interesting to see that maybe it was this series of seminars that was able to take people who had once sort of worked in isolation and get them to see the world kind of through similar eyes and evolving to what we have today, which is a lot less text and very visual because people are reading more visually than they are text these days.

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah, television's had a great effect on people looking for images. They're looking for images quickly and in color. And this reinforces what

Ed was saying about the quality of the images. I think we realized they had to improve because of television to a great degree.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: So, the expectation of the reader is different.

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah.

Edward Zahniser: I have one of the standard books on web writing, and it's called Don't Make Me Think. Clarity is really an important thing. Well, I think Vignelli at least intuitively understood that particularly today, I mean today more so than twenty years ago or, jeez, thirty years ago when I started to get into this stuff, that the reader makes a preconscious decision when looking at particularly print. There's a preconscious decision of whether or not this looks like I can readily read it, and today there are so many other options instantly available, that if you look at something and the type is too dense, you will move on. So, you've wasted whatever effort you put in, you know, big budget, into trying to communicate.

Edward Zahniser: I've done some freelance work on exhibits since I retired, and my mantra with the people I work with who are not usually directly the Park Service, but usually indirectly, "Fewer words, more readers." That's like my mantra, and it's not because I want to get paid more per word by writing fewer words. But things have to look like you can readily read this. And I really learned that from Vignelli when I got sold down the river to the Department of Interior to start an all-employee newsletter for the department, first time I'd ever had anything like that, and Vignelli had designed a tabloid in which there was no place in that tabloid where you were ever looking at a chunk of body type that was any larger than an eight-and-a half-by-eleven sheet of paper. I mean, not piece of type, but—

Elizabeth Ehrlich: A body of type.

Edward Zahniser: A body of type that — Betsy was always one of my best editors — a body of type which was no larger than an eight-and-a-half-by-eleven sheet of paper, because his concept was you want employees to read this on their lunch break. So, there was a publication that was tabloid-size, but just looking at it, it looked like you could read it in a reasonable amount of time. So that's a concept.

Edward Zahniser: Vignelli was not a writer, but he was a genius designer, just no question, and a visual genius, too, because in the Yosemite NPS Handbook design, as we said before this interview began, we provided him with six hundred photographs. He came to our office to work on that book, and we started at about ten o'clock in the morning. So, we had these six hundred photographs, and he went through a lot of the photographs, and I had been working with the photographs for a couple of months, so I had a pretty good grasp of what they were and how they related to the different parts of the book that we were trying to present.

Edward Zahniser: At around ten o'clock in the morning, I started showing him photographs. Well, like at three in the afternoon, he might say, "You remember that photograph you showed me?" And he could describe that photograph from five hours ago with enough precision that I, who was pretty familiar with the whole body of photographs, could find that photograph and hand it to him. Also, I watched him. Every once in a while, he would just stop and stare off into nothing, and I realized he's going through every two-page spread in that book in his head.

Edward Zahniser: So, what we got from him were little thumbnail drawings of each two-page spread in the book, little thumbnail gestures with his fat-leaded pencil, but the gestures were so accurate that our designers could place all the photographs that we selected for that thumbnail spread. We started that book at ten a.m. and finished at midnight in the conference room. We ate Vince's lunch for the week. Vince was kind of a fruitivore, and he had this brown paper grocery bag full of fruit and stuff, and we just stayed in that office and worked that whole time, and by the midevening, we'd eaten all of Vince's fruit for the week. I could see he was a bit pissed off, but he was afraid of Vignelli in terms of saying, "Well, why don't we go out for lunch," or something.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, so when he was doing that, I mean, had he read your manuscript at that point? I mean, what — kind of physically, what were you doing in terms of images and words?

Edward Zahniser: We had had the manuscript set in the typography of the book. So, as he was working on it, he was reading it, and I was in heaven, because he kept saying, "Wow, this is interesting. Did you write this?" No, he said, "Who wrote this?" I said, "Well, I wrote it." He kept saying that, which was great validation for me. But that was back in the days when we had time to work on those books, because there's a lot of great stories attached to Yosemite if you have time enough to learn them and put them out.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, how did you get your assignments? How did you — did you choose? Were you assigned certain parks? How was that decision made?

Edward Zahniser: I paid Bruce $50 if I really wanted the job. [laughter] I don't know. How did we get the jobs?

Bruce Hopkins: Well, both with brochures and handbooks, I would make decisions within my branch who's going to work on this and who's not going to work on this or, mostly who's going to work on it from an editorial standpoint.

Edward Zahniser: And damned if he didn't send me to Chickasaw. [laughter]

Lu Ann Jones: And how would you make those decisions, given that you—

Bruce Hopkins: Well, the background of the writer/editors in my group. Even though we were the natural history and recreation branch, one editor really had a history background, and others in the group had various backgrounds.

Edward Zahniser: And I had no background, so I got the jobs that fell through the bin.

Bruce Hopkins: Ed got a lot of the natural history things. A lot of it also depended on what I would expect was going to be a big job or a small job, and Ed was extremely good at taking a big subject and figuring it out and what should be included and what shouldn't be included and what should be a chapter and what should be a sidebar feature.

END OF FILE 4

START OF FILE 5

Bruce Hopkins: We had a young writer in our branch, Carolyn de Raismes, who was excellent at handling brochure texts and, I thought, wrote marvelous things, but she hadn't been around long enough to handle big jobs, and big jobs kind of scared her. So, you base a lot on that. The writer/editor with the history background got a lot of the national recreation areas and the history sites and the National Capital parks. So, I'd choose it more that way.

Lu Ann Jones: So how long would you have to write something like Yosemite and where would you start with a project like that?

Edward Zahniser: Well, we can't tell you that or they might revoke our pensions. [laughter] We had a lot of time to work — that was a long time ago. We had a lot of time to work on that stuff, so you could really pretty much immerse yourself in it.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, what's a lot of time? Because, I mean, it's a pretty substantial book. So, a year? Would you have a year or more to do a book this size?

Edward Zahniser: Well, we've got to weasel-word this a little. When you're working on a book, you're also working on all your brochure projects.

Lu Ann Jones: Yes.

Edward Zahniser: So, yeah, I mean, that book would take place over a year or two—

Lu Ann Jones: Right.

Edward Zahniser: — because you also had to cajole the other members of your team to devote their time to your project instead of somebody else's.

Lu Ann Jones: Right. I mean, that doesn't seem excessive to me for a project.

Bruce Hopkins: Well, some of them went longer than that. If you—

Edward Zahniser: Well, one of them went on long enough to get the progenitor fired. We won't elaborate on that.

Lu Ann Jones: I'm going to stop asking those. So, for example, the one on Great Smokies. Now, most of this, if I read correctly, was written by Wilma Dykeman and Jim Stokely, I believe.

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah.

Edward Zahniser: Yeah. Bruce did the—

Bruce Hopkins: Actually, I worked on the—

Edward Zahniser: I did the "Great Smoky Mountains Handbook." This is "At Home in the Smokies."

Lu Ann Jones: Oh, gotcha. Okay.

Bruce Hopkins: But "At Home in the Smokies" was the park's idea. Great Smoky Mountains National Park wanted a book about its human history as well as its natural history, and they suggested, people in the park suggested, Wilma Dykeman, who wrote a column for the local newspaper and had written a lot of fiction—

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhmm.

Edward Zahniser: But the reason Bruce was interested in it, she wrote a book called "The French Broad."

Lu Ann Jones: I was going to say—

Bruce Hopkins: Right.

Lu Ann Jones: — that was one of the Rivers books.

Bruce Hopkins: Right.

Edward Zahniser: Yeah, but he didn't realize it was a river book. He thought it was about some French broad. [laughter]

Bruce Hopkins: That was one of Wilma's famous stories. She said — I don't know how far off you want to go into a tangent here, but—

Edward Zahniser: Well, this is better than what I'm talking about.

Bruce Hopkins: — there was a Rivers of America book, and she had written to Carl Carmer, who was the main editor of that series of books, and said something about writing about the French Broad, and he wrote back and said, "No, it's not that major a river," and everything and so forth. She wrote back to him and said, "Well, there was a guy up in Massachusetts who wrote about a pond." [laughter] "Okay. I give up. Write a book about the French Broad." That's how she got the job.

Bruce Hopkins: But the park people had told her one time that the book sold like crazy in the park because all these college boys would come in and think it was about something more than a river. She was a delight to work with, and I, fortunately, got that assignment, and she became one of our seminar speakers at more than one seminar.

Edward Zahniser: Right. She also — wasn't she the one that got us in The New York Times travel section? Didn't she write that piece about—

Bruce Hopkins: I think so.

Edward Zahniser: National Park Service Handbooks as travel books?

Bruce Hopkins: I think so. Yeah.

Edward Zahniser: Yeah, Wilma Dykeman wrote that.

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah, I think so.

Edward Zahniser: Front page of the Sunday New York Times travel section was devoted to our NPS Unigrid format handbooks. We called Vignelli's systematic designs of NPS brochures and handbooks Unigrid formats.

Bruce Hopkins: Wilma Dykeman was a lot of fun to work with, and, really, because of her newspaper background, because of her fiction background, she knew how to write for the public.

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhmm.

Bruce Hopkins: Now the — you're going to be sorry you brought up this book.

Edward Zahniser: No. Go ahead.

Lu Ann Jones: No. [laughs]

Bruce Hopkins: But the first edition of this book was called "Highland Homeland"—

Edward Zahniser: Of the—

Bruce Hopkins: — of the "At Home in the Smokies" book, and it was black and white. This is before we had the Unigrid format. But it was at a time when—

Edward Zahniser: Where Vince willing to pay for a photograph.

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah. It was at a time when we were introducing the metric system in our publications, and we decided that in the handbook we would convert to metrics. I can't remember whether we put in parentheses the English measurements or not, but—

Lu Ann Jones: Still, you reference hectares in here.

Bruce Hopkins: It's a second — it's secondary, I hope.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah, I think so, but still.

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah, I think in this version it's secondary. But in the first version, we had all the stuff in metrics and converting board-feet into — board-feet is hard enough to understand in English, never mind the metrics. [laughs] But Wilma Dykeman always got a kick out of how the first edition of the book had metrics and the second edition had English measurement backed up by metrics. She would make a great joke out of it.

Edward Zahniser: [coughs] Excuse me. I just choked on purified water. I had another thought that just evaporated. Another great experience that I had — and Bruce gets a lot of credit for my being able to have this experience — occurred because we had a seminar with a fellow named Bruce Marshall, who, with his wife and a graphics partner, had a book-producing business in London in which they produced what are called international co-editions, books that are published in several languages using the same basic films, except for separate films for the type. Marshall came and gave a talk, and one of the things he really helped us with was how to use an expert.

Edward Zahniser: You don't take an expert's word for anything. You do the best you can do, and you give it to him, and you say, "Now, tell me if something's really wrong with this."

Edward Zahniser: I very quickly realized that one of my jobs as an editor was to protect the readers from geologists and archaeologists, because they want to take people so far into the weeds, because they're not thinking about the reader; they're thinking about their colleagues who are going to say, "Well, you mean you let them say that?" If you make something simple enough for somebody to not only understand but to appreciate, there are things you can figure out that you won't end up appreciating if somebody made you figure the damn thing out, you know? So that was a thing you learn.

Edward Zahniser: But also, there was an employee development opportunity that was available when they established the Albright Awards.

Lu Ann Jones: Is it Albright-Wirth?

Edward Zahniser: Well, originally, I think it was Albright. When Bruce Marshall, at the end of his seminar, which was multi-day, I was just so fascinated with his description of how they worked, and I just told him, "Boy, I'd love to come over and just see how you work," because he said each project had its own room, you know, and that the projects were largely done by freelancers, because in Britain it's much more advantageous, both to the employer and to the employee, to be on a freelance basis. It has to do with the way things are taxed. I don't know. I could never understand it. But I was just fascinated by the fact that you've got a project, you put all these people in one room with this project.

Edward Zahniser: So, I applied for a, I don't know, whatever it was, Albright-Wirth — it wasn't Wirth at the time — to go to England and spend a month working with them. I happened to have a personal childhood friend who had been working as a lawyer in London, and his company was moving him back to the United States, so he had this flat in Queen Square, London, that it was to his advantage to have somebody living in while he's trying to sell it.

Edward Zahniser: So, I was going to London with no housing cost, and I could propose a budget that didn't make any sense in London. I thought, "I can eat a lot cheaper. I don't care what the cost of food is over in London; I can eat cheaper than that per diem." So, I put in this low bid on the expenses for this fellowship to spend a month working with them in London. In fact, I got a call from the National Park Service travel office. They're saying, "Do you realize the cost of housing in London?"

Edward Zahniser: So, I explained, "Well, I have a place to say."

Edward Zahniser: They said, "Well, the per diem for food is such and such."

Edward Zahniser: I said, "That's okay. I think I can do that."

Edward Zahniser: So, despite what it might have cost otherwise, I got to go to work with them for a month, and that gave me a lot of confidence. I mean, the result of that was it gave me a lot of confidence that we were doing real books and that I could do real books.

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhmm.

Edward Zahniser: Because before I left, after that month with them, I was putting together a book for them, helping them put together this book on national parks and even how to advertised the book, and they let me sit in on all sorts of meetings about how to handle several books they were doing. Anytime anyone had a birthday, they had me sing the "Happy Birthday" to the tune of the "Song of the Volga Boatmen." The way they would term it is, "Get the American in here to sing that song." [laughter] And they thought I was crazy because they all had their pubs and their drink, you know, and every time I went to a pub with them, I wanted to order something different and find out all this stuff, so they thought the American didn't understand pubs or beer.

Edward Zahniser: But that experience was really valuable to me. In fact, it is through that experience I got a freelance job doing a book on North American trees with a book packager in the Washington area that Bruce Marshall knew. He gave me an entrée to them. I wrote the book. This was a book published by the Reader's Digest Trade Division, and I wrote the proposal for the book and then met with this guy and the Reader's Digest guy to sell the book to him, and then I wrote about 60 percent of the book, and then they had a guy as the editor of the book — well, the author, he was listed as the author, and he regularized the voices, because there were like three or four writers involved. So that was a good experience, too, of working on a book like that, and I helped them a lot with the photography, too, although they had an excellent photo editor, but I had the resources.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: One of the things that was noted in your Distinguished Service Award was that you had "an outstanding ability to deconstruct a project and ask thoughtful questions." I'm wondering if that's sort of where you got some of that strength from, and if you could kind of articulate that. Like, if you're talking to a writer today who is going to start a new project, or describe how you started a project to know how to ask, what to ask, and how to dig in and deconstruct something, how would you describe that?

Edward Zahniser: Well, from the standpoint of Vignelli, I mean, the fact that you're dealing with platforms that you understand in advance, you're not worrying about what kind of paper are we going to use, what size is it going to be, you've got a pretty good idea of what the end product is, so that helps you think in terms of the end product, not strictly in the sense of all the details that you're going to have to understand to get there, you know? So that's kind of gridded thinking.

Edward Zahniser: Correct me if I'm wrong on this, but when we started talking about the Unigrid handbooks, we had a manuscript for an Assateague Island book, and Bruce and I had been talking about — well, I don't know if we termed it this way, but we were sort of talking about what's the grid for the handbook, you know. So we decided that we would do them in three parts, and the first part would present the values and appreciation and the beauty, and — if you want to say — aesthetic approach to the place, and then the major second part of the book would be like the intellectual, not in the highfalutin sense of the word, but engaging your intellectual mind about understanding the stories and what goes on there, and then the third part would be — we named it "Guide and Advisor," and it would be practical travel information about that park.

Edward Zahniser: So, I did a dummy layout with regular typewriter sheets of the manuscript divided up that way with these big red divider pages, because Vince Gleason was a red person, which he didn't understand, but gonadal energy is red, and he really responded to red. So, I had these big red divider sections that said "Guide" for the back, and it said — I forget what the opening said, but it was these three parts. So, he saw his Unigrid in this book thing, and all he said was, "Go do it." [laughs] So that was a gridding of the book in our minds about how you structure it. And if you look at Yosemite, there's a lot of beautiful big full-page pictures in there, there's not as much type, and then you move into the second part, there's more details. There are what we called graphic spreads or graphic features. Is that what we called them?

Bruce Hopkins: Features, yeah.

Edward Zahniser: Yeah, graphic features. That's right, graphic features. So, we kind of figured out how to differentiate them from the sheer photography and the text pages, the main storyline text. Both working with Vignelli's stuff and Bruce Marshall, that really helped me. But I think by the time I went to Marshall Editions, that was '89, we had done books.

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah, we started in the eighties someplace with—

Elizabeth Ehrlich: With the handbooks.

Bruce Hopkins: — with the handbooks and the Unigrid format. When did Vignelli start the brochures, in the—

Edward Zahniser: Seventy-seven. Late '77. I came in April, and I think that started in the fall of '77, and that was just a great time to arrive.

Bruce Hopkins: So, by the early eighties, we were — or late seventies — starting to put the handbooks into the Unigrid format. One other realization I had — well, when I first came here, they had piles of manuscripts for books, and Vince would give me these to read at first, and I'd try to keep my eyes open, some of them were so boring, and I thought, "God, maybe I should have stayed at the newspaper." I could hardly stay awake reading some of them.

Bruce Hopkins: Well, finally I realized that some of them should never be published. And then when we decided to go to the Unigrid format, we had some parks like the Smokies for which we did two books, a natural history book and a history book. Wind Cave was one of our first conversion projects, and we took what were going to be separate natural history and history books and put them together, and it wasn't the most ideal thing, but it killed two projects with one, and in the course of human events, we weren't going to be able to do that many handbooks anyway. So, we converted other texts — you worked on Big Bend, which started as a natural history project—

Edward Zahniser: — and Glacier Bay.

Bruce Hopkins: Glacier Bay. And some of these original authors, freelancers, weren't that pleased, but—

Edward Zahniser: Yeah. Great Smoky Mountains was a Nape Shelton manuscript—

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah.

Edward Zahniser: — and—

Bruce Hopkins: Ruth Kirk.

Edward Zahniser: — Ruth Kirk was Glacier Bay.

Bruce Hopkins: Big Bend. I can't—

Edward Zahniser: Helen—

Bruce Hopkins: Helen somebody.

Edward Zahniser: Yeah, but they were, I guess you'd call them — they were major, in some cases, major rewrites that we tried to do politely and nicely. But also, it was like taking those manuscripts and dividing them up into these three pieces or adding a third travel piece, because that was really an idea later on, to make these true NPS handbooks.

Bruce Hopkins: We took some of the chapters and turned them into sidebar features, two-page features.

Edward Zahniser: Yeah. One of our early motivations with the books is that we wanted to produce these government publications that did not look or read or feel like a government publication, because the expectations at that time of government publications were dull, drab things, way out of date, no color pictures, none of that stuff.

Lu Ann Jones: So how much conversation would you have with somebody at the park while you were writing these? I mean, one of your questions was what if your concept for what the handbook was going to be, or the brochure, differed from what people at the park thought. How did that get resolved? So, where's the park in this conversation?

Edward Zahniser: Well, on that job, I went out there and I was out there—

Lu Ann Jones: We're talking about Yosemite?

Edward Zahniser: Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah, mmhmm.

Edward Zahniser: I was out there at least week. I went everywhere you could go by car in that park and everywhere that a traveler to the park could go by car, and I did some tramping around, too, and I talked to several people there. The chief of Interpretation there, that was Len McKensey, I think. Gosh, I remembered his name. I don't know. He seemed to realize that I wanted to do a real book for them, and at one point I was talking to one of his staff, and they mentioned someplace, and I started describing it, and he said, "Boy, you have been everywhere."

Edward Zahniser: So, a lot of it is just making sure that they understand that you want to do something that does them credit, does the park credit, is of real value. And actually, that book was so successful that it killed it, because we printed — what did we print, 25,000 copies of that book?

Bruce Hopkins: At least.

Edward Zahniser: Well, I mean, the first printing was 25,000 copies, and they sold all of them in a year, and they reprinted it, and then the local cooperating association, which produces publications, too, the cooperating association realized, "Dang, we should publish our own books so we're getting the full profit, not just—." So, they produced a book, and this one sort of disappeared over the years, I think, and I don't think it's in print now. I'm not sure, because they produced their own book, but the reason they did it, very clearly, was that they realized that, "Wow, if we did a real book, we could sell it."

Edward Zahniser: But, yeah, occasionally you just — I don't think I ever really gave up on a book and just did what someone wanted, but sometimes there was a lot of back-and-forth and finessing, and when I was working on the Sequoia Kings Canyon book, they had a couple of employees in the park who had written their own books and had fairly narrow interests about what the park meant and what the values were, and they didn't like the kind of popular tone of the book. And Larry—

Bruce Hopkins: Waldon.

Edward Zahniser: Larry Waldon — collective memory here — bless his heart, he was in charge of the book because he was the chief of Interpretation, and he just told his people, "Well, we're going to give the author his—." I forget what he said, but, "We're going to go with the author's impulses on his book." He also assigned somebody out there to help me, and just gave them all the time that was necessary to help me. This is the Sequoia handbook again, and that staff help led to just a couple anecdotes of backcountry experiences, which are totally unbelievable.

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhmm.

Edward Zahniser: But we gave rich details like that, because one of them, there was a guy, a climber out there, an old duffer climber named Norman Clyde, who was a legendary mountain climber and used to just like live in the backcountry for weeks at a time. He was known for carrying such heavy packs that his friends started ribbing him by telling him, "Well, you know, this type of canned good is really good." So, he'd end up with his pack full of canned goods, and he carried several cameras, and he was a voracious reader and he'd have like three, four substantial books in his pack. So, he was just legendary. But twice in his life, he was sitting out in rocky terrain up in the mountains, and I forget the species, but one of the birds of prey landed on his shoulder — this happened on two separate occasions — thinking he was a rock. [laughter]

Edward Zahniser: I later learned, this was many years later, that after David Brower, the famous Sierra Club guy, who was a world-class mountain climber, when he first starting climbing, he and some people he was with had an accident that just could very well have killed all three of them, and so Dave Brower realized he needed a little more training, and someone told him that Norman Clyde, this guy was the go-to climber, and he did, and Clyde helped Brower a lot with training. But—

END OF FILE 5

START OF FILE 6

Edward Zahniser: I think the thing you had to do when working on a book was to sell your seriousness and just hope that they responded. But even with, well, Glacier Bay, we really rewrote that book, and still the original author even came in and we went through stuff, and she worked on it again and then I worked on it again, and she still allowed us to use her name. So, we tried not to do too much violence to anybody's work. The book was just totally a different book than what she had written. In fact, I was working with Linda Meyers as the designer on that book then—

Bruce Hopkins: Oh, really.

Edward Zahniser: — and it was after we got the final approval from the original author Ruth Kirk on the final rewrite that Linda read that and said, "I finally saw a book," which I thought coming from Linda was high praise.

Bruce Hopkins: This is a gross generalization, probably, but I always found that the naturalists in the parks were so interested in the outdoors and what they were doing in their work, that they welcomed writers and editors and were more open to them. They would feed us ideas, but, "You go at it, because I'm busy watching birds," or, "I'm busy doing this." Historians in the parks — this is not disparaging at all, but they come from a writing background to a large extent, so they seem to have firmer ideas of what they wanted said and done. Not always. I think of Don Defoe at the Smokies—

Edward Zahniser: Yeah.

Bruce Hopkins: — and as a freelancer since leaving the Park Service, I would call him up and ask him questions, because this guy knew everything about every salamander that ever lived.

Edward Zahniser: Individually, not species. [laughter]

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah.

Edward Zahniser: “Oh, yeah, I went to church with him three times.”

Elizabeth Ehrlich: You talked earlier about writing first drafts as manuscripts, and then obviously things evolved into digital technology, Word files and that sort of thing, and design changed a lot as well, going from those early sketches and layouts and getting typeset all the way up to when you left, everything was done digitally. Can you talk about how that affected your writing, how you think about writing, how you approached a project? Or maybe it didn’t.

Edward Zahniser: Actually, right now I’m taking an online course in writing short nonfiction for magazines, because I do a lot of that, but I don’t get paid for any of it. This is an attempt to find out how to sell the damn stuff, you know. We had to do these little profile things. There’s like about twelve people taking the class online, and we each were supposed to do a little profile, and I said in that profile that I learned an awful lot about writing by writing to fit, because once you grid something and you decide, well, we can tell three stories or four stories, there’s a space there, and you’ve got to have the illustrations, and you’ve got maps and all this stuff. The nice thing about going to publication software, publishing software, was that you could take some text of the dynamics that you’re going to use, you can flow it in there and you can count it, and you know I have so many words and letters and spaces.

Edward Zahniser: That’s the way to count is letters and spaces, far more accurate than words, because David Rains Wallace might write mostly words that long, and somebody else might write them that long, but if you do characters and spaces, you’re pretty close.

Edward Zahniser: So eventually that’s how — you know, I would just ask, because we would be using the greeking — instead of greeking type with Latin, we ended up using actual English type picked up from another job or whatever, and just flowing that in there and just counting it in Word as characters and spaces. So, it introduces a very good discipline, because it’s got to fit, especially if you’re working with Angie Faulkner. I’d have to negotiate any extra line, which was great discipline, too.

Edward Zahniser: So, you start out and you fill that space, and then you know you can get more information in that space than in the text you wrote, so you start rewriting. I always kept in the back of my mind Bruce's admonition that, yeah, you can write it short, but don't make it sound like a telegram. So, you keep working on that to put as much information in there as you can and still make it a pleasant read. So, I found that a great discipline. Plus, it let you know that you didn't have to learn everything there was to know about that topic. You had to learn enough about it to convey the topic. So, as we had less and less time to work on projects because of money crunches, that was just very valuable to start writing that way.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: So, you were working to a layout, but the layout had to be developed based on some idea of what these overarching stories and the key ideas were going to be. How did those develop into a layout that then you could write to, in terms of your part of that layout development? You were thinking in terms of layout, or were you given a layout that you then had to think about and develop toward?

Edward Zahniser: Well, that depended in part on the designers and the way they make — one of the Center-wide seminars we had on was "Styles of Decision Making." I don't know if anybody remembers that. That made me very aware that, at the time, the designers in the office really made decisions in radically different ways. Some people loved to have a conversation about it as being the basis of making the decision, you know, you get together and you talk about it, and someone else wanted to just mull it over and come to their own conclusions. So, you write them a brief and hand it to them and don't ask them what they think. Say, "If you have a chance to think about it, let me know."

Edward Zahniser: So, there are different ways of working, but you'd have to try to figure out what works for the other members of the team.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: And the park. I mean, did you work with parks that had a specific idea about how things should look, and therefore you have to sort of shape your story to theirs?

Edward Zahniser: Well, I don't know. I think that in general the office pretty rapidly developed a reputation in the field that we knew what we were doing and were producing good stuff, and they're all much busier than we were. These poor people in the parks are just beat to death. They should get Purple Hearts for showing up for work. So, increasingly, I think we would just work up something and propose it to them and then not be doctrinaire about that, not pretend that what we knew was far better than anything they knew, so that there's back-and-forth. But I also worked from the very start with whoever my park contact would be. I'd say, "You know, well, in a brochure, we can only tell three or four stories. What are they?" So, I'd be willing to do any amount of work with them back and forth on how do we combine eight ideas down to three or four, and can we combine these two and still tell — you know.

Bruce Hopkins: When we were first doing the Unigrids, the writer/editors would prepare a text and it'd be sent out to the park for review and then come back, and we'd massage it some more and then go into design. I don't know when we shifted to where — did we ever shift directly to going to design before the park saw it?

Edward Zahniser: Yeah, I think we did. We used to send out — Vince had some name for them. They were like design dummies.

Bruce Hopkins: Mmhmm.

Edward Zahniser: He had some other name for them — comprehensives. But we'd paste in pictures that suggested what—

Bruce Hopkins: That was the first time the park saw the text?

Edward Zahniser: Well, we didn't even necessarily put in text at that point, I don't think.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: You had greeking?

Edward Zahniser: No, no. It wasn't dummy. He had some term he used, I forget, but it was basically a design proposal. So that evolved.

Edward Zahniser: But moving to electronic publishing made it possible for us to give a much better idea of what we were proposing, because I learned this in-house. I worked on the Grand Teton Handbook with Nick Kirilloff. And you know Nick. We must have spent four weeks on one photograph, because in the dummy he had used a photo of a piece of driftwood. It was a beach scene with driftwood, he used in a dummy, and about two weeks into this agonizing process of picking pictures for this one spread, I realized, "He's trying to find a photograph in the Grand Teton of driftwood on a beach." So, I told him—

Elizabeth Ehrlich: Compositionally or literally?

Edward Zahniser: Well, with Nick, there wasn't a huge difference between literality and conceptuality. So, I said, "Nick, we're looking for a picture that just could never occur. The lowest elevation at Grand Teton is 6,000 feet. That's the floor. We're never going to find a beach scene with driftwood up there." It was a real revelation to him that that's what he was doing. So, these things happen. [laughs] But we looked at picture after picture after picture. We'd send out for more photographs from different photographers, driving the — at that time, there was like Marilyn Wandress and Doris Barbour doing photo research. They'd have to go out to these commercial photographers and say, "I'm sorry. We've already looked at two hundred of your photographs. Can you send us a hundred more on speculation?" for these ridiculous prices we were paying then, ridiculously low prices for using photographs in perpetuity. [interruption]

Lu Ann Jones: Well, I think you had some notes prepared. Are there things that you want to talk about that we haven't covered so far?

Edward Zahniser: We might talk a little bit about audience, concept of audience. We talked quite a bit about word and image. Just talked some about the personalities and enthusiasms of different designers from the standpoint I worked with them as a writer/editor.

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

Edward Zahniser: I would say that in terms of the idea of design-driven publications, I was just a bigtime advocate of that, and that concept maximized our work. It makes it possible, I think, to maximize the real synergy of illustration and words and presentation, overall presentation, so that you view the publication as a communication.

Edward Zahniser: I think somewhere you asked about, or maybe I made up my own question about "How do you measure success?" For me, it was like I was out in Yellowstone, out of my car but at like a viewing place or something, and there's these people on bicycles and they're reading the park brochure and reading it as a group, sort of. "Hey, did you read about this?"

Edward Zahniser: "Yeah."

Edward Zahniser: "Well, did you read about this?"

Edward Zahniser: "Yeah."

Edward Zahniser: That's success.

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhmm.

Edward Zahniser: But I don't know. I feel that even though I was educating myself for the time between when you retire and when you die [laughs], I just really felt that externally Vince Gleason, for all his — also being a human being — his influence, and Vignelli and Vignelli's sidekick from the Knoll furniture corporation, Christine Rae, and from Bruce Marshall and his operation, that it was just a real opportunity for a great education you couldn't have gotten anywhere in a school or whatever. So, I always felt good about that.

Bruce Hopkins: Working with some of these outside writers, that was a real highlight for me. Wilma Dykeman, and then I got to work with Bill Mauldin on a book for the—

Edward Zahniser: Oh, yeah, that was great.

Bruce Hopkins: — Bicentennial.

Edward Zahniser: That was great.

Bruce Hopkins: Because the history group didn't want anything to do with it, didn't think it was history, I got the assignment by default, and it turned out to be one of the best things, most enjoyable things that I participated in. And it turned out that Mauldin was a very good writer. He said to me at one point, "I have never been edited so much as with you but thank you."

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah.

Bruce Hopkins: So those experiences were good. I got to work with Paula Steichen, Carl Sandburg's granddaughter, on a handbook for Carl Sandburg's home. I did write down some of those names so I wouldn't forget them.

Edward Zahniser: Stokely. Jim Stokely, was that—

Bruce Hopkins: Jim Stokely was one of Wilma's sons. Robert Finch wrote the Cape Cod book. That was kind of my swan song, the last book I worked on. Barbara Charles, a designer, I enjoyed working with her in Washington.

Edward Zahniser: Was that Charles & Eames?

Bruce Hopkins: Well, she came out of that school. We worked together on the Arlington House book. I enjoyed working with Duncan Fitchet on maps. Vince brought in an outside mapping firm, Donnelly Cartographics during the Bicentennial, and that turned into a longtime relationship. As crazy as Duncan was, he really raised our mapmaking levels tremendously, and Vince let him.

Edward Zahniser: That's what helped us begin to be able to buy photographs worthy of the places that we were wanting photographs of, was that Duncan raised the mapping level so high that we could shame our boss Vince Gleason and say, "Look, you can't do these wonderful, glorious maps and use crappy photographs. We've got to buy some real—."

Lu Ann Jones: How do you spell Fitchet's last name?

Bruce Hopkins: F-i-t-c-h-e-t?

Edward Zahniser: Mmhmm.

Bruce Hopkins: One t, I think, at the end.

Edward Zahniser: It looks like Fitchet, but it's Fitchet.

Lu Ann Jones: Okay.

Edward Zahniser: Good question.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah.

Edward Zahniser: Good question, transcriber, right?

Lu Ann Jones: I was going to say I try not to bug people too much with that.

Bruce Hopkins: I shouldn't forget in that list that I would — this is really Ed's interview, but I have to say this. I was very lucky in that I became a friend of Freeman Tilden's and took two trips with him, one to Cumberland Island and Florida and one trip to Colonial, to Jamestown.

Edward Zahniser: We did a brochure — Freeman wrote the brochure, but I don't want to go right through that whole story.

Edward Zahniser: Yeah, do, because he underlies most of what we do.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: Yeah, and we haven't really talked about what's going on in this building, the Mather Training Center, in the whole interpretive development program, theories of interpretation. So, I'm glad you raised this.

Bruce Hopkins: He said, "Don't call me the father of Interpretation. I'm the codifier of Interpretation." He was right about that.

Edward Zahniser: Well, he was just worried about paternity suits. [laughter]

Bruce Hopkins: But everybody in the Park Service thinks of him as the father of Interpretation, but he really studied what the Park Service people were doing, the rangers were doing at St. Augustine and out in the natural areas, Grand Teton and various places. Fortunately for me, and it was probably because of my newspaper background, I think, and Freeman had a newspaper background, and we're both New Englanders. So, I went to Cumberland Island with him, and he was to write a brochure about Cumberland Island. Cumberland Island had just opened up. The Park Service had just taken over, and we stayed in the great big Carnegie mansion that was devoid of furniture.

Edward Zahniser: Oh, you got to stay in that one?

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah.

Edward Zahniser: Whew. The one with the—

Bruce Hopkins: Plum Orchard.

Edward Zahniser: Yeah, the real Tiffany lamps and the—

Bruce Hopkins: Well, this had nothing in it at that time. It had been cleared out, probably. It had books. It had a lot of books left in the bookshelves and just a couple of pieces of furniture here and there, and the superintendent was living in it. I can't remember his name — he came from the Blue Ridge Parkway. But this guy, the superintendent, he was talking about "The Carnegies did this," and, "The Carnegies did that," and the various other rich people who were there and everything. He disappeared, he went out of the room, and Freeman came up to my right ear and said, "This is obscene." [laughter] Freeman always had a way of defusing something and educating me.

Edward Zahniser: Tell them the story about Freeman going to a concert with a guy who had to go to the bathroom.

Bruce Hopkins: I can't do that one justice, but I think of it every time I have asparagus. [laughter] So you can imagine what that story was about.

Edward Zahniser: Yes. The guy's coming back, working his way down the aisle, and Freeman's still seated over there, and he called out in a loud whisper, "You know what they say about asparagus? It's true." [laughter] But Tilden was an amazing writer. He wrote books on economics. He didn't just write—

Bruce Hopkins: Oh, the one on economics is a pleasure to read, too. It's "A World in Debt." You'll never find a copy of it other than the Library of Congress. I borrowed it one time.

Bruce Hopkins: But he did not end up writing a piece on Cumberland Island because he just couldn't get into it. But after we left Cumberland Island, we went down to St. Augustine because he used to spend his winters there. As he said he used to spend the winters above Babe Ruth. I said, "What?" Well, there was a wax museum down below his room, and he claimed Babe Ruth was under his room. [laughter]

Bruce Hopkins: They treated him like God at Castillo de San Marcos. We walked into that place, and because of all the research he had done there and the months he had spent with the rangers there and everything, that superintendent rolled out the red carpet for him, got one of his rangers to get into a Redcoat uniform, because the Bicentennial was going to come up in a few years, and come into the room and stand there at attention in front of Freeman. Freeman, "Mmhmm." He kind of mumbled, "Mmhmm," smoking his cigar.

Bruce Hopkins: We went back to the motel, and I said, "Freeman, what'd you think of that Redcoat uniform, all that Bicentennial stuff they're getting ready for?"

Bruce Hopkins: "Terrible idea. People will see that, and they'll go home thinking this was a British fort instead of a Spanish fort."

Bruce Hopkins: I said, "Well, why didn't you tell them that?"

Bruce Hopkins: "Oh, no. I can't do that. I can't hurt their feelings." But he was always right on. God don't get me going on Freeman. We went to Colonial and we were doing a brochure that the Park Service wanted to do — they're tied together — Williamsburg, a non-Park Service site, and Yorktown and Jamestown, these three areas, and Freeman did it and he wrote a wonderful piece and everything. And Vince said, "Okay. Let's really do it. This is a greeting brochure for this whole area, and we want to really do it up."

Bruce Hopkins: Dennis designed it, and it had a silver coating, a dark gray silver coating on the surface of the paper, and the text was printed in brown on top of that silver coating. It's the way I remember it. There're probably more technical ways to describe that.

Bruce Hopkins: So, I remember I delivered printed copies of this to Freeman, and I thought it was great. It looked wonderful and all this and that. I gave him the printed copies, and he said, "Looks like an invitation to a jewelers' convention." [laughter] Oh, god. He always hit the nail right on the head.

Bruce Hopkins: And I took a very quick trip with him to Wolf Trap Farm Park for the Performing Arts. Back in the seventies, the Park Service talked about historical areas, natural areas, and recreational areas, and then former NPS Director George Hartzog came up with this new cultural areas idea. So, we had a brochure that had the natural, historical, and recreational blurbs by Freeman with one photograph of each category, a very simple brochure, and Vince wanted a fourth on the cultural area. So, I went to Wolf Trap with Freeman and he's just humming, "Mmhmm, mmhmm, hmm." He listens to the interpreter and he's mulling things over, "Mmhmm, mmhmm." Then we got in a conversation later about it, and he said, "You know," and this is a point Ed made earlier, "all the parks are cultural," and that fourth category idea got dropped by Hartzog.

END OF FILE 6

START OF FILE 7

Bruce Hopkins: This guy, Freeman, had great perception. It was just marvelous. In fact, I thought it was better than his writing, often. Sorry for that—

Lu Ann Jones: No.

Bruce Hopkins: — sidebar conversation.

Edward Zahniser: One of my mentors was a college friend of my father's, and he often would say, "You know, this loses something in the original." [laughter]

Lu Ann Jones: Well, speaking of original, how did you ghostwrite for Roger Kennedy and John Reynolds and other people? How do you come up with other people's voices or hear other people's voices, or does your voice become their voice?

Edward Zahniser: Well, if you hadn't said Roger Kennedy that would be easy to answer. How I approached ghostwriting for him was with fear and trepidation, because unlike a lot of people that high up, he would put something that you ghostwrote through his own word processor, and stuff would turn up here and there in the piece that was just like, well, you wondered where in the world they came from?

Edward Zahniser: But, yeah, you try to write in someone's voice or at least in a speaking voice, and I had heard him give talks here at Harpers Ferry Center and elsewhere — well, mostly here, but I think I heard him down in D.C. once. So, you try to write in that voice to the extent you can, and obviously you're trying to use their ideas and their vocabulary, except when you want them to say something that you just personally wished that they'd say!

Edward Zahniser: What I did for John Reynolds was not so much things he would speak, but just a paper about something that he'd want. But Kennedy did a lot of writing himself. One of his books, it was called Orders from France1 or something like that, and it was about the early American experience, and I read that thing. Our ace historian the late Raymond Baker had a copy. I read the thing, and it was just all over the place. You couldn't tell what that book was about, you know. So that made me think, well, a lot of his stuff — you know he was head of the Smithsonian—

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhmm.

Edward Zahniser: — so, a lot of his stuff was probably written by people that worked for him there. But it wasn't that he couldn't write, but that it was tangential, he was so all over the place. At one point one of the people in the Washington office asked me to come down and join three other people, who were writers, and one of whom was a woman who did a lot of writing for Stewart Udall before, just to come up with some talking points for Kennedy, because every time he got up to talk, it was just something off the wall.

Edward Zahniser: Actually, I saw him again in 2000. This was several years after he left office. I saw him in St. Louis, Missouri, at the Discovery 2000 Park Service event, and I said to him, "You know, things are not nearly as interesting now as they were when you were in charge."

Edward Zahniser: He said, "Well, I guess I'll take that as a compliment." [laughs]

Edward Zahniser: I said, "Yeah, it was."

Edward Zahniser: But, yeah, that was a lot of fun, writing for him. I think that the work I did for John Reynolds and the director and for the Office of the Secretary on the all-employee tabloid newsletter "People, Land, and Water" was very beneficial to Harpers Ferry Center, but it was the only job I ever got without knowing it, because this was after Bruce had retired, and Bob Grogg and Melissa Cronyn were sort of rotating as being a head of our group, because no one had been selected after Vince was pushed out or something, and Bruce had retired. I forget what the sequence was.

Bruce Hopkins: I went before he did.

Edward Zahniser: That's right. That's right. So, the then-director of Harpers Ferry Center called Bob and Melissa and me down to talk about something. I don't know. We talked about something. So, we're all through, we're getting up, ready to go, and our Center boss said, "Wait a minute. I've got another thing." So, he announces to them and to me that I'm to be detailed to the Secretary's Office to start this People, Land, and Water thing. I didn't realize this at the time, but it was really out of the blue to just say, "Hey, by the way—" and give you away to the Washington office!

Edward Zahniser: Fortunately, we had just gotten cc: mail, email, so I ended up mostly just going into Interior on Tuesdays, which was the day that the Bureau PIOs, public affairs officers and public information officers, met with Kevin Sweeney, who was Secretary Babbitt's chief of Information. But it turns out that the underlying reason that Vince Gleason got fired was that, without informing his superior, the manager of Harpers Ferry Center, Vince went off to New York to deal with Vignelli about what should be done about this new publication they're talking about for Kevin Sweeney, who was the Interior Department information chief.

Bruce Hopkins: The newspaper.

Edward Zahniser: Yeah, the all-employee tabloid newsletter, tabloid-format newspaper. So, the then-Center-director told Vince that he wasn't supposed to run off like that without telling him what he's doing, and, "Don't do it again." Well, Vince did it again and got fired.

Edward Zahniser: Then the then-Center-director got paranoid that he had fired this guy who was trying to help out Secretary Babbitt's Chief of Information, so he volunteered me to help him with this project. But that was great, too, because I got to go to New York and work with Vignelli again and with his assistant, Rebecca. Massimo and Rebecca would talk about stuff and she would do it, because Vignelli didn't do anything with computers.

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhmm.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: How long were you on that detail?

Edward Zahniser: I was able to talk my way out of it with Kevin after about six months. So, he and I then hired a nongovernment person to be kind of a transitional editor, but soon after that Kevin left government and went back to the Patagonia company. Kevin left, and the next guy that came in just didn't understand at all why this thing was designed the way it was, so they immediately just started filling it up, chock full. You'd take one look at it and say, "God, it would take me a month to read all that stuff." It lasted a while, but I don't think it exists anymore, does it?

Lu Ann Jones: Not that I know of.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: I don't think so.

Edward Zahniser: Yeah, because a friend of my wife's and mine who used to work for the National Parks Conservation Association, she was involved in it for a while, but I think it died out.

Lu Ann Jones: Do you have any more questions?

Elizabeth Ehrlich: Well, I think you've touched on just about everything that we had in the questions without ever actually going through the questions.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: So, I don't have anything specific. I think it would be fun to kind of end on a note of like what was your favorite highlight or good story, because, gosh, you just — as we were walking over here, Bruce Kaiser said ever since you left, Ed, that he's been trying to ramp up his humor to fill in the void, and so we all recognize that that is something huge that you brought to the Center that we all miss so much, so I know there's some good stories in there. So, if you want to finish with something like a highlight or something to keep us all going.

Edward Zahniser: Well, I'll just tell you what my brother always said, which is that everything he needs to know he learned at our mother's knee and other low joints. [laughter] So, no, it was great fun working here. I enjoyed the people I worked with and enjoyed having a real mission that I think is really important, which is to make people understand and appreciate that these places and what they stand for are more valuable than B-1 bombers, you know, and they cost a hell of a lot less.

Lu Ann Jones: Bruce, do you have—

Bruce Hopkins: Well, I think I covered one of my highlights with my Freeman Tilden stories and working with outside writers besides the staff. I mean, I thoroughly enjoyed the day-to-day work here with designers and cartographers, with Vince, with fellow writer/editors, and other people in the Center, though I wished we had a little bit more interaction in those days with the other divisions. But after coming from newspaper work, I found this very rewarding, and I think both Ed and I loved having a city job in the country. I was working for the Washington Star in the 1960s when everything went to hell, and I thought, "Well, I can go to Vermont." Well, I ended up out here, and it was just really fortunate how things fell together.

Elizabeth Ehrlich: Any last Ed stories we need to have on the record?

Bruce Hopkins: Ed stories?

Elizabeth Ehrlich: Yeah.

Bruce Hopkins: Well, none that I can say. [laughter]

Edward Zahniser: I'll tell you one. Between the time when, I guess, the decision was made to hire me and I showed up at Harpers Ferry, Bill Perry, who was then one of the staff members here, happened to read my bio that I had supplied to Backpacker magazine when I did a piece about my father — I think it was Backpacker magazine — in which I mentioned where I had lived in former lifetimes. [laughs] And I think Bill came running into Bruce's office, saying, "What is this?" [demonstrates]

Bruce Hopkins: He wanted me to cancel the hiring of—

Lu Ann Jones: Where had you lived?

Bruce Hopkins: Morocco.

Edward Zahniser: Morocco, yeah. See, I have to check with Bruce where I lived in a former lifetime.

Bruce Hopkins: Even when I called him up and told him he had the job, he told me his astrology reading for that day, that he was going to get some special message that day or something like that.

Edward Zahniser: Did I?

Bruce Hopkins: Yeah. Ever since then I look at the horoscope in the paper, and it never comes true for me.

Edward Zahniser: I'm so not at all into astrology, but my wife once got a fortune cookie that said, "Never look a gifted horse in the mouth." [laughter]

Bruce Hopkins: A friend of ours got a fortune cookie that said, "Don't believe previous fortune." [laughter]

Edward Zahniser: Yeah, fortune cookies, Chinese fortune cookies were invented by Japanese people in New York City. That's true.

Bruce Hopkins: Really?

Edward Zahniser: Yeah. Chinese didn't.

Bruce Hopkins: Well, they ought to go back to making them, because the messages are really bland. They won't go out on a limb anymore.

Edward Zahniser: "Adidas do not a runner make." That's one I got one time. [laughter] What kind of fortune is that? But last night, my son emailed me a fortune he got in a Chinese restaurant. It says, "Your problem will get bigger," or something. I said, "Well, I guess it depends on what your problem is." [laughter]

Elizabeth Ehrlich: So, there's one last short story — you've told this before, Ed — that I would love to hear you tell just once more, and that is on your last day at work, there was an event that occurred that kind of ruined the flow of the normal checkout process. And I don't even know that you know this story, Bruce.

Bruce Hopkins: No, I don't.

Edward Zahniser: Yeah, on the last day of work, there was a power outage occasioned by some construction crew some distance from Harpers Ferry, severing fiber optics and all sorts of stuff. So, we just all of a sudden — we were down then in that temporary quarters in the—

Elizabeth Ehrlich: The annex.

Edward Zahniser: — the annex, which used to be the maintenance shed. So, Mark Muse and I were in this back cubicle, and it was pitch-dark. We could barely see to get out of there, so you couldn't do any work. You had no computer. You had no lights. It was totally dark. So, there's a little picnic table out in front of that building and right next to the parking lot, so we were either sitting at or gathered around that picnic table, and our boss Melissa Cronyn had not yet showed up for work. So, we had a large box, a pizza box, so we got the idea of since we were all hanging around outside doing nothing, that we would make a big sign with that box that said "On strike," and we'd put it up on the exterior window ledge, and we were sitting around there.

Edward Zahniser: So, Melissa drives up and she sees that sign. She gets this horrified look on her face, and we're all just gathered around, and then I think by the time she got to the picnic table, she figured it must be just a joke or something, but it was worth it just to see her look when she looked up at that sign, saw all her people standing around the picnic table, saying, "On strike." I was given a T-shirt that we can't describe to you because I can't even wear it in public, but it's a cool shirt. [laughter]

Lu Ann Jones: Well, if we've gotten to the X-rating or whatever, maybe it's time to end. So, thank you very much for the conversation today.

Edward Zahniser: I appreciate it. It was great. Thanks.

Lu Ann Jones: You're welcome.

END OF FILE 7

END OF TAPE