

**National Park Service (NPS) History Collection**

---

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



Nathan Baker  
May 26, 1971

Interview conducted by S. Herbert Evison  
Transcribed by Thelma W. McDonald  
Digitized by Madison T. Duran

This digital transcript contains updated pagination, formatting, and editing for accessibility and compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Interview content has not been altered.

The original typed transcript is preserved in the NPS History Collection.

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

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

(Tape # 66 – Side 2)  
NOTE: Personal history  
obliterated

EVISON INTERVIEW WITH NATHAN BAKER

DRAFT 6/23/72

Typist: Thelma W. McDonald

FIRST PART OF INTERVIEW ON PERSONAL HISTORY OBLITERATED

[START OF TAPE 66, SIDE 2]

Herbert Evison: This is Wednesday, May 26, 1971. I'm Herbert Evison and I am in the penthouse studio of the Department of Interior Building. With me is Nathan Baker—

Nathan Baker: Her name was Connie Nugent.

Herbert Evison: Well there was a nice person to make you feel at home I'll tell you.

Nathan Baker: You're not kidding.

Herbert Evison: They don't make them any better.

Nathan Baker: Well Connie and Bob I reckon were our two best, longest friends. We see her every winter when we go to Florida. Did you see Connie?

Herbert Evison: Yes, we stopped by and had a wonderful morning with her in one of the most charming apartments that I've ever seen.

Nathan Baker: Isn't that nice?

Herbert Evison: Just wonderful! Well, let's go ahead with this.

Nathan Baker: I haven't finished my schooling. Then I went to Marshall University down in Huntington, West Virginia. A friend of mine who I used to play ball with was going down there. I never had heard of the school. So, I said, "Well why not?" First, I had gotten a job in the YMCA down there. It was just a house then. They built the YMCA while I was there, and that was part of the job that I had. So, I went down there on a job and then went to Marshall University, and that's where I got my A.B. degree in education and mathematics. My minor was physical education. I played baseball, some basketball, and did some wrestling. I didn't play any football.

Herbert Evison: Now let's place this in the proper framework as to time. When were you there?

Nathan Baker: I was at Carnegie Tech from 1926 to 1928, that would be until the end of the school year. And I went to Marshall from 1928 to '31, three years. I was in engineering school at Carnegie and, of course, I lost some of my credits. Marshall gave me a year's credit on my work at Carnegie Tech.

Herbert Evison: I see. You came in with the account of that after you had told about going to work for Rex Reixach, and I wanted to be clear as to how that came consecutively. Well now let's go ahead.

- Nathan Baker: Well, wait a minute. I haven't finished with my education yet. Then I came here to Washington, and I got this job with the CCC in the Bond Building. I went to night school at George Washington University. I still wanted to get my civil engineering degree, so I went to night school for four years I think it was. And then they started this traveling. I had to do a lot of traveling. You know, you get in a car, and you go to all these camps all over the country. The night school gave me another year's credit, so I actually have three years in civil engineering besides the A.B. degree. I actually took the exam here as a coach for the District public schools. And I passed very high in all except for the lack of experience. At that time, they had more coaches than I reckon they needed. But as it turned out, according to salaries, and so forth, I fared better by getting the job I did with the National Park Service.
- Herbert Evison: Well now let's go ahead with this National Park Service job. You were set at the chore of reducing that heap of unanswered letters, but then you went on working after that and I'm interested in being reminded of what you did.
- Nathan Baker: I was classified as I recall as an Engineering Aid. Rex was in charge of purchasing all this heavy equipment — well from typewriters to bulldozers. I remember we used to have equipment scattered along the railroad tracks from one end of the country the other because you had to spend this money by the end of the fiscal year. We did maintenance work. Now this was for about a year and a half. And then, as I get the story, pressure was put Bob Fechner, the Director of the CCC, from the Hill to do something about these kids who were being killed, maimed, and injured in accidents in the camps. Mr. Fechner brought in an outstanding safety engineer by the name of Sam Lauderdale, who was the head safety engineer for a power company in Arkansas. When Sam came to Washington, he formed a council with representatives from the various agencies, and the Army, that were participating in the CCC program. Rex Reixach was a representative for a while and finally he took me with him to these safety councils that Sam Lauderdale headed up. And eventually Rex turned it over to me entirely. So, besides the purchasing work, maintenance work, and heavy equipment work out of his office, I also had the safety program. It was less than a year that that became a full-time job. So, then I was working strictly on safety for the National Park Service under the supervision of Rex.
- Herbert Evison: Well now just what did that involve doing?

- Nathan Baker: In fact, CCC was really the first federal agency that had a real organized safety program in the federal government.
- Herbert Evison: Really?
- Nathan Baker: Of course, the exceptions are the armed services.
- Herbert Evison: It was the first of the civilians.
- Nathan Baker: Yes, CCC was the first of the civilian services, or bureaus, or departments. Our job was to establish a program at the camp level. And we did such things as appoint a safety assistant, and usually that was the top foreman who had that job in a camp. We gave them various informational materials and programming materials, films and what have you for promotional work — accident analyses and the whole gamut.
- Herbert Evison: Let me interrupt you here by asking you this question. You had to set standards and formulate regulations of various kinds. I remember for instance, to cite an example, people working with rapid-grind wheels or with other things menacing the eyes. There was an absolute requirement that no boy could work at that without wearing safety goggles. Now there must have been a whole flock of such regulations.
- Nathan Baker: I was designated as the chairman of a committee by Sam Lauderdale to write the safety regulations for the CCC camps. I still have a copy of the book and it had the committee names on it. And these regulations covered every kind of an operation, even the Army activities in the camps. We, of course, had an Army representative on this committee. I wrote with this committee the first regulations that were issued. It was called The Safety Manual of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Sam Lauderdale was quite strict on taking disciplinary action when somebody failed to do something. I didn't like that particular part of his attitude, but I must give full credit to Sam Lauderdale for giving me the training and the exposure to becoming what I would say fairly successful in the field of safety. And Sam Lauderdale was really my teacher.
- Herbert Evison: Well, you really qualified ultimately as a safety engineer I would take it.
- Nathan Baker: Yes.
- Herbert Evison: This would have been along in 1935 or '36 I would suppose.
- Nathan Baker: 1937.
- Herbert Evison: Did you still work in the Bond Building?
- Nathan Baker: I forget when we left the Bond Building. We left the Bond Building when the Department of the Interior Building was finished.

- Herbert Evison: Well that I know was after I went down to Richmond in the middle of 1936. I think it was in '37.
- Nathan Baker: Right.
- Herbert Evison: But during all that time you continued as the safety man for the Park Service.
- Nathan Baker: Yes, for the Park Service. Frank Ahern was the safety man for the regular national parks. Some friction developed between Frank Ahern's program and my program. And so, Connie Wirth I recall went to the Director and said that I was in charge of the CCC operations, and he wanted Frank Ahern to stay out of his program work. And it was further being coordinated by Sam Lauderdale from Director Fechner's office too. I used to have some difficulties. I remember going into Yosemite when Colonel White was Superintendent. Do you remember Colonel White?
- Herbert Evison: Yes, but he was Superintendent of Sequoia.
- Nathan Baker: All right, Sequoia. Of course, you always had to go to the Superintendent's office first. That was the thing to do. And Colonel White said, "What the hell are you doing here?" He first asked me my name and I told him what I was there for. He said, "Well okay, go on out and look at your camps." It was just the attitude it was. And I was just a young kid you know, trying to make a living and really this shook me up to no end. I finally got over those things, but there was some friction between the CCC boys and the regular park people. And I remember when the park superintendents used to sit on store boxes and have a homemade table for a desk until the CCC came along and fixed up their offices with furniture. And it's funny how it all turned out that the CCC boys finally ran the Park Service.
- Herbert Evison: Well, just about that.
- Nathan Baker: Then in 1937 Connie Wirth set up Weatherwax's office Departmental-wise when I believe Secretary Ickes designated him as his representative for the whole Department. Then Connie asked me to handle safety. And Weatherwax had Harry Greenberg to head up his budget and operations. And little Iris Pryor, a real good secretary, was Weatherwax's secretary. She actually, I think, ran the office. And G. D. Arthur was in charge of training. And we had the whole Department. So, then I had the whole Department, which was six bureaus as I recall. And then I used to go on field trips with the various safety engineers of the other bureaus who were handling safety work, and I was coordinating the whole business, and still handled the Park Service operation direct. So, I was really the Departmental safety engineer and handled CCC operations.

Herbert Evison: Well now, how long did you stay in that?

Nathan Baker: The CCC folded up, as you know, very suddenly and I think sadly because it's a shame there weren't more records of really what the CCC contributed. In July of 1942, Roy Hunt, who was in Mr. Charles Peters' offices, and had been transferred out of Park Service — Public Buildings Administration to the Federal Works Agency, asked me to come over as his assistant on safety. So that's where I went. This was July 1, 1942. I remember this very well. On March 1, 1943, I was drafted in the Army. I had all kinds of commissions working. And fact is, they told me to go on down to basic training at Fort Bragg and that I would be called out of the ranks to accept a commission. Well, the commission came through, but they would not release me because they wanted men for the infantry divisions. I was 34 years old then, I might say that the only enjoyable part of my Army experience was that my bald head used to get me out of a lot of extra duty work and stuff like this because the non-commissioned officers would give me the battery, to take down the gun you know — this was artillery that I was being trained in — and do all this parading and what have you. So, I always knew I was going to get off on weekends because they'd take care of my inspections. So, I was always going to pass that, and I could arrange more often to meet my wife. So, the old bald head helped out a lot. The kids would come to me with all kinds of problems, and they used to call me "Pops," overseas in Italy and everywhere else. It was sad the way some of these kids were treated. Of course, knowing I had a government job at home I had to be careful about what I said or did, either on my own, or in advising these kids. They said, "Well you're too old. You won't be going overseas." About six months later I was over in Africa with the 85th Infantry Division as a buck sergeant in charge of a 105-howitzer group. We didn't do much of the fighting. It was mostly quelling riots and stuff like that. It was a bloody war over there by the way, but it was pretty well over by the time we got there.

Herbert Evison: Now you said you were in Africa. Where?

Nathan Baker: We landed in Casablanca. We got on 48 trains. Two of us had to sit up while the others slept. I remember that, I think I developed a claustrophobia. We'd go through these tunnels and there was smoke from the train, and it would stall. They said some of the kids actually jumped off, I don't know — maybe one or two in our group. I reckon there were about 5,000 troops. I can't remember where we went to, but we did mostly training, and as I said, quelling riots, stuff like that, and protecting ourselves really. Then we were shipped out across the Mediterranean to Italy. We landed in Naples. We then moved up out of Naples into — they

had what they called “Zero Hour.” Nobody knew anything about this, but across Italy they had formed a line and they had set a time that the English and Italian armies — I don’t know how many divisions we had there. General Mark Clark was in charge. We sat out there for about three days until, I remember the time, about 11:11 in the evening they gave the order, and man that sky just lighted up with artillery and everything else. And the aftermath of that, there were so many soldiers killed on both sides that they declared a truce, and everybody went out and got their own bodies and what have you. One of the jobs I had was to take a stake body truck with three boys and pick these bodies up and stack them in the back of the stake body truck like cordwood. And we’d try to get the dog tags to get the identifications, but I’m sure some of them were missing. They were just dried, bloody bodies and two of the kids passed out. We had to revive them. But one guy and I finally got a load. That was really something.

Herbert Evison: Probably about the worst job you ever had huh?

Nathan Baker: I never have experienced anything like that. And it’s the first time I reckon I’ve told that. I don’t think I ever told my wife about that experience. Then we went into battle, and I was over there a little less than two years when the war ended.

Herbert Evison: Where were you when the war ended?

Nathan Baker: Just north of Venice. The fact is one combat team went over the border before we were called back. In a combat team would be an artillery battery and five companies of infantry. Then we were a long while getting back to Naples. And I had plenty of points to come home on. All of a sudden, they found out that I was a safety man. I was all set to come home when I got these orders. They were having a lot of motor vehicle accidents, both civilians and soldiers. They had cut these orders for me to come to Naples to set up a program for the prevention of these motor vehicle accidents. That’s where 5th Army Headquarters was. And it happened to be that when we were at tent city waiting to come home, this was a couple weeks’ duration, a colonel was assigned to this in the 85<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division’s Headquarters. He found out that I had done fire prevention and safety work. And he called me in to organize a program of fire prevention at this camp where I would say there were probably 25,000 troops. So, he was very proud of what I had done. And I was talking to colonels and majors there. I was then a staff sergeant. So, when I got these orders, I rushed over to this colonel at the camp in Naples where we were waiting to ship out. I also had with me my appointment as head of safety for the Public Buildings Administration, as it was called then. As I recall I had a P-4 rating then. So, I showed him the appointment, that I had a job waiting for me back in the States. He was lying out in the sun practically stripped. He

got dressed and went up and saw the commanding general of the 85th Infantry Division, General Calder. And Calder got the orders cancelled, so I got home with the group.

Herbert Evison: You mean your orders to take this other safety job over there were cancelled?

Nathan Baker: Yes. Otherwise, I would have been over there another year or two probably.

Herbert Evison: Well, you came back here and went right on the job then with Public Buildings Administration?

Nathan Baker: I came back here. We took a trip. I just wanted to get away from everything. There was one interesting thing. Well, it was interesting to me. Land mines were very prevalent over there in Italy. And I remember coming back one evening from Camp Meade where we were given our discharge, and my car ran out of gas. I got out of the car and was taking a shortcut and just as I hit the fence row, I just froze like this you know. I had forgotten that I was back home and was thinking, "Gee, is this a mined area here?" And planes used to bother me. I used to really scramble out of bed and get under it and everything else for a month or so after I came back, but now that's all gone. There is something to adjusting when you've been in a situation like that. I can appreciate these boys that come back now from probably a far worse environment than I was in. That was the end of my Army career. Then I came back and was head of the accident fire prevention program for the Public Buildings Administration.

Herbert Evison: Would that have been still in 1945?

Nathan Baker: 1946.

Herbert Evison: Well now how did it happen that you ultimately landed back in the National Park Service fold?

Nathan Baker: When the General Services Administration was organized the War Assets Administration came up there and they had a powerful bill. That GSA bill is still powerful, and they haven't used all that's given in that thing either. But the War Assets Administration came up there and bounced everybody around. So, I was in competition with Vic Anderson, Safety Director of the War Assets Administration, for the top job of heading safety for all of General Services Administration. Well finally I won out on that deal and there's a lot of detail to that. I was head of safety and fire prevention for all of General Services Administration. I was on a program at the National Safety Council in 1959 when Belva Brandon called me and said, "Connie Wirth would like to see you." And I said, "Well fine." So, I went over to Connie's office and he spent about two hours with me. Of course, I had

occasionally gone over to see Connie, maybe three or four times since I left the Park Service. I got involved in a political deal at GSA and I sought advice from Connie. Connie told me exactly what he did when a political situation came up. He'd go up to the Secretary and say, "Give me my old job back and I know that you'd like to have your own man in", but he survived all of them I reckon. And that was the advice he gave me. But he spent two hours with me and asked me whether I'd come back to National Park Service. I said, "Well Connie, I can't come back at a grade lower than I am now." I was a GS-14 then. And Connie said, "No problem, no problem." So, I said, "Give me a couple of days to think about it", because I'd started this whole program in GSA and Public Buildings Administration and I was pretty proud of what we were doing, and so forth. I said, "Really my first love is the National Park Service and I love the people that I worked with, and I know a lot of them are still here." Then I called him later. And he said, "Come on over and we'll chat." So, he said, "We got the GS-14. When can you come to work?" I said, "Okay Connie." So, on March 1, 1959, I went to work with National Park Service again. And you know, I didn't see Connie but about three times after I got the job. I was amazed at him — I mean all this time he spent with me. But Connie is the guy that if you did your job and as long as you're doing all right, you didn't hear much from him. He'd always support me which I was so proud of.

Herbert Evison: You did quite a number of things. In the first place, you dropped right into a situation that darn well needed somebody to run a program on safety.

Nathan Baker: Yes, I did. All respects to Frank Ahern, but Frank never had an organized program going. I know for example, Tom Vint and Dick Sutton came into my office and welcomed me with open arms. And I found out later that Tom Vint got fed up with Frank and had his own safety people in the two design offices. But Tom Vint also took me around. Traveling with a big shot like Tom Vint you know, with me a little safety boy was something. That's one thing that got me started off. The other thing that got me started off was — they were having a Superintendents' meeting at Williamsburg and I was upset. I think that's where I saw you the first time Herb. I was upset because safety was not on the program. I said, "This is the place to start. If I'm going to start, I've got to start here." So, Bill Carnes and his Mission 66 and Tom Vint got me on the program in Williamsburg. I wasn't even in the printer program. I had a chance to make a little talk down there and I spent a lot of time working it up. I taped a talk and played it back and everything to try to work it out. I'll never forget one thing. Connie was on the stage with me. I said, "Connie, can I tell a couple of stories to make some points?" And he said, "Yes, but don't use the

word [inaudible].” I’ll never forget that. I think that was when I really got a cooperative start with the program, and it sure helped me a lot.

Herbert Evison: Aside from the fact that safety and the promotion of safety, and the teaching of safety was not organized at the time, what was the situation and what did you then do to correct it aside from getting this good send-off down at Williamsburg?

Nathan Baker: Well Frank was more of a consultant I’d say, and people came to him. I sat down and wrote on paper what I wanted to do with a program which included – accident analyses to me is a minor detail – but to get committees organized in the parks and operating, and give them material to operate with. It’s just an amazing lot of things to do to get people interested, participating and involved. I’ve always believed in working on people and the heck with statistics. Now you have to have statistics to see how you’re progressing and whether you’re doing the right things, and so forth. I tried to get people involved in everything I could. We had our conferences in Chicago, and we’d get management people there. It was finally so I could get into all the training sessions and what have you. Then we had a safety contest. There were about two dozen things. There were a couple of original things. One of them was using retirees. You know that program worked out real well. That was a little later program. Another thing was getting the regional directors to investigate the fatal accidents to employees. That finally came into operation. I remember the old boy, John Rutter, who used to be the Regional Director out in San Francisco. He’s now Director of the Pacific Northwest Regional Office in Oregon. He said one of the best things he ever did was that he found out more in one afternoon investigating that fatal accident we had at Olympic than the many times he’d been in that park studying the operations. So, it was working two ways. There was another thing I’m trying to think of that we did that was a novelty and new to the safety field. Oh, I had each of the park staffs develop a program of activities both for the public and for the employees, I gave no guidance. And it was amazing what a good job most of the parks did on writing down things they were going to do to prevent accidents during the coming year. We only got them one time. And we had the parks revise them a couple of times. Then from that I developed a model program for a large park and a small park for them to follow which included various activities such as inspections, in the prevention of accidents. The only thing that bothered us in our program was Bill Pope and I don’t care if this does go on record. He got so wrapped up in statistics that we spent so much time on statistics it was ruining our own program for a long while there.

Herbert Evison: Who did this?

Nathan Baker: Bill Pope, the Departmental safety engineer. And why he got on that kick I don't know because I always said that about 30% or 40% of your accident reports are not factual anyhow, that they're trying to cover up for one another, either the supervisor or the employee. I used the records mainly to see whether my techniques and my ideas were going over. I had wonderful support. Hillory Tolson never hesitated to give me money for travel or things like this. I had great support from Connie Wirth, both verbally and he'd sign most anything I'd want him to. And George Hartzog, in spite of the fact that we probably are not too friendly now, and I say this with some reservation, was I think one of the best top executives for a safety man to ever have. And I say that unqualifiedly. Now what changed him somewhat I don't know, I heard just today that there's a million-dollar lawsuit against Park Service on that kid who was burned to death in Yellowstone. If we would have safety men out in the parks, we would be in a much better position to defend against things like this. And I kept telling them this. And that's exactly where the plaintiff's got them. He said that one man is handling safety and here you have all this operation out here. But I never did get through. We got safety clerks, and we got the retirees, and that was all.

Herbert Evison: Now I'm interested in this use of retirees. Of course, most of those were fellows that I knew well. Ralph Anderson had worked for me for a number of years. And, of course, there was Ray Vinten, one of the best field men the Park Service ever had. I'm interested in what you told them. You must have gotten them all together first before you sent them into the field.

Nathan Baker: Right. We had the retirees here for one week. We had various branches of the parks come in, in the operational part, to tell the retirees what their problems were, what their operations were really, although they knew them. But I think the best thing was I always tried to get the Director, my boss, or as many of the top people as I could, to come in and just say a word or two to the group. That is the best thing to do. Right away you've got the attention, and you can do anything.

Herbert Evison: To indicate that the top brass was really interested.

Nathan Baker: Right. We tried to eliminate as much of the paperwork as we possibly could. We said, "You're going in the parks as counselors. Advise them. If you don't have the answer, call our office or let us know about it." Of course, after the first time maybe we could accumulate some of this information so we could do a better job of training the other people. We gave them all the references that were used in our own instances and what have you. I kept stressing, "Meet with the guys out on a job and have a little talk with them, not all about safety, but get safety into it." This was the technique that I used. I always believed in working on the people and

getting involved rather than all this technical stuff. I always said the best safety engineer was the foreman on the job. I used to tell them that. I said, "You're the safety engineer on this job. You know more about this job than I do and where the accidents are going to occur. I'm only here to try to help you and tell you to think about it. And once you think about it, you're going to prevent the accident, not me." That was always the technique I used.

Herbert Evison: Now actually you were the Park Service's safety engineer from 1959 until when?

Nathan Baker: I retired in February of 1969.

Herbert Evison: You were on for practically 10 years then.

Nathan Baker: Right.

Herbert Evison: And if I'm not mistaken, in spite of your dislike of statistics, some of those that came out of those years indicated that you had done a job.

Nathan Baker: Well, I say I used statistics for numbers only. They couldn't cover up very well the number, but Bill Pope was making such a big deal out of the causes. And there's where they were covering up on it. And I knew there were certain things you had to do to get people involved, that you didn't need a whole lot of sheets and studies, and what have you on accident analyses. You used some of it yes. But if I want to use accident reports I'm going up to Yellowstone and study their reports. Big Bend is a little different from Yellowstone, but yet I know there are certain program elements that cover the whole wide area of safety programming.

Herbert Evison: Nat, of course, I think you were involved in one of the most useful and one of the most significant programs that the Park Service carried on during that time. And the interesting thing is that among the many people that I've taped I don't think anybody has ever more than mentioned safety, so I'm darned glad to have gotten you, and your experience and your ideas on this tape. Now is there something more that you'd like to get on here?

Nathan Baker: Well, how much time have I got?

Herbert Evison: Oh, all you want.

Nathan Baker: Is there another appointment coming up?

Herbert Evison: No, no, the rest of the afternoon is free as far as I'm concerned.

Nathan Baker: When I came to the Park Service I was in sort of a bind. I was elected chairman of the American Society of Safety Engineers chapter here in the Washington area while I was still with GSA. That year the president had his Industrial Safety Meeting here. So, the ASSE chapter sponsored a

dinner at the Naval Gun Factory for these safety people from all over the country that were here. I was master of ceremonies for the program because I was chairman of the chapter here. And I think that was a highlight in my life. We had Dr. Frederick Brown Harris, you remember, the minister over at the big Methodist Church on 16th Street?

Herbert Evison: Yes.

Nathan Baker: I have a letter here in my files from President Nixon who was coming and then had to cancel out at the last minute. He was then Vice President. We had something like 300 or so outstanding people from all over the country. Lyons was the speaker for the evening. He was an advisor at the White House to President Eisenhower and he was our main speaker. That was quite an interesting meeting. I do have some things I wanted to show you. You might want to cut the recorder off for a second.

Herbert Evison: I want to look at those and I'll turn off the recorder while we're doing that.

Nathan Baker: One day while row tilling actually in my garden, I thought that we should have a training course. And I wanted a training course that did not involve just the fundamentals of safety and safety in itself because the impression you sometimes get is that it's a dry subject and what have you. So, I thought of the idea of a sort of self-improvement program, or a thinking kind of a training program that would bring safety into it. Well in the meantime I had become well acquainted with the man who is still conducting these courses by the way, Dr. Earl Hannaford, who was personnel director and handled safety for the Bell Telephone Company. He was a guy you could go to see you know. I was on a panel with him once and then I had him here in 1959 when I was chairman of the ASSE chapter here. He'd get a suite of rooms in a hotel. He didn't drink and he didn't smoke, but he'd have a bar there for friends who came up to see him and wanted a drink and what have you. These were big shots. Dr. Hannaford always had the time for old Nat to come up to his suite and sit down and talk with him. Public safety particularly is what he helped me on, which is a new field to everybody by the way. And now I'm getting requests to do consulting services on it, including requests from the Park Service.

Herbert Evison: Good!

Nathan Baker: I thought of Dr. Hannaford right away as the man I could get together with to develop this course. Well, we did. And I got him in as the instructor, and this course is going like a house afire. And you ask everybody that takes that course whether they've been to Dr. Hannaford's course, and they'll say it's the best thing.

Herbert Evison: I've heard about it and how it continues still.

Nathan Baker: Right, it's still going. I think that's about all that's still going.

Herbert Evison: And he still is connected with it?

Nathan Baker: Yes, he's the one who's still conducting the course. That old boy must be 75 years old.

Herbert Evison: Oh yes, I've heard of him and what a marvelous guy he is for stimulating the people.

Nathan Baker: Right. He lectures and then he gets the people into groups and makes them discuss his lecture and come back with what they got out of their group discussion. And then we had projects set up at the training centers where these guys would go out and actually supervise a gang of people on some maintenance job or something. So, he lectured and then he made them discuss it and then he made them do it. That's not the three steps really. But he and I both together wrote the text for this course and that was something I've been very, very proud of.

Herbert Evison: What's the title of that text?

Nathan Baker: Gee, what is the title of that text?

Herbert Evison: Well don't bother about it now, but let me just put on the record a request that you provide me with a copy of that if you can get it because I think that ought to be part of this archive dealing with Nat Baker. It's part of your accomplishment.

Nathan Baker: I can get you all kinds of things like that.

Herbert Evison: Well I wish you would.

Nathan Baker: Okay.

Herbert Evison: We're trying to collect that for the archives.

Nathan Baker: I didn't know what you wanted; I just picked these things up to remind me.

Herbert Evison: Nat, back in my day in the Park Service I think it was very seldom that anybody, unless maybe it was Frank Ahern, ever got to meetings of the National Safety Council. But I have the impression anyway that you went regularly to those meetings and that there were other Park Service people also who got to them. Am I correct in that?

Nathan Baker: Yes, you are. Our top management people meeting you know was in Chicago in conjunction with the National Safety Congress.

Herbert Evison: Now in what way was attendance at the meetings of the National Safety Council itself useful to you, or useful to the Park Service generally?

Nathan Baker: Gee, I'm glad I have this chance to answer that. Of course, I attended so many meetings of the National Safety Council and I've been on the program so often that I got most of my information by going around to the various meeting rooms. You might have to drink a little whiskey or something, to get hold of a man that you want to talk to about a certain problem. So, I learned more in most of the later years by going to somebody like Dr. Hannaford, with a particular problem and asking him about it. It might be a problem on equipment or something like that, so I would see a manufacturer. I don't think that the management people of the Park Service who came out where we had our conference and attended the National Safety Congress realized the importance that's given to safety by industry and agencies throughout the country. They just couldn't believe that this much emphasis, this good a program, these kinds of people, these are not safety engineers, would attend. I think about 15% of the group are safety people. The rest of them are vice presidents, presidents, top management people in industry or across the board – groups, county groups, state groups, boards, high schools and colleges, and everything like this. And I think it really opened their eyes to realize – I think they got a better understanding too than I could give them of what safety was all about. So, I think this did an awful lot of good.

Herbert Evison: Well now it is a fact that it wasn't until after you started in, that attendance at the National Safety Congress widened to include others than the safety engineers. Isn't that so?

Nathan Baker: I'm not sure about that.

Herbert Evison: I don't remember Frank ever having—

Nathan Baker: What Frank was having was the safety people who were supposed to be heading the safety program as a collateral duty at the regional offices. He never did get the top management people to attend. I got so eventually – well you see who was there – regional directors. And believe it or not, George Hartzog was the one who said, "I don't want safety people to attend the meetings. I want you to get these top people. I want regional directors or assistant regional directors." And we'd have about six superintendents, and we'd have either a regional director or his next in line at these meetings. Now the National Fire Protection Association has annual meetings too. This has to do with fire protection, fire prevention and also forest fire fighting and what have you. I used to attend those meetings. And I would get some of our people there, but we didn't have a meeting in conjunction with this like the big deal that we had out in

Chicago. This was a much smaller deal, but it was another phase of safety that I thought was very important for anybody to learn if they're in the fire protection and fire prevention field like I was, in addition to the accident prevention field. And then I was one of the organizers of the Public Safety Conference, which now has full status as a conference of the National Safety Council. And I was one of the originators of getting this because we had the public safety problems, and I was anxious to get other people in and find out how they did things and what have you. So now they have a Public Safety Conference, which means full status compared with any of the other conferences.

Herbert Evison: Now how do you define public safety? What's the scope of that?

Nathan Baker: Well public safety has to do with the protection of the people from the time they come past that ranger station until they leave the park.

Herbert Evison: That's the definition of it as far as the Park Service is concerned.

Nathan Baker: Right. That's true of industry. We had the same problems in GSA where we had business in buildings or occupants of buildings. The difficulty there is that you sort of have two strikes against you. But we worked out some things that we could do, and I can give them one, two, three, not now, but if you want them. We always had to be careful that we were not interfering with the enjoyment of the park, the visit and what have you. Of course, I said one of the best things to do was to get these rangers out in the assembled groups. We had finally developed an inspection program where they would go to assembled groups and watch people. They might uncover a physical hazard. They might uncover something people are doing that we could maybe do something to prevent it. For example, we had a big wrangle down at Flamingo in Everglades National Park, about putting a rail around that water there. And I said, "I don't care about rails. I'll tell you what's better. Plant some barberry bushes along there, some flower bushes, or something like this, that will keep people back and the kids won't be playing on the rails and what have you." So here again was another deal that I tried to work on very hard. It was to get the naturalist, or the historian, or whoever it was, involved with us in trying to solve a problem at a historic site or trying to solve a problem out here at an assembly area, at an overlook or what have you, to keep people from falling. I really did enjoy that work. And we were getting to the point where we were getting all these people together. I've got an interesting thing to tell you, Herb. When Public Buildings operated the government buildings throughout the country, the people who designed and constructed these buildings were under the Department of Treasury. So, there was almost an impossible gap between the operating people and the design and construction people. We finally got the design and construction

people back over from Treasury and got them in their own outfit. They still fought and what have you, but they were getting together. They were listening to the operating people. There wasn't a lot of maintenance money spent to correct the designs that they could have corrected in the original planning. Then I came to the Park Service, and they were doing just the opposite. They had separated the design people from the operating people and that's why they were having problems, and they're going to have problems. Just from my own standpoint on safety where I was getting involved, I saw quite a lot of mistakes and what have you. I questioned how much maintenance money was spent on changing designs that could have been changed without any cost at all. George Hartzog really took a hard look at this, and I thought at one time by gum they were going to come back. I expressed the experience the Public Buildings Service had gone through, and I said the same thing was happening here. And I said, "You cannot separate the design and construction people from the operating people. Get their feelings." And you'd go around to the parks, and you'd hear the gripes you know. Oh, that was one of the greatest gripes I ever heard.

Herbert Evison: I'll say! The [inaudible] of it is they would try to impress on the design people what they needed to meet a certain situation, or to avoid a danger, or something of that kind. It didn't boil, didn't even percolate.

Nathan Baker: I don't know whether the design people were all to blame. I think some of the operating people maybe were a little too critical and really weren't factual enough either. The design people just seemed to set these [inaudible]. I could always get along with the engineers, but architects and lawyers are the ones that I've had trouble within my programs.

Herbert Evison: As far as our tape is concerned, we're nearing the end of it. I want to look at your material, but I think we might just as well turn this recorder off now, after I say thank you a lot for being willing to come down here this afternoon and sit in front of this mike with me, and get this on the record.

Nathan Baker: It's a great honor. I'm the one who's honored.

Herbert Evison: Let's just agree that we both are, but, thank you a lot.

Nathan Baker: Thank you, Herb.

[END OF TAPE 66, SIDE 2]

[END OF INTERVIEW]