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Earl Batten
Circa 1962

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INTERVIEW WITH EARL BATTEN

Blue Ridge Parkway Engineer in charge of Maintenance

About 1962

(The following transcription is of a recording that I made about 1961 or 1962 at the Blue Ridge Parkway office in Roanoke. In 1972, in the course of an oral history trip that took me to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, I had hoped to make a second recording with Batten which would bring up to date and round out the picture he had drawn for me of the maintenance task that has to be performed on the Blue Ridge Parkway. I learned when I got to Roanoke that Earl was at a summer home on a reservoir (its name has slipped my mind) south of the city and I very optimistically headed in that direction, figuring that it would be easy to find him. It wasn't until we had traveled some miles and were ready to take off on a road leading directly to the reservoir that we learned that what I had assumed was a modest sized body of water had a shoreline of 100 miles or so! Whereupon I decided that finding my man would entail a major trip of exploration and that I was hardly in a position to undertake it. Later, I was able to interview Batten's successor as Chief of Maintenance for the Blue Ridge Parkway; in this interview I learned that the functions of the Chief of Maintenance had been changed very radically since Batten's time. There is thus a considerable gap in the record dealing with the maintenance task, and I hope that ultimately it may be possible for someone to fill it by means of a recorded interview with Batten.
H.E. July 22, 1974)

[START OF INTERVIEW]

- Herbert Evison: You are in charge of maintenance, as I remember. I was down here asking a lot of questions about the parkway a couple of years ago, and one of the things I didn't ask about was maintenance, and there is quite a lot of it I would like to find out about. What kind of an organization does it take? Can you give me a general description of the maintenance organization?
- Earl Batten: Yes, sir. We call it here the Division of Engineering and Maintenance. We have in this Department the day labor portion of our construction projects, consisting principally of minor roads and the building of utilities projects. In addition to that we have our regular routine maintenance operation.
- Earl Batten: Now, to carry out the functions of this Department, we have the Parkway Engineer and Assistant Parkway Engineer, two trainee civil engineers, and we have clerical assistance in a clerk-stenographer. In addition to that we have certain technicians that work directly through the Park Engineer; two of these are the radio technician, more properly called the "electronics technician, radio", and the other an equipment specialist.
- Herbert Evison: What does an equipment specialist mean, a guy particularly skilled in the use of equipment or in maintenance of it?
- Earl Batten: He is more skilled in the maintenance of equipment; however, he is very good and has had a lot of use training; he functions as both, but his utility is greater in the maintenance of the equipment, and as a matter of fact, we call on him to formulate our programs for equipment maintenance; in addition to that, he maintains our equipment scheduling. We are not rich as far as equipment. We are scattered out here, as you know, for close to 450 miles and we have to advantageously schedule the use of equipment along the Parkway. Indeed, there is a man who keeps a schedule, a tight schedule, as to where it can be moved and when it can, and he also keeps a close control of the use of the equipment that we use in regard to its replacement and thus both construction and the automotive type of equipment that we use in our maintenance operations, whether they be for protection or administrative use such as that along the entire Parkway.
- Earl Batten: Then, to get a little further down the line (we can come back to this subject if you would like to a little later) we depend entirely on the functioning and programming and scheduling of our district operations of our four

district maintenance supervisors. The Parkway, for maintenance operations, is divided up into four districts.

Herbert Evison: Are those districts the same as your ranger districts?

Earl Batten: They are exactly the same. We may have a slight deviation here or at another gap or something or other like that, but essentially they are the same thing. The district operation will roughly run around 125 miles average, and there we have the maintenance supervisor in charge of his district for the maintenance operations as well as whatever day labor projects may be going on in the construction field.

Herbert Evison: Those fellows are supervisors of what they used to call force account crews?

Earl Batten: Right. That is what we call force-account construction. The maintenance supervisor carries on the functions of his district operations with an individual staff, you may say. He will have his personnel there consisting of what we used to call a mixed-gang foreman and now they are called Foreman 3's; and we have at least one on each of the districts and on at least one we have two Foremen 3's at the present time. The Parkway is getting at a stage of development in certain sections of the State of Virginia and of North Carolina where we are right ready to start our permanent organizations there. We have functioned a long time with temporary and seasonal personnel and just a very nucleus of a maintenance organization. But we are hoping, and making plans, to start putting several of our districts on a permanent maintenance basis.

Herbert Evison: Do you mean, is it possible that you have some districts now where you don't have any year-round employees?

Earl Batten: No, I didn't mean to imply that. We have permanent employees on all districts at the present time. The Parkway is covered but we have developed to the point that we need more permanent help. As the Parkway was growing we had been depending on additional help from seasonal and temporary personnel and holding a nucleus or an organization on hand as permanent personnel to take over when the busy season came around, and

the construction; but now that we have developed principally certain areas in the Parkway, etc., on several of the districts - James River District is one now with the completion of the James River bridge - essentially that section is completed, and we are making plans and want to set up our permanent staff for that district so that in the wintertime we can carry on the regular operations that would normally be done - handling of debris, conditioning of the picnic tables and the refuse containers and all that - and not have it all to do early in the spring with seasonal personnel and all that sort of thing. So that is something it is high time we were getting into, to get up our permanent organization, and that is what we are making plans on right now to get that very thing started.

Earl Batten: Now the district operations we have got down to the Foreman 3's. We have labor foremen, the Foreman 2, who has charge of the work crews; then the Foreman 1's, who really are labor leadmen and are working foremen.

Herbert Evison: Your Foreman 1 would normally be a sort of straw boss of a working gang?

Earl Batten: That is exactly it. He will have his own crew or maybe four or five men or three men or something like that, and he works right along with them. He is just a little straw boss, is exactly the way we use him here. And then we have the laborers, of course, and the caretakers.

Herbert Evison: What are a caretaker's functions?

Earl Batten: Our caretakers are used in our recreational areas principally, and the caretakers - we feel the caretaker is one of our most important positions.

Herbert Evison: The effectiveness of his work is one of the ways in which people very importantly judge the National Park Service?

Earl Batten: That is the way we feel, definitely, and for that very reason we try to be very careful in the selection of a caretaker, not only for his ability to do his work but also from the point of view of his nearness, his attitude toward people, and all that sort of thing, because he is right out in the park. While

I am not trying to say he is in the protection force or anything like that, he does meet a lot of people while he is there in the course of his work.

Herbert Evison: He is recognized as an employee of the National Park Service?

Earl Batten: That is right. But his functional duties, as far as that is concerned, he makes our parks clean, he buys the supplies and he keeps it clean and he does all of that.

Earl Batten: Then, as far as the skilled labor is concerned, we have very little of that. We depend principally on temporary or seasonal labor for that sort of thing. We may have a little skilled work to do at various times, but it is of a very temporary nature. There again, if it weren't for the fact that the Parkway is so long, we could use several skilled men, but this thing of mileage—

Herbert Evison: I am glad you brought that up, because one of the things in this stuff I am preparing is a separate chapter on the Parkway, and one of the things I am trying to do particularly is to contrast the Parkway operation and responsibilities with those that are typical of other areas of the National Park System; and, of course, it is interesting the different ways the shape of the Parkway, that long narrowness, brings about deviations from practices that are just accepted as matter of course in other parks.

Earl Batten: Well, I see what you mean. For instance, we might use a plumber, an electrician, full time on the Parkway; I see the possibility of not only one but several of each, if we could concentrate the Parkway; and painters, too.

Herbert Evison: You don't have any year-round painters?

Earl Batten: No. What we do have, and we are beginning to fill these positions as a maintenance man's position which we have proposed and we are proposing to put one maintenance man in each of the four districts. He will work that entire district, and we feel that he will - well, we know he will - need aid at certain times because the workload becomes very concentrated at times. But nevertheless, the maintenance man, as his name implies, has

to be one of those jacks-of-all-trades, plumber, electrician, and all that; not particularly good at anything but he may excel in some particular phase of it, but his qualifications give him a working knowledge of most any of those crafts. And so, with the use of this man to work along say in a 125-mile district, with the addition of occasional temporary seasonal men, we are hoping to cover that very thing.

Earl Batten: Like I was going to point out a while ago, if we had an electrician at Montebello, for instance, which is at the north end of the Parkway, he may have a three-day job there and maybe gets caught up. Well, a temporary man we can let go. But it may be that, after doing that same three days that he was working on just at the end of it we may heed an electrician at Asheville, for instance, but it is completely out of the question to send that man from Montebello to Asheville, when we could pick up someone locally down there for a day or two. So that is the reason we are not going into that.

Herbert Evison: For small painting jobs or small plumbing jobs you go to your nearest town where you know of someone skilled?

Earl Batten: That is right; or we pick them up. We have temporary appointments just standing by, even on the roads. Since we have the new Civil Service regulations and all, we can make a temporary appointment and then this seasonal employee is WAE - when actually employed - so we call him in for three or four days and let him return home.

Herbert Evison: But he is hired on a WAE basis instead of being hired separately each time?

Earl Batten: Yes, sir. We have been very fortunate in picking up some like that. There again we have somewhat of an advantage because of the distance and length involved; we pass through many areas of different types of communities, some fairly well settled as residential, others completely farming, and all that; and we find these fellows very receptive to seasonal employment; it suits them fine to come around and work a few days.

Herbert Evison: It is one of the things that help to cement your good relations with the community, I imagine.

Earl Batten: That, too, and they seem to like the idea of farming a few days, then supplementing their income with a little bit of our work, and we benefit from that, too.

Herbert Evison: Well, you know, public relations wise I think you have a definite advantage there on the Parkway. In a concentrated park they have a permanent, full-time man for a lot of tile jobs that you farm out to a whole lot of different people, each of whom is damn glad to have it. That is a very interesting phase of your job. All this is of particular interest for the contrast with conditions you find in other areas that are so different in character from this long string park.

Earl Batten: Well, to assist the maintenance supervisors we have on each of the four districts and also two additional ones at subdistricts - this is a new term I am using on you here, but we will go into that a little later - and what I meant by that was our project clerks. We have a project clerk who maintains the stores accounts, the workers' time records—

Herbert Evison: He maintains records on your equipment operations?

Earl Batten: That is right. We have our shops account to keep up with, and so that is a very important part of our function in the field. The clerks have been giving us very valuable service; and of course they are available for whatever correspondence is needed in the maintenance area. Each of these little maintenance areas, I'd like to point out, is self-supporting, self-sufficient to a certain extent. They have their shops to condition and to perform regular maintenance and repair work on the equipment located in the district. We have a mechanic assigned to each of the shops, one mechanic, with the exception of Rocky Knob, where we also have one mechanic's helper; that is the only shop that we have two men in.

Earl Batten: Now, as the work load gets pretty heavy or the particular work requires two men to do it, like moving or lifting heavy pieces of machinery or something or other, we have to give a little help temporarily, but normally we do not provide assistance to our mechanics, and they have been given to understand that, that they are expected to perform as a mechanic, and we are very pleased with our shop operations; they are working out very well.

Herbert Evison: You are getting conscientious men to do the work?

Earl Batten: Yes, sir. We have mechanics that - I am not trying to contend here that they are finished mechanics; I don't think that anyone could get a mechanic out of a commercial shop that could do all the different phases of mechanical requirements that have to do with modern-day cars. I know that we, even so, have some of the most complicated types of mechanical work such as the fine motor adjustments that are required in some of our

patrol cars; we don't attempt to do that; we don't have the machinery to do it, the equipment that is necessary. And so, we let this equipment go to the nearest commercial garage where they are properly equipped and they have an expert on that machine who knows what he is doing; so we don't try to do that sort of thing.

Herbert Evison: You have enough choice as to where you go so that there isn't just one guy you have to go to because he is the only one there; you have various towns so that you can pick a good man to do the job?

Earl Batten: We have Fords, Chevrolets, Plymouths, and that is the bulk of our cars, except several of the small cars we have gotten in recently; but those commercial garages - I won't say they are convenient to us, because we sometimes have to go out of our way, but we are within about a 20-mile radius, which doesn't make it unreasonable to get them there on the occasions when something like that is required. I think that pretty well wraps up our overall organization.

Herbert Evison: It certainly has presented me with a picture that I had no real conception of before, and that is the part of the organization that really makes the Parkway function. If maintenance went out of business for fifteen days, I would say that the Parkway would be a wreck, wouldn't it?

Earl Batten: Well, since you brought that up, I realize that I was about to slight one of our most valuable employees, because it had slipped my mind; but there are our mower operators. We have 19 of the tractor mowers that we use almost constantly, and just on the roadside, just on the roadway, we will say, keeping down our shoulders' and we have developed, with the assistance of the various departments here, we have actually a mowing policy that we very strictly adhere to. As a matter of fact, that was one good thing that came out of our last maintenance conference when Mr. Kenner was down here. We had presented that as one of the things we had wanted to accomplish during that conference; and the landscapers and the naturalists and we all were together there and we came up with our mowing policy. We are now in our first year of a fixed mowing policy and one that we can follow and strictly adhere to. Really, it is just very simple. Essentially it is that we do no mowing except that somewhere during the middle of the season when the spring bloom has quit and you are beginning to get your growth for your fall bloom, that in areas that have been designated as established bays, etc., and such as that, that they would be mowed at that particular time and then they will not be mowed again until after the fall bloom is complete; but meantime just the road edges, just the shoulders will be mowed. We have had so

much advice as to how to mow, I mean—

Herbert Evison: Well, normally through the summer season how frequently would any particular stretch be mowed; or would that depend somewhat on the dryness or wetness of the weather?

Earl Batten: Very definitely on the dryness or wetness. We are in the third year of an intensive fertilizing program, trying to establish and maintain good growth, an effective growth of cover grasses, especially on the roadsides, the shoulders, and on our slopes, fills and cuts. So, if we get a relatively wet spring our mowers can hardly keep up with it. Of course, as conditions change and the weather becomes drier we may mow once in three weeks sometimes, but no oftener than that.

Herbert Evison: When you have a dry spell and they only mow, say, once in three weeks, what do your mower crews do when the demand for mowing is less?

Earl Batten: Well, we use this same personnel as our truck drivers, some of them truck drivers, and at that time—

Herbert Evison: Now these fellows are hired as what, laborers?

Earl Batten: They are mower operators, but their salary, etc., is based on truck drivers, and these are seasonal operators, too; except we have been very fortunate in developing these men into capable mower operators and we have been very fortunate in getting them back year after year in most cases. We have several that have mowed for us for eight to ten years.

Herbert Evison: Now, here is a question: In what way does a lack of capacity as a mower operator show? What kind of mistakes can a mower operator make?

Earl Batten: Well, I am not trying to infer that all mower operators are like this, but here again we have drawn on the local supply of labor, and a lot of them had operated mowers on their own farms, and they frequently became quite mower happy, if you really want to know what that is, they just like to mow and cut down everything they see and get it done with. Now here is a thing that has happened on the Parkway - not that I have had a great deal to do with it, because it happened before my time, but I firmly endorse it and encourage it - and that is the use of land-use maps; and that is the reason I am going to lead up here now to why the mower operator should have a definite and very high regard for what he is doing.

Earl Batten: During the construction time of the Parkway there was a great deal of study and thought given as to what areas should be left open, what should

be allowed to grow up, what parking areas should be maintained where there are these magnificent vistas. Whether it is called brush cutting or whether it is mowing, all this is part of the land-use map, and we have them for almost all sections of the Parkway; and as the Parkway is being completed, we are still getting these land-use maps.

Earl Batten: That is a record that we have for keeping the Parkway as near as we can to the way it was originally designed to appear to the public; to maintain the overall picture of it, so that these vistas, the little flower bays, and all those sorts of things will be maintained just as it was originally designed. Now, with an ever-changing group of personnel - though, as I said a while ago, some of these people have been here eight years or more - we are thinking about many years to come; this fellow is with us no longer, for some reason or other, and we have to get a new man. His conception of mowing could be entirely different from the other. So, we put these maps right out there; we tell the maintenance supervisor and his Foreman 3 to get that mower operator and show him these plans, give him a copy of them. That is what we want. He has to have enough intelligence to be able to interpret and know what these things are. It is not a matter of saying, "Well, I mowed here last year so I will mow here again this year." It is to mow with a purpose and know what he is doing.

Herbert Evison: You know, you have given me a completely new conception of what the mowing job is on this Parkway. It is extraordinarily interesting.

Earl Batten: They do perform a very important function. We have been very fortunate to receive a lot of favorable comments, too, about it.

Herbert Evison: It is a gigantic thing. Here is something I want to ask you about: I remember talking with Ed Kenner and Ralph Lipscomb about this matter of equipment. There was a time when a park, if it had two weeks a year of a certain type of job that required special equipment, fought to have its own special piece of equipment to do the job; there was a lot of equipment, and some of it very expensive, that was put to very little use in the course of a year, yet it represented an investment of a great deal of money. I know that several years ago they made some study of that, and I believe they came up with the conclusion that a good many individual pieces of equipment that the Park Service owned it really shouldn't own at all but should hire for the occasional period of need.

Herbert Evison: Now, all of that is a kind of long lead-up to the question of the extent of your hiring equipment that you need, as well as whether you hire equipment and operators together to do jobs on the Parkway in connection

with maintenance?

Earl Batten: We do some of both. We hire equipment on some occasions and furnish our own operator; on some occasions we contract for the equipment and its operator. Occasions that require that are usually those that are an emergency type of operation. We may have a slide that we can't get our equipment concentrated on soon enough, or we may not have equipment capable of handling it. We had several occasions like that last winter. We were plagued with quite a few slides last year. It all started along about the time the hurricane hit this country; and then on down through the winter, with the snow that we had, we had numerous slides.

Earl Batten: When you start talking about equipment I get a little envious, really, when you hear about all the equipment people have and use it a few weeks or so. We are getting a little equipment. We have dozers now for each one of our districts; we have even had to hire dozers on certain occasions for such a simple operation as sanitary land fill. I mean, that is something we are always using equipment on and you need one for that.

Herbert Evison: You have dozers because you have enough use to justify that expense.

Earl Batten: If we make a mistake it is going to be our own fault now, because we were down to no equipment at all, or close to it, at one time. We had a scattering of equipment, it is true, but not enough, not near enough. As a matter of fact, two compressors, two or three dozers, one big dozer that was used in the beginning of construction which was completely out of the question - we had that around with a couple of dozers. Someone was always using that one when some other districts wanted it, so we just had to hire equipment frequently for those other districts - that sort of thing.

Earl Batten: But nevertheless, here is something that has developed in the last few years - I know that I am not the only one aware of it - and that is the fact that our labor is continually increasing in cost. Just in the last two years the basic (as we call the laborer) has increased from \$1.15 an hour to \$1.34 an hour. Well, that reflects right on up the line in the increased hourly rates paid to all of our employees. We are going to have to analyze - and we are doing so continually - the cost and relationship of the foremen who work now, where we used to not think too much about it, just doing it with manual labor, as compared that cost with machinery. Now the costs are getting so high; we have limited operating funds; we don't seem to get any great increases; as a matter of fact, our per-unit allowance is going down in relation to the labor costs that are coming up. We don't have as much money to operate per unit of anything I can think

of offhand - picnic units or campground units or anything else - the unit allowance is, by the time you take into consideration the advance in hourly rates of the people working, and that sort of thing, we don't have as much money to buy time with as we had several years ago.

Earl Batten: And for that reason we are just going to have to place more emphasis, give more thought, more study, to the possibility of using mechanized equipment if it is within reason, and analyze it for its economic advantage. This is just what we are going to have to do. And at the time that that does make itself known that it would be more economical to operate that way, we are going to try to do whatever we can to take advantage of that. There are certain operations that we have that are going to be extremely difficult ever to go to mechanical type operations; they don't lend themselves well to that; but there are certain other things that we can do that will help and I think will be advantageous to operations.

Herbert Evison: I take it from my observation of the road surfaces on the Parkway now that you are not too much concerned at this period in the Parkway's history with major road repairs.

Earl Batten: We still have approach settlement to quite a few of our underpasses or grade separations, and some of our culverts. We have wedged those up, and that is one of the larger items that we have; but we have some settlement on large slides that we are wedging up. But as far as the break-up of a section, just the decomposition and complete wear out of a length of road, we don't have any of that; we haven't reached that stage yet. As a matter of fact, we had thought about it and we, with the help of EODC and the Bureau of Public Roads, have very definite programs on major roads for resurfacing whole sections in projected time and use periods that we think the roads will require reconditioning; we have given thought to that. But we have not been plagued with a great breakup in the road.

Earl Batten: The most that we have had is from some winter breakup that we patch early in the spring, from frost upheaval and damage from the few snowplows that we use. Of course, one thing that gives us some trouble, too, is local use during the wintertime when we are not trying to keep the road open, but the local people will get on there with their chains and chew up the road and tear down to the base. We have had numerous occasions of that this past spring, and we have repaired those. Of course, it does me good to hear you say you notice that we haven't done a lot, because we spend a good deal of time trying to make it appear that the new surface is just the same as the old surface. We haven't always been able to get aggregate to match the old, but we have tried, made an attempt

to try to not make such a great contrast in appearance of the road.

Herbert Evison: You have gone so far beyond what I would have thought to ask questions about this has been very productive for me.

Earl Batten: I would expand just a mite on our operations, I say we have a Parkway engineer, an assistant Parkway engineer, and two civil engineer trainees. Now of course there are many functions, that would apply to any type of operations that have to be done to satisfy our own curiosity and our own planning and programming, too; but in addition to that, of course, you are familiar with what is required all the way into the Region and the Director's Office, and all that sort of thing.

Herbert Evison: No, I am not, and that is something that has very largely developed in the past four or five years, since they have actually had a Maintenance Branch, I guess it is. Hasn't a lot of new procedure come in with that?

Earl Batten: Well, our maintenance account has been broken down into - I think I couldn't tell you the number, but I would say that to operate the roads and buildings and utilities portion of any park - not only the Parkway - there must be something like 75 or 100 various accounts.

Herbert Evison: Are they all necessary - off the record?

Earl Batten: Well, sometimes I think they aren't. For instance, we have four different accounts involved in such a thing as picking up paper, or refuse collection. We have the Buildings and Utilities-Grounds, for instance; if you pick the paper up around a picnic table or something or other out in the area that is grounds, to take it over and put it in the refuse container. Now, when you pick that can up and take it off and put it on your transportation, that is refuse collection, that is a different account. And when you crank your truck up and you take it down to the incinerator on refuse collection - when you are ready to embark upon it and when you take it off the truck, that becomes refuse disposal, which is a different account. Now if you go out on the roads and pick up the paper, that is the roads account. I mean, picking up a piece of paper, to me, and refuse collection are the same; but nevertheless, in cost accounting, that is the way we have to do it.

Herbert Evison: Your own feeling is that the breakdown is a little bit too elaborate?

Earl Batten: We try to make bookkeepers out of some of our caretakers, for instance. We just sort of checked on one of our caretakers here some time ago. I think it was up in the trillions of accounts he was fooling with; he has

water system, sewer system, his buildings, his grounds, his refuse collection, his disposal, that he could be called on to work on; he probably wouldn't operate on that many, but it certainly wouldn't be unusual to have a caretaker working on 8 to 10 accounts.

Herbert Evison: Is he supposed to keep a record?

Earl Batten: He has to report to his foreman how much time he spent on each of those.

Herbert Evison: This caretaker has to know what all those different accounts are so that he can keep a proper record so that he can report it?

Earl Batten: Right.

Herbert Evison: That is another little burden on your caretaker that I think he might be spared somehow.

Earl Batten: But anyhow, I was getting back to say that we have an organization in here. We wouldn't try to operate without a program and a program for future years, too. We have programs to prepare and it becomes a sizeable item when you actually have as much as we do here to provide for all of the services and for all of the accomplishment that we expect to make during the years; and then we have to apportion our money to the various districts.

Earl Batten: I would like to point out, too, that our maintenance supervisors in themselves are required to program their own activities on each district. Their programs are then subject to approval by the Parkway engineer and, in the case of questionable items, through him for the Superintendent, but they provide their own programs, which we scrutinize and analyze carefully; often items are deleted, others that we think should be in the program are added, placed in the program. Then we have an apportionment of funds that is very necessary under our present operations, on which we have a 3-month accounting period now, with quarterly allotments, that we have to adhere to very strictly; and that results in a very tight scheduling of funds and operations, to be sure that the items included in the program have been provided for.

Herbert Evison: You have to make sure that what has been allotted will last and also that you don't have a lot of carryover?

Earl Batten: That is right, and so we will have enough to function next spring when

we get ready to open up. But the districts operate on that basis. And then the Parkway engineer is responsible for carrying out this whole procedure, with the help of the assistant Parkway engineer, who incidentally becomes a very busy fellow. He tries to see that all this is going on at the right time and everything is moving along just to check and provide technical assistance where it is necessary, especially in our road work and our buildings maintenance and all that sort of thing. We provide them with the technical assistance that otherwise wouldn't be available to a lot of those fellows.

Herbert Evison: You are the Parkway engineer. What kind of engineer do you classify yourself as, civil engineer, mechanical engineer, highway engineer, or what?

Earl Batten: Civil, I believe. I went to the University of Virginia in civil engineering. I did not get my degree, though; I had two and a half years of civil engineering at the University of Virginia. The assistant is a civil engineer; he went to Duke University. The one phase that I haven't touched on here, though, that makes it very important in my own opinion that we have some civil engineering knowledge is the construction work that we are doing; we are performing quite a bit of construction work down here. As a matter of fact, just out of curiosity, I made an analysis of how much minor roads and B&U work we have done in the past four or five years, and it will average between \$400,000 and \$500,000 worth of force account work that we are doing each year.

Herbert Evison: Does that money come out of capital funds or is that all maintenance?

Earl Batten: Construction funds on projects constructed with day labor.

Herbert Evison: A Parkway engineer then is much more than a superintendent of maintenance.

Earl Batten: Yes, we actually are construction and maintenance.

Herbert Evison: I am glad you made that point, too, because it would be very easy to get the idea that, well, a park engineer is the chief of maintenance for the park, period, without realizing he had other important functions, too.

Earl Batten: I am sure that other parks have that same requirement, too, because I know the larger ones do. I know some of the park engineers personally and have known them for a long time, and we often discuss that construction

requirement, etc.

Herbert Evison: Tell me this: Has any machinery been established by which park engineers do get together to hash over how they do the job and what have you? Has anything in the way of a park engineers' conference ever been worked out?

Earl Batten: I have never seen or heard of any such method or anything of that type. About two and a half or three years ago there was a conference in the Regional Offices of all park engineers, administrative officers, landscape architects, in which we discussed some common mutual operations, procedures for accounting, etc., at that time, but they have been very spotty. As a matter of fact, we have been advised that we will have one, a construction and maintenance conference at Yosemite this fall, and of course I am very glad to have been selected to attend that. However, because of proximity I have had occasion to talk with the engineers at Smokies and Shenandoah; and then, on my infrequent travels during a busman's holiday or something or other, I have sometimes stopped in and talked with personnel at other parks.

[END OF INTERVIEW]