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Irving McNeil, Jr.  
March 2, 1973

Interview conducted by S. Herbert Evison  
Transcribed by Beverley A. Foltz  
Digitized by Sara E. Forrest

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
OF  
IRVING MCNEIL, JR.

INTERVIEWED BY  
S. HERBERT EVISON  
March 2, 1973

Tape Number 164

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FINAL

(Tape 164)

TYPED BY: Beverley A. Foltz

July 9, 1981

[START OF INTERVIEW]

Herbert Evison: This is the morning of March 2nd, 1973. I am Herb Evison, and this morning I am in Globe, Arizona, at the hilltop home of Irving McNeil, Jr., who has been superintendent of a lot of interesting areas in the National Park Service.

Herbert Evison: Now, Irving, let's start off by getting when and where you were born and something about the family you were born into.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I was born in El Paso, Texas, in the year 1913. I have two sisters; my father was a physician, very highly respected in the community and very highly respected outside the community. He was known from coast to coast and from Canada to Mexico.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: My mother was a reviewer of books, and she reviewed books in El Paso and all the nearby cities and towns.

Herbert Evison: Let me ask you about that; does that mean she would get up before an audience and talk about books?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh yes, oh yes.

Herbert Evison: Because I thought first of reviewing books for a publication like Newsweek or something.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, no. She would talk about the books; it was her hobby, after we children got away from home, and she especially enjoyed reviewing these books to pay for war bonds.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: In other words, people would pay to hear her talk by buying war bonds, and she took great delight in the amount she raised during World War II, in making book reviews. She formerly lived in Washington, D. C.; she grew up in Washington, D. C., and my father went to school there - medical school - and so they had a common, or a partially common, background.

Herbert Evison: How about your own education?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I went in the front door and out the back door in El Paso, of kindergarten, grammar school, high school, and the University of Texas in El Paso. After I finished there, I went to George Washington University in Washington, D. C. for a short time.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: About that time, there was a fellow in Europe stirring up a great big storm, named Hitler, and before I knew what was happening, the draft had come to this country and caught me up in it, and I had been to Australia, India,

Burma and China, and was coming back under that Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, which is etched in my memory as a symbol of home, because etched in my memory just as clearly was walking up the gangplank of the ship going over, because at that time I didn't know whether I was coming back or not.

Herbert Evison: Well now, you came back when? After the war was over?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes. I rejoined the National Park Service, with which I was associated before I was drafted.

Herbert Evison: You were in the Park Service before then?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes.

Herbert Evison: Well now, we're getting a little ahead of ourselves. I still want this biography. Somewhere along the way you met the lady whom we met for the first time this morning. What was her name and when were you married?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, I was first married to my first wife, and there were two boys - Irving III, and Mark Sanford. The marriage lasted six years, and then it was some years before I was remarried. After that, I met my present wife, and we were married, and we have a daughter who is in high school now.

Herbert Evison: Yes. Now you and your present wife were married when?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: December 1, 1956.

Herbert Evison: And her name was?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: In the First Presbyterian Church in El Paso, Texas, and her name was Ruth Hamilton. She was a graduate of Texas Women's University and was reference librarian at the El Paso Public Library when I married her.

Herbert Evison: You mentioned that you were already working for the National Park Service when Uncle Sam came along and tapped you on the shoulder, so to speak. How did you happen to get into the Park Service in the first place? Was it by any chance in connection with the CCC?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: No. I had planned to be a college professor, but this buddy of mine with whom I ran around a great deal when I was going through school - he and I had similar interests and had a great many adventures together. One summer, we worked all summer. He had a car, and he said, "Well, let's take a trip to some of these national monuments." Toward the end of the summer, we had saved up our money, and so I asked what was a national monument. He said that they were really interesting places and so I said, that yes, I would go.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: So, we planned this camping tour, and we went to a great many - well, not a great many, but a number of monuments and parks in the Southwest. I was fascinated by the rangers, who were able to tell the visitors all about

the plant life, the geology, the animal life, as well as about the main attractions of the area, and I thought, well, boy! that was what I wanted to do. Tell that stuff to the visitors.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: So, I went home and began writing letters. That was during the thirties when times were very hard, and I got turned down and turned down; but I kept writing letters, and finally the first of June came, and I didn't have a job.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: My father said that they were taking a trip. Every summer before that, for years, I always had a job. I had counted on this so; I was just determined that I was going to get a job with the Park Service, and I didn't have one when the time came. My father said, the family is taking a tour down to so and so and maybe you'd like to go along with us, so I said, that, well, I guess I might as well since I didn't have a job. You couldn't pick up a job in those days like you can now, so I got ready to go with them.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: The morning before we left, I received a telegram from Frank Pinkley. Some fellow had resigned, and he wanted to know would I wire him immediately whether I accepted the invitation he was offering me as a job. I wired back my acceptance in a hurry, and I've been there ever since.

Herbert Evison: Yes. Well now, where were you told to report to? To Casa Grande?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes, Casa Grande.

Herbert Evison: Tell me about that - what happened when you got there? And what year was that?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I was still going to school then, and Charlie Steen met me at the train - you traveled by train then, not by plane - and Charlie Steen met me at the train and took me out and introduced me to the Boss.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: The Boss oriented me there at Casa Grande and then Charlie took me up to Tonto. Charlie had taken me up there and left me there by myself. I didn't know anything at that time about anthropology, as history was entirely separate from anthropology, and I was studying history. I knew nothing about the Indian ruins at all and I had to learn from scratch. They had some books or pamphlets there and left me there by myself. I didn't know at the time, but that was the way the Boss broke in his men.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: You either sank or you swam – that's all there was to it. And I guess I swam, because I stayed with them.

Herbert Evison: Now again, what year was this that you started?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: In 1937.

Herbert Evison: So, you were the only employee there at the time?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes, sir.

- Herbert Evison: In other words, you started off in what they always called a “one-man monument” and I guess you were the one man.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: They had a museum there, and my bed was in the museum, and my living quarters were about six feet wide by about ten feet long. In this part of the museum, there was no running water, no electricity, and there was water from a spring that came down through a pipe outside the house. It poured over a wall about three feet high. Every morning I used to go out and take a shower under that before I dressed. I had to be sure I got out of there before the visitors got there, of course! I had a desert refrigerator, - you know.
- Herbert Evison: Yes. No ice.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: It was hot in the summertime, and you put a can of water on top and it had strings from the bottom of the can down over the cooler, and you could keep butter firm that way. The water would go down the strings, on the burlap and—
- Herbert Evison: Right, and it would evaporate and cool it.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: It had a screen around it, so the varmints wouldn't get in there.
- Herbert Evison: Now, we were over there yesterday, and of course, we drove down a beautiful, paved road and we drove up to the new visitor center on a nice, paved road. Everything was thoroughly modern. So, I would be just delighted to get anything on the record about conditions back there in 1937 when most Southwestern Monuments were one-man monuments, if I'm not mistaken.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Let me interject this. The Park Service had a very high esprit de corps, and that was evident from many angles. But I think Senator Harry F. Byrd from Virginia, a very highly respected man - I think he was Chairman of the Appropriations Committee for the Senate - remarked on time to a group of National Park Service superintendents that the Park Service was the only bureau (and these words are to this effect, I'm not exactly quoting him) that the Park Service was the only bureau he knew in the entire government where the American public got \$1.20 worth of good out of every dollar that they put into it.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Also, the esprit de corps of the Southwestern National Monuments, run by Frank F. Pinkley, was the highest in the entire Park Service. In spite of the fact that they were the worst provided for, on the whole.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes. I know your credit card, for example, when you went any place, it was a barrel of gas at the back of the pickup. That was your credit card. And when you'd go down the highway, you'd just stop and put some gas into a can and pour it in your car and go.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: But the esprit de corps - and I want to repeat - at the Southwestern National Monuments was very, very high. A man transferred in under

Pinkley and he was glad to be there, and he didn't get out; he was either fired or he died, to get out, and there were very few of either of those.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: And I was very delighted at the time to be selected by Pinkley to work under him, and I'm very proud of it even today.

Herbert Evison: Yes, I bet you are - as anybody who worked under Boss Pinkley has reason to be. Now, you went there to Casa Grande, but he talked with you a little first.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

Herbert Evison: And gave you a pep talk of a sort. I wish you would tell me as much as you can about what he covered in this introductory talk to a brand-new employee.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, I can't remember now; it's been too long. I know one thing he said, he said you were on duty 24 hours a day in your area, and if somebody comes up at midnight and wants to see your area, you had a duty to take him and show him through.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: No offense was taken at that, and we were on duty 24 hours a day. I remember many a time we worked many, many times overtime with no thought of overtime pay or anything like, that at all.

Herbert Evison: Well now, were you married at that time?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: No.

Herbert Evison: Oh, so you were still single. You were really a one-man man. You had to do your own housekeeping and look after the monument, too.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, yes.

Herbert Evison: That's great.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: But I learned it from scratch, I tell you.

Herbert Evison: What was the road like that people had to follow to get in there?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, it was terrific. And the summer rains would make it worse.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I remember there was - they don't make them anymore, so I could mention it, I guess - but there was a car put out by, - oh, I can't remember the company now, but it was a rather popular make, a well-known make I should say, and the fellow started up the hill and the hill was so steep that the man couldn't make it in his car because the car didn't have the power enough to bring the car up there. So, he zigzagged back and forth across the road, and, as narrow as it was, he got to the top.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I can't remember the make of the car, they don't make them anymore.

Herbert Evison: It's in the company of about 2,000 cars I think, that have been made in the past and aren't any more.

- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, this was a well-known make, a cheap car, but a well-known make at the time, but I just can't remember the name of it now.
- Herbert Evison: Yes. Well, in those days, how many people would you get in there in the course of a season?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: I remember during that summer, I counted up either 299 or 399 for one month, and I was very disappointed that it didn't get to one more to take it an even hundred. I mentioned in my monthly report something about next time, if it came out that way next month, I was going to take a trip through the ruins myself in order to make it an even hundred.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: But I went up and down hill, with every group, except on one day we had so many visitors I didn't get down and I didn't get any lunch that day; it was the Fourth of July. But I went up the hill and down the hill, and that's a darn steep hill. Went up the hill and down the hill with every group that came through.
- Herbert Evison: And that wasn't the nice easily paved walkway that runs up there now, was it?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, no, no.
- Herbert Evison: I'm wondering about your status when you went to Tonto. Had you ever taken a Civil Service examination?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: They didn't require Civil Service examinations at that time for seasonal rangers.
- Herbert Evison: Oh, you were just there seasonally that first time. This was while you were still going to school.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Right.
- Herbert Evison: That really astonishes me, that an undergraduate should be put out in charge of a monument at that time. Well, you had that summer there. Then, when next were you back on the payroll, the next summer?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes, sir.
- Herbert Evison: Where? The same place?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: No. Bandelier.
- Herbert Evison: Oh, yes. Well, now, is it possible that you were the custodian of Bandelier?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: No, no.
- Herbert Evison: Or were you working under a custodian.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: No, that was a big outfit there. They had a big CCC camp there; they were building a hotel, and they had a custodian, as they called them at that time. It was really a superintendent, but he had a chief ranger under him and a

maintenance man, and I was just one of the summer seasonals. But believe me, we worked there. Take my case for example - I'd get up and go out with a party at eight o'clock in the morning; there was always a party where somebody camped overnight; there was always a party at eight o'clock in the morning.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: It took two hours to make the three-mile trip. We guided half the way and then the other half we talked with the visitors as we came back through the shady lane. We made the three-mile trip, we made it back by ten o'clock. There was a good-sized party at ten o'clock, I would take a drink of water and turn right around and make the three-mile trip again. Get back at noon, just at twelve o'clock and eat my lunch. I would start with the biggest party of the of the day, at one o'clock, sometimes 100 or 150 people, and then lecture to them all the way out.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I know there was something like 66 or 74 or something like that, amount of ladder steps we took on these trips, among other things; and one stretch must have been about 50 ladder steps. We'd go up, and I know we rangers of course had to be able to go up the steps and down the steps without touching them with our hands.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: And we used to always get a kick out of getting about halfway up and hearing some kid yelling, "Oh, mama, look at the ranger!" and we would go up facing the ladders, but we would come down facing out.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I don't know, it was 40 or 50 steps, something like that. These large parties, - in coming back, as I said, we just talked with them. I would start coming back with the front party, the front group of people, and I would talk to them, but I'd be listening to the group behind me; and as I pointed out, we knew the plants, the grass, the shrubs, the trees; we knew their life histories and where they were found, what elevations they grew at; we knew the fish they had in the rivers, we knew the birds, the animals, besides the ruins.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: For instance, I would hear them behind me saying, "Is that fish in the river?" And I'd say, yes, that the state plants rainbow trout in here every so often, and I'd drop back with them, you see. By the time we got back to headquarters, I'd be working with the last group back, and then I would start at three o'clock in the afternoon with another party, and this made the fourth three-mile trip I made in the same day.

Herbert Evison: Yes. Well, at least you developed your leg muscles.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Then, I would get back at five and there was almost always a party. At five o'clock you were supposed to quit, but there was almost always a party there. They'd come from Connecticut or somewhere, and they'd say it would be their only chance to see it. Nobody was allowed to go without a guide, so they would beg me to come.

- Irving McNeil, Jr.: So, I'd take a short trip with them - but the trouble about that was in that day and time, a man's efficiency - believe it or not - was gauged by the length of time he kept out his parties. You would take that short trip at five o'clock and it would cut down your average, see.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: It was a regular joke around there; the only way you could get out of working on your day off; since there was only one day off a week that you had, the only way to get out of that - and of course, you didn't get paid for it if you worked - so the only way to get out of that was to get out of the park, and I didn't have a car.
- Herbert Evison: So, you were practically stuck for seven days a week.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, no - I made it out okay. Then we'd get called out on fires at midnight and things like that, and we had a good time. For instance, after that day, we walked at least 12 miles each day, and that's quite a walk when you try lecturing people half that distance - and we would stop every few yards - you were darn tired when the day was over.
- Herbert Evison: Oh, I bet.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Then, at night when we'd be giving a lecture in the visitor center - and here's where some of the good times came in - the rangers would look over the girls at the lecture and decide among ourselves whether we'd have a dance that night. So, if there was some good-looking girls, then we'd announce at the end of the lecture that there would be a dance at the hotel that night. So, we'd go there and dance until midnight.
- Herbert Evison: Well, the thing that strikes me about that, - you'd work six days a week or seven days a week, and ordinarily much more than eight hours a day, but you enjoyed it.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, you bet we did. The esprit de corps was high.
- Herbert Evison: Now who was the custodian when you went there?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, I worked under several of them when I was there. Cy Harkins was there when I went there the first time. Cy Harkins.
- Herbert Evison: Oh, yes.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: And Chester A. Thomas was there. He is a great fellow.
- Herbert Evison: Yes, I know him.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: And Jim Eden was chief ranger there, who was later Associate Regional Director. I taught Jim Eden how to shoe horses; I used to work on a ranch. They got some horses there one time, and Jim didn't know how to shoe them, so I showed him how.

Herbert Evison: Wonderful. Well, of course, Jim was one of those unusual people, a guy who had a Park Service career, but who started as a CCC boy, an enrollee of the CCC.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, he's a wonderful fellow. You can't beat fellows like that.

Herbert Evison: Now this, again, was a summer job?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes; well, several summers there. I served six months one time; had a six-month appointment.

Herbert Evison: Meanwhile, going back to school in between times.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes.

Herbert Evison: I don't remember whether you said you ever got a degree.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I got a BA degree from the University of Texas at El Paso, and I took some graduate work at George Washington University in Washington, D. C., but I did not graduate there.

Herbert Evison: But what year did you get your degree from El Paso?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: In '38.

Herbert Evison: Thirty-eight, yes. Well, now, you had - you said three summers there at Bandelier.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I don't remember now, but it was two or three summers.

Herbert Evison: However many, but sometime or other, though, you got on the permanent rolls. Would that have been under the Ramsback Act in 1941?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: No—

Herbert Evison: Or did you take a Civil Service examination?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I took a Civil Service examination; you bet I took one; I took a number of them and passed every one I took except the typing. I missed that one, typing.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: But I got on that War Service appointment, I think, and then went off to the Army. Well, I came back to the same job.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: They gave a Park Ranger examination in 1937, I think it was, and I wasn't aware of it when they gave it, so I didn't get to take it.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: And then, they may have allowed that one, but anyway, all the examinations that a person had taken, from the time they began draft boards, long before the war started, - they nullified all those examinations.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: And so, I took an examination while I was at Chaco; I was superintendent already - a custodian - but I had to take the exam. There were 1800 men, I

remember, took that exam, and 300 passed. And fortunately, I was among those who passed. That was when I got on permanently, without a doubt.

Herbert Evison: Now you mentioned that you took this exam while you were at Chaco Canyon, but we haven't got you to Chaco Canyon yet. When did you go there, and in what capacity?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Chuck Richey was superintendent of the Southwestern Monuments by then, and he offered me a place as superintendent - a War Service appointment - as superintendent. I forgot where the place was now, so I asked him if I could have a delay en route and stop by and visit my folks in El Paso. And I think there was probably a girl I had wanted to see then, too, or something - and so he said yes, you could have several days delay en route.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: So, while I was there in El Paso, he wired me and asked me if I would accept Chaco in lieu of this other place because the man had just resigned there, and he wanted someone there immediately, and asked if I could go there right now.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: So, I accepted Chaco, never having even seen it.

Herbert Evison: Now this was before your Army service?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes.

Herbert Evison: This must have been the early forties then?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes.

Herbert Evison: I think it was 1948 that I paid my only visit to Chaco Canyon, and stood on top of Threatening Rock, among other things.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, yes? Chaco is a wonderful place.

Herbert Evison: It is an incredible place. Tell me something about the situation there - the kind of quarters you lived in as custodian.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, I had good quarters there, different from Tonto; I had good quarters. There was a small, well-built house, - two bedrooms, living room, dining room, they were all small - living room, dining room, two bedrooms, a bath and kitchen - a nice little house there. Very well built, and right on the highway. Right past your front door, you could reach out and touch the cars almost, as they went past.

Herbert Evison: Now would it have been up above or down in the canyon?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: It was in the canyon.

Herbert Evison: Oh, yes.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I think it's been torn down now, but I was talking to someone who had been to Chaco - I forgot who it was now - some time in recent years, and

he said the house had been torn down. But it was a very well-built house, and I think it cost about, - I remember I had the figures at the time, but I think it cost about \$1,500 to build that house.

Herbert Evison: Well, as I remember, back in those days, the Park Service couldn't build a building that cost more than \$1,500 without a specific Congressional authorization for it. Do you remember that?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I forgot that - if I ever knew it in the first place.

Herbert Evison: Yes, you could get quite a lot of house in those days.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, you bet you could.

Herbert Evison: Sure, for \$1,500.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, you bet - that was a well-built house.

Herbert Evison: Yes. How about your water supply there?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, it came out of a well. The Park Service was awfully hard put for any funds, even in that day and time, and long after that. I know we had a pump.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: When I went to Chaco, the first thing I did when I got there was to bellyache for a pump - because the pump I had, I had to grind the valves every time I pumped water, by myself.

Herbert Evison: Oh? Was this a hand pump?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: No, no; it was a power pump. I had to grind the valves in the engine, every time I would pump water, so you can imagine what kind of a pump I had. I mean, an engine - and the pump wasn't any better. And I bellyached and bellyached, and so when I went off to war, the new pump was sitting down at the railroad station waiting for me to go get it. Well, it was a war-time-built affair, so when I got back to Chaco, it was all worn out. What I did was start bellyaching for a new pump. I guess they thought all I did was stand around bellyaching for a new water pump.

Herbert Evison: Now, I'm just wondering, when I was in there in '48, that was after the Grand Canyon conference of 1948.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I was at the Grand Canyon conference.

Herbert Evison: Well, were you still at Chaco at that time? Because that's the time I would have met you first, or at the conference, before.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: My first boy was born during that conference.

Herbert Evison: Oh, really? Well, that made it a memorable one for you, didn't it?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes.

Herbert Evison: I mentioned Threatening Rock.

- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes. But that fell in 1941.
- Herbert Evison: It fell in 1941?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes.
- Herbert Evison: Well, then that was pre-war that I was in there. I was thinking it was after that conference. I find that some of the things that I remember the most vividly are incorrect.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: I find the same thing. You might find this tape may be wrong in many respects.
- Herbert Evison: I remember; I was on a trip to the southwest in 1940 for a conference in Santa Fe, and went there afterwards, and I think - yes, I'm sure - Ray Vinten from the Southeast was with me on that trip, and we made quite a circuit.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: He was at St. Augustine, wasn't he? He was at St. Augustine for many years.
- Herbert Evison: That's right; that's the guy. And we had a wonderful trip together.
- Herbert Evison: Tell me: Looking back over the time that you were at Chaco, both before and after the war, do any incidents stand out or any events stand out in your memory particularly, of, oh, let's say, contacts with people or - I would like to get on the record something about Threatening Rock; that's a long time ago and people have now pretty well forgotten it ever existed.
- Herbert Evison: But how about giving me a verbal picture of the situation of Threatening Rock, something about statistics you can remember about it, its relationship especially to Pueblo Bonito.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, Threatening Rock fell shortly before I got there, but there were some facts on record when I got there, and there was some fiction, too. You can separate the two, maybe. And as you say, your memory is very faulty, but I'll do the best I can. I say your memory - but my memory is probably a lot more faulty than yours is.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Threatening Rock weighed 50,000 tons, and was a rock that broke off the principal mesa but had not fallen. It had broken away, I should say, from the principal mesa, but was still standing upright.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: And it was staying there, apparently, when the Indians built Pueblo Bonito, the large Indian house down there beneath, which had 800 rooms or something like that, - very large - it was the largest apartment house built in America up until 1880, or something like that. It was a very large affair - and it was built directly beneath this rock.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: And they had feared that the rock might fall, because they had shored it up, or they thought they had shored it up, with some timbers. Well, their timbers weren't worth anything more than a lot of toothpicks, but they

probably had thought they did a good job, because it stayed up all the time they were there.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Also, the story goes that it was a very wet winter that the rock fell, and that was the reason, - the foundation became weak, and so the rock tipped over and fell; that was the immediate cause of it falling.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: And they tell the story, that the custodian at the time realized it was going to fall that day, and of course, moving picture cameras weren't common at all during that day and time, and neither were these fast cameras. But it seems that the rock tipped out further and further and further, and he began snapping pictures of it as it moved further and further out. He got it out to a practically unbelievable angle; he snapped his last picture and ran down to the trading post to get some more film, - and you know what happened while he was gone!

Herbert Evison: Oh, that's wonderful, that's wonderful.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, that's the story; I don't know whether there's any truth to it or not. It makes a good story.

Herbert Evison: Well, it has all the sound of truth, whether it's true or not. That always fascinated me - my memories of it - because when I was there, as I remember, there was a crack maybe eight inches wide, between Threatening Rock and the solid cliff. And as I remember it, they had some kind of a gauge there.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes, they did. The rock moved back and forth slightly, and so what they did was to get up on the principal mesa, which was a rock foundation - a solid rock foundation - and put in a rod firmly anchored to the principal mesa, sticking out over Threatening Rock, and they would mark sections on that rod and tell how far it moved back and forth.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: It moved back and forth several years before it fell. The report might say it moved an inch out this month and then another inch the next month and then moved another inch and a half the next. There really wasn't much movement, but it did move.

Herbert Evison: It did move! Now anything else, those years? Really, I'm getting you to put on here a little history of before you got there; but you were there first before the war and then after the war. And one thing that I remember is that I came in from the north, and it was a long, long dirt road.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I remember one time my wife was in the hospital in Farmington, and the doctor called me and told me she was seriously ill. It was very wet at that time; it had been raining, and so I got Gordon to go with me to the highway, which was 28 miles. I took my car and got Gordon to go with me in another car; and it took us five hours to make that 28 miles to the highway, and I was not stuck anywhere. We were moving just at a snail's

pace, and of course, the next 60 miles or so, I covered it in about 45 minutes.

Herbert Evison: Now, where did you have to go to shop - Farmington?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, it was an even hundred miles to Gallup, New Mexico or to Durango, Colorado. Now, strange as it may seem, products we bought for the monument could be obtained generally cheaper in Durango, Colorado, which was not on any main railroad line or any main highway route; but the things were generally cheaper in Durango, Colorado - and it was exactly the same distance from one to the other. So, we generally went to Durango.

Herbert Evison: Now, during all your time in there, was it still a one-man monument?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: It was absolutely a one-man monument when I was there, before I got in the Army. I remember they had a horse there, an old club-footed horse that I was suppose to ride - that I did ride - and he was one of those horses, I suppose - the government bought the cheapest horse they could get. The fellow who bid the cheapest, they accepted his bid on this horse; and it was the dumbest horse you ever saw, a big old club-footed horse that weighed about 1100 pounds. I rode that horse around, and every time you'd get on him, he'd pitch. Now I don't mean that the minute you got on him, he would do that; you might ride him for an hour, you might ride him two hours, you might ride him all day, and just before you got back to headquarters, he'd come undone.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, I had ridden thousands of miles, I guess, on horse-back, and I never enjoyed riding a pitching horse. I don't think many men, if you asked them honestly if they enjoy riding a pitching horse, that would admit they enjoyed it.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: And this horse, as I said, was a big old clumsy thing, and every time I'd get on that horse, he'd pitch. I used to work on a ranch, and I would watch for things that might make a horse pitch, but I never could find anything. He was just one of those horses that the rancher would probably be glad to get rid of by selling it to the government, because—

Herbert Evison: Just naturally ornery?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes, and you had to ride him at all times, ready for him to pitch, because he was going to pitch sometimes, and that gets tiresome, riding all day, expecting the horse to come undone. I used to ride the horse. I had some very good neighbors there, whose name was Crowley, they lived six or seven miles away or something like that. I would generally tell them I was going out next Tuesday or something - I was going to go and patrol on horseback, and if I didn't get in, then they'd know, if they came by the next morning, and didn't find me there, they'd know I was out somewhere; because I was afraid that horse might pitch me off and my foot get caught in the stirrup, or something like that, which happens to a lot of cowboys.

- Irving McNeil, Jr.: I'd be alone, you see, and there wouldn't be anybody to know what had happened. So, I would generally tell them, as I said.
- Herbert Evison: Did you have any, - I mean, there were no telephone communications at that time, was there - or was there?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes, there was - it was an Indian Service line, and I could give you a whole bunch of anecdotes on that, and very amusing; but I could relate something that happened that was sort of amusing to those concerned.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: My mother called me from El Paso, and this is an Indian Service line, you see, out from Gallup. I had instructed the the family how to get in touch with me if they wanted to; and I wasn't married at the time and, for some reason, my mother wanted to get in touch with me.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: So, she instructed the telephone operator how to get in touch with me; the telephone operator was gone a long time, finally came back to my mother and said, "Well, we've got a ranger at Aztec - will that do?" She asked for the ranger at Chaco, you see.
- Herbert Evison: Anything else like that? I'd love to get several of those on record, if you can give them.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: I can't think of any more that could be told in short order at this time, but there were lots of amusing and interesting occurrences concerned with the phone.
- Herbert Evison: And a little bit exasperating, too, I bet.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, yes.
- Herbert Evison: Now, you talked about having taken a horse patrol of the monument. Of course, as I remember it, Chaco Canyon has Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl, and I bet a whole bunch of smaller, separate ruins. Were you troubled very much by people coming in there doing damage? Like vandalism?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: No, not at that day and time. People respected the parks, and there was very little in the way of lawbreaking in the parks generally at that time. But there were trespass problems. I don't know whether it's a great part, but there were whole sections - that's a square mile - where you couldn't get to them in a car, up on top of the mesa or something like that; and people would be running their stock on the monument, and figuring, I guess, that nobody would be up there.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: So, I had quite a bit of - well, not really problems; trespassing of that nature is against the law, yes, but what I had in mind was criminal offenses; there were practically no criminal offenses then.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Now, let me tell you this - I wanted to keep the stock off, and some of the horses of the neighbors learned to jump the cattle guard. You know, we had cattle guards then.

- Herbert Evison: Yes, yes.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: And they learned to jump it. As I say, I had worked on a ranch, so I figured that I'm going to fix that. One of the Fish and Game men came through. I told him the story; I asked, "could you send me a bear hide," and he said sure he could.
- Herbert Evison: A bear hide?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes. He said somebody was always killing a bear out of season, and he could skin the bear and send me the hide. I thanked him, and sure enough, in a few months, I got this great big stinking thing in the mail, and it smelled to high heaven. The postmaster was darn glad to get rid of it, and I brought it down and put it on the cattle guard, and it kept the horses off all right; it performed its duty. But what I didn't know was that the bear was sacred to the Indians out there, and it caused a wrath among some of the Indians.
- Herbert Evison: Now, you put this down on the cattle guard?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes. Incidentally, I became known then as the bear-hide custodian.
- Herbert Evison: Oh, did you?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes.
- Herbert Evison: That's as bad as being the cat spanker, isn't it.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Sure is.
- Herbert Evison: While you were there, was there any authorized excavation going on in any of the ruins?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: They held the conference - I was there in '47 - the Pecos Conference there; and I got to meet a great many of those eminent anthropologists about whom I had heard so much, and who had ideas on Chaco. Each one, of course, had ideas on Chaco, and it was very enlightening to talk with those men. Of course, I knew Paul Reiter and Nibbs Hill from the University of New Mexico who had the University Station there, and the University Summer School. They'd come out from time to time to check on that; but I found it very enlightening, to just talk with some of these eminent men; and I enjoyed the conference very much.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: But to answer your question, - well, I was there before the war had started, but I hadn't gone into the Anny yet; and there was no excavation going on then.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: But after the war, Gordon Vivian was in there with his crew, and he was not actually excavating; but in the course of his stabilization, he had to do some excavation work.

- Irving McNeil, Jr.: I remember he sent a man up to Chetro Ketl. There was a second story or third story room which had about two feet of dirt in it. We had a big rain. Gordon was afraid the walls might be weakened with all that dirt in that upper story, uselessly there, - might cause the walls to collapse, so they put an Indian in there to get the dirt out.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: About the first shovel-full the fellow threw out, he began to discover things that were one of the biggest discoveries ever made in the way of Indian artifacts in the whole Chetro Ketl; we were weeks and months digging that out.
- Herbert Evison: That's certainly interesting.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes. And they called it Gordon's Turkey Farm. I mean, that wasn't all that was there; there was - well, we won't go into that; it would be boring for anyone to listen to what we found, but it was called Gordon's Turkey Farm, just like I was known as the bear-hide custodian.
- Herbert Evison: Anything else that you remember that you would like to get on tape of your days at Chaco?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, I don't know—
- Herbert Evison: Apparently, you are a person who can live enjoyably way off from a great many of the amenities like a library or motion pictures or what have you.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, my wife is an ex-reference librarian, and here in the house we have six sets of encyclopedias, I think, and four or five big dictionaries, plus a whole wealth of books in there. I like to read, as I told you, but Chaco was a wonderful place to interpret.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Let me tell you this - the Boss - that's Frank Pinkley - said something, when I first came into the Park Service that made a terrific impression on me. He said words to this effect; that if in the monument of which you are in charge, the bird life is not outstanding, and there isn't much animal life, and there aren't really many different kinds of plants around, and really, it's a small monument, and the reason that the site is set aside isn't so great, - you don't belong in the Park Service.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: It made a terrific impression on me, and so I tried when I went in there to learn every plant and every animal and every bird and be up on everything. So, when a bird went flying across the sky, you could be able to tell them something about that bird, - where it came from, where it nested; or what plant that or this was, and what the Indians used it for.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: I went so far afield there, I forgot what I started out to say.
- Herbert Evison: Well, you did at Chaco, as you did probably everywhere else, I presume, learn everything about everything you could.
- Herbert Evison: Did you - were there any books there.

- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, you asked me about - I started to say that Chaco was a wonderful place to interpret; that's where I got off the track. It was - and is - a wonderful place to interpret. There's nothing in North America, north of Mexico City, that will match Chaco and it was a wonderful place to interpret.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Living out there, as one of the fellows said, at another place where I was stationed, - he said, you know, when you first go out to a place like this, he said, it was wonderful, he said you've always got pictures you wanted to put in an album, and film you want to edit and books you want to read; but after about a year, that gets old.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: I did miss the amenities of the city, though I did manage all right.
- Herbert Evison: Yes. You were saying that you went next to El Morro and that was another wonderful place to interpret.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, a wonderful place to interpret.
- Herbert Evison: Tell me something about your experience there. Why is that a particularly good place to interpret?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, that is known as the stone autograph album, and people came through there from 1605 on; that is the first date that was carved on the rock. It is carved in soft sandstone rock. There's a water hole there; people stopped to get water, which is very scarce in the southwestern part of the country. They stopped there to camp; they knew, in advance, they were going to find water there, and they would stay around a day or two and carve their names on the rock. As I say, 1605 was the earliest signature.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: They ranged from there forward, some great men and some common, ordinary Joes like you and I, and eventually it was made a monument in 1906, I believe, something like that, with hundreds of names there now - and it is a regular history book. There are some interesting inscriptions; some nice carving jobs are done on it, too. Some men have a lot of history with them, and some men very little history. But of course, any man's life is interesting.
- Herbert Evison: How about the protection problem for a thing like that?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well—
- Herbert Evison: Didn't you find people wanting to add their names to the rock, too?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, yes and no. Most of the time I was there, the Park Service required all guided trips. But a fellow came out from New York one time - and I have nothing against the state of New York, he just so happened to be from New York - and he came up to the office one busy day, with visitors just all over the place, something like, and he said, "I'll go out here and carve my name." I said - lots of people came up with jokes like that - and I said, "Yeah, it would cost maybe a \$300 fine and a few months in prison;"

something like that, "and the next trip around here starts in 15 minutes." He said, "I'm not interested in going on a trip, so I'm going to go out there now and carve my name."

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Suddenly I realized the man wasn't joking, after joshing around with him a bit. So, I said, "Look, buddy, men have left their names on this rock for hundreds of years, but since it's been made a monument, over 50 years ago, it's now illegal to do it." He said, "You mean I can't put my name on there," and I said, "Yes." He said, "he came all the way from New York just to put his name down with all the other famous men." I said, "Well, there's a heavy fine and imprisonment for doing it now," and he said, "if I can't" - and I said we were having a trip to see all the inscriptions in just a few minutes. He said, "he wasn't interested in taking the tour if he couldn't leave his name," and he got in his car and left. But that was the exception.

Herbert Evison: I would imagine the guy taking the people around on the guided trip had to keep a pretty close eye on them; but I imagine that you started off with some statement before you got underway.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh yes; we would take them out, we went across a little bridge and got them away from headquarters and got them all together and made an orientation talk. From then on, we didn't have any trouble.

Herbert Evison: Now you were the custodian there, or was it superintendent by that time?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: It was superintendent while I was at Chaco; I was the first superintendent at Chaco.

Herbert Evison: Yes. You gave me one wonderful anecdote about the man who wanted to carve his name there. How long were you there, and do you think of any other events of that period.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, I'm writing up a lot of stories of interesting events, of humorous events that occurred in my life. But I have at least 50 of them written and will get some more written up.

Herbert Evison: I would hope you might share a few with us.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I can't think of any more just off hand.

Herbert Evison: And while you're on that subject I think it would be a wonderful idea - are those anecdotes of yours typed?

Irving McNeil, Jr.: They're rough draft typed.

Herbert Evison: Yes. Well, that doesn't make any difference. They are in a readily reproduceable form, and you were saying when we were talking about this before, that you thought it'd be nice for your grandchildren to be able to read these anecdotes and adventures and events in grandpappy's life.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, as I said, also, they'd probably thumb through them and say, "Gee, dad, granddad was sure a creep," and throw them away.

- Herbert Evison: But I would like to urge you very earnestly to loan those things to the Harpers Ferry Center and let them duplicate them; let them get photo duplicates of them – it doesn't make any difference that they're rough drafts. They are a part of exactly the same kind of stuff that I'm trying to collect on tape, but simply in another form. I hope you will be willing to do that, because that would be, I think, a very interesting addition to the archives which they're setting up there at Harpers Ferry Center.
- Herbert Evison: Would you be willing to do that? I'd guarantee you that they would be taken good care of and that they would get back to you.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, I'm not going to promise you anything like that.
- Herbert Evison: Well, about the only other thing that I could think of is the possibility of letting somebody come here and make duplicates of them.
- Herbert Evison: I think that your memories of those things ought to belong to a few more people than just your grandchildren. Of course, I would like to urge you to make a book out of them; I think it would be a good one.
- Herbert Evison: But I do think that that's material that you ought to share with more people than just your grandchildren, and I hope you will think about it.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well. I don't have any grandchildren yet.
- Herbert Evison: Well, this would be a good time to get your material duplicated, and then you'd know that, whatever happened, there would still be copies left.
- Herbert Evison: But anyway, think about that - please.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: I tore up a good many of those things after I got them written because I figured that they weren't worth much or weren't funny enough.
- Herbert Evison: Well, you're a good raconteur, and I suspect that the average readability of those would be pretty high. Don't be too darn modest about them, anyway.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: No.
- Herbert Evison: Let's go on from El Morro, unless there's something else about your stay there that you'd like to get on this tape.
- Herbert Evison: We're not running out of tape; there's another side. Where did you go from El Morro, then?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Tumacácori.
- Herbert Evison: Oh, yes. And that would have been about when?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: The sixties, sometime. January of '63.
- Herbert Evison: Did you spend the rest of your Park Service career there? No. Well, let's get to Tumacácori. I was there just this past Tuesday. It's one of my favorite places.

- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, that museum case there, the one inside the Catholic Church, is said to be one of the best in the whole Park Service.
- Herbert Evison: Yes, I have always considered it so. I always go there and push the button.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh yes, and the candles flicker. That's a wonderful place.
- Herbert Evison: Now one thing that I noticed when I played that the other day, all I got was the recording; no action anywhere, and I meant to ask about that, - whether it was out of kilter, or they just discontinued it or what. But that always fascinated me - a little motion in the congregation, and as you say, the flicker of the candles and so on.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, take for example, the flickering candles; they may have discovered some better way to do it now, but when I was there, we didn't know any better way to do it, and I'm sure the fellows there are doing the best they can now.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: But the thing is always getting out of kilter, as you say. Somebody would come in and report this to us saying, "the last time I came in here, the candles were flickering, and now they're not. What's the trouble?" We would go out and look, and they were not. We would get back behind the thing and it was sort of difficult to get back there. We had a door we could go in, and we would try to get it adjusted so it would flicker again, but they were very delicate, and a fellow who is all thumbs, like me, why, it's pretty easy to get it out of kilter.
- Herbert Evison: Well, of course, I think that other diorama there - the fight against the Apaches - is a wonderfully vivid thing.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, yes, you can study that thing, and you know, the more you study the more you see the strategy they were using, and so forth.
- Herbert Evison: Oh, yes. I immensely enjoyed looking at both of those again, and I suppose I've been in there a half dozen times and have enjoyed them every time.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: I don't know; there may be finer museums in the Park Service - and I've visited a good many parks and a good many monuments in my career - but I don't know of any place that has a finer museum than Tumacácori - in my estimation, anyway.
- Herbert Evison: Now, one thing that I was interested in learning the other day was that they're going to make the museum, or everything in the museum, bilingual. I raise that point there because I was disappointed when I was down in Mexico City finding practically nothing but Spanish labels on the museum displays down there.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: I've been there.

- Herbert Evison: Yes? A marvelous place. But the ranger with whom I talked said that that's definitely in their program, because they're getting more and more people there from outside Mexico.
- Herbert Evison: Now, any events of your years there that we should get on tape, or any good anecdote? You were the superintendent then. How much of a staff did the place have then?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, not a very large staff. They had a management assistant and a former administrative officer, and two maintenance men, and an historian. And seasonal employees from time to time.
- Herbert Evison: Now in your day there, was interpretation a matter entirely of somebody guiding them around?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: No, the Park Service began to bend in the concept of everybody going on a guided trip a good many years before that. And El Morro was one of the last to go on the self-guided tour, and by the time I got to Tumacácori, of course, it was all self-guided. They'd have these booklets, and we'd have a man along to aid the visitors if they had any trouble interpreting something at some point along the way; he would have a deeper knowledge than most of them would have, but it was self-guided pretty much.
- Herbert Evison: Yes. How about those years there? You were relatively near to a large town, there, not too far from Tucson. Did that make much difference to you?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: I'd been out in the sticks so long, when I got out there, I joined everything in town. I think. I had a great time making friends for the Service, I think I did. I joined the Rotary Club and had some good friends in there, and I joined the Toastmasters and served as president of that. I was one of the members of the Masonic Lodge; I held several offices in the Masonic Lodge. And my wife and I joined the Eastern Star; and when we left there, she was associate matron and I was associate patron, - next to the top office. I was president of the Scottish Rite Club, and a member of the Shriners—
- Herbert Evison: You were a Mason from way back, then.
- Herbert Evison: What you were just saying certainly was in sharp contrast with most of your previous experience. How far were you from Nogales, wasn't it about 17 miles or so?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: It was 17, 18 or 19 miles - something like that. Lots of weeks we'd average 400 miles a week, going back and forth between Nogales and Tumacácori, and that was after hours.
- Herbert Evison: I guess for the first time in all your experience, you were able to buy your groceries in a supermarket. Isn't that right?

- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, something like that. We enjoyed Tumacácori very much, and we had some wonderful friends in Nogales, and we enjoyed it; it was a beautiful town. And of course, I grew up in a town like that - El Paso - but Nogales was a beautiful little town. As I say, my wife and I look back and have lots of fond memories of Nogales during my stay at Tumacácori.
- Herbert Evison: Do you remember any events of your stay there that we should record before we finish up with Tumacácori?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, I don't know.
- Herbert Evison: It was just a pleasant existence?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: It certainly was. All my Park Service career has been good, because each monument is different.
- Herbert Evison: Yes. Now here's an interesting thing. You remember you were talking about your start with the Park Service, and you'd occasionally get a day off by not being there when somebody might call on you for a job. After the war came, it brought greatly changed conditions; a 40-hour week came into effect. While you were out in places like Chaco Canyon, I think - the 40-hour week went into effect, and at El Morro.
- Herbert Evison: How did that affect you? Did you observe a 40-hour week?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Of course not. I had been trained differently.
- Herbert Evison: Yes. At any place, including Tumacácori were you sufficiently well-staffed there, for instance, so that occasionally you could observe a 40-hour week?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, yes. At El Morro and Chaco, I put in long hours; and I remember sometimes at El Morro, I used to guide from eight in the morning until dark taking off about 20 minutes for lunch, and then do my office work after that. But as I say, each one was different. Tumacácori had a high wall around it, and there was no overnight camping; people didn't camp overnight, and that door where they came in, - about five o'clock, and certainly not before - 5:30 or whatever it was, we'd close the door.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: But on occasion, we would - I remember one time, one morning before breakfast I went out to get the paper; we had daily papers delivered there, which was certainly different. I went out to get the paper and I hadn't had breakfast, and a whole busload of people drove up, a Greyhound busload. They were from some part of the eastern country, and they wanted to know if they could go through Tumacácori right now; I said I hadn't had breakfast yet, and they said they would sure like to go through. So, I opened up and let them through.
- Herbert Evison: Long before your ordinary opening up.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes, right. But we were not called upon to do that as often there as we were in those outlying monuments, like Chaco or El Morro. At the time I

was there, they were outlying; the people had come out to see that particular place and weren't going anywhere else. So, I didn't mind taking them through; but these people are going up and down the highway all the time; that's a different story.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: But one thing about the outlying areas, - you get such fascinating, interesting people. You know, we learned as much from the people as the people did from us; and it was fascinating taking these people through. They enjoyed their tour, and they would ask pertinent questions, so you knew they had studied up on the place, or a similar place, before they got there, and it was a joy to take them through. Well, it's a joy to take anybody through something that way, but it was a special joy to take those people through.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: This probably shouldn't go on tape—

Herbert Evison: I think it should.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: I remember Hugh Miller told me when I first joined the Park Service, when I was still down at Casa Grande, before I got out to Tonto, - he said, "Now, when anything comes up, don't ever bluff. If you don't know, tell them you don't know, and then look it up afterwards, but don't ever bluff; always give straight answers, and as I say, if you don't know, say so."

Irving McNeil, Jr.: So, I went out to Tonto, and I'd been there, oh, I don't know, now a few weeks or a month or so, and this young woman and her mother came up, and they were going through the ruins, and the girl picked up a piece of pottery. She said a cross-section of this is dark in color - you know, the cross-section of pottery - and she asked, "Is that because it was fired pottery?" And I said to her, the thought never occurred to me before; that I didn't know. I just think; I don't know. And she said, "No, it didn't" - that she was an expert in pottery.

Herbert Evison: You just laid it on the line, then, and I bet you were glad. Well, that's interesting - somebody might have just been sent out there to trap you or something.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: No, I don't think that, but she would have known that I didn't know what I was talking about, though. I'm a great admirer of Hugh Miller.

Herbert Evison: Oh, yes, you and me both; I loved the guy.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: Oh, he was wonderful. When he became regional director, I think there were more men glad that he got that job than any - and this is certainly no reflection on any of the other directors - but than any other director ever in that position.

Irving McNeil, Jr.: That's no reflection on the other men, but there were more men genuinely glad that man got that position.

- Herbert Evison: Yes, I expect that was so. He was a very extraordinary man and wonderful in his relationships with other people.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Yes. I have been fortunate to know the Boss, and Hugh Miller, and Art Thomas, and Jim Edens, and all these fellows that I worked with - all outstanding men - and I've just been very fortunate that I've been able to work with them; they were wonderful men.
- Herbert Evison: Yes, I think you were, too. I know them all - all you mentioned - and I would say that anybody was fortunate to have been associated with them one way or another. We still have you down at Tumacácori but you weren't able to come through with any particular events of your stay there. Where did you go from there?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: I came up to the Southwest Archeological Center here.
- Herbert Evison: In what capacity?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Management assistant.
- Herbert Evison: To whom?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: To the Chief.
- Herbert Evison: Would that have been Gordon Vivian, or had he passed on by that time?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: No. Well, Gordon was another fellow whom I admired a great deal, he was another wonderful fellow. But no, Gordon was chief for a while, but Art Thomas was the Chief's name.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: They transferred me to the Washington office and assigned me to Southwest Archeological Center, and I stayed there a few years, and then the Center moved to Tucson. This is the only town my wife and I have ever actually lived in since we've been married. So, we came here and began to make friends; we liked the town and liked the climate and liked our house. We have a beautiful view there.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: We got orders to move to Tucson, and we went down, and began to look at housing, and we found some we liked a little bit, but we didn't like the houses as much as we did this one that was in our price range. One day, I said to my wife - we had come home after one of those tours, down to Tucson, of looking at housing - and I said, "You know, it's not going to be but a few years when I will probably retire anyway, and I like Globe. I've got a mind to just retire and stay here." She said that it was the thing to do. So here I am.
- Herbert Evison: Here you are, indeed. And you haven't regretted it at all.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: No, not one bit. It's a friendly town, and we like it very much, - like the climate, like our neighbors.

- Herbert Evison: Well, I think you're to be envied in your retirement that you've found a place that satisfies you both so much.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Jane is in school here and she seems to like it. She'd be doing all right in her grades so—
- Herbert Evison: Yes. You were telling me but not on the record, - about you daughter, and I wish you would tell me something about her.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: We are extremely proud of her, and this probably shouldn't go on tape —
- Herbert Evison: Oh, well, I won't urge you to do it, then. I'm frank to say that I feel that getting to tape you is really like finding a gold mine. You are undoubtedly aware that you are an articulate person, and you have a very good sense of humor - and I love to tape anybody like that.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: I think you ran into a dry hole!
- Herbert Evison: No, no dry hole. Now, is there anything else that you'd like to get on the tape before we call it a day?
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: No, I guess not. I had no idea this tape was going to be so long. I envisioned it about no more than two or three minutes, and I suppose we've been on for a lot longer.
- Herbert Evison: Well, I'll say this for you; I think your early forebodings about being tongue tied when I turned this on proved not justified. Certainly, you have talked very readily, and I'm just immensely obliged to you for being willing to spend your morning this way.
- Irving McNeil, Jr.: Well, you're a very friendly fellow yourself, and I have enjoyed talking with you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]