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Judy Hart
November 16, 2015

Interview conducted by Antionette Condo
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My Narrative
The Administrative History of the National Heritage Areas Coordinating Office

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Interview conducted and transcribed by
Antoinette J. Condo

This transcript was reviewed by Judy Hart

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Regarding how she began working on National Heritage Areas: I moved to Washington at the end of 1989 to work on a special project, National Park Service 2000. I then began working in the Office of Legislation May 1990. After total burnout in Legislation, I went down to sign up for retirement and the Director's office called. Director Roger Kennedy said, "no you aren't retiring," and "what do you want to do?" I said I wanted to start up the Conservation Study Institute and he said if I could find funds and a supervisor, I could work to create a place for NPS employees to study and collaborate with others. I walked down the hall to Deny Galvin's office who I had had lots of discussions with regarding the legislation that created the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park, which authorized such a study center.

Deny was enthusiastic and said that he would get the money for me to start the Conservation Study Institute. The Park Service Training Office was developing a significant boost to its program, and the Institute became included in that expansion plan. However, Congress did not provide any funding for the expansion and improvement so there was no funding for the Conservation Study Institute.

At that time, it was decided that the national heritage areas needed coordination, as there were nine. It was decided to hire a coordinator, and after working with Deny he thought that a fine next position for me. I was transferred into Rivers and Trails to be the first coordinator.

Regarding NPS and heritage area relations: Deny was excited about heritage areas, and Director Kennedy was supportive. But most in the NPS saw it as just a drain on the NPS with little or no benefit. It was a drain on time, drain on attention and most important, funding. There was a deep prejudice against spending NPS funds on something that was not property or land the agency would own and protect for 100s of years. It was very true that Congress was going to give a certain level of appropriations to the NPS and any money to national heritage areas reduced the amount available for parks.

There was also the arrowhead issue: could it be used in places where the NPS had no control, and therefore no ability to maintain standards for the display of the arrowhead? This exaggerated the negative feelings about, taking money away from the Parks, as the standards were perceived to be lower, or nonexistent, and inadequate.

National heritage areas coordination had been assigned to Rivers & Trails because they were the one section of the NPS whose mission and practices always involved spending money outside the boundaries of any park. They knew how to work with people outside the NPS. The first manager was Sam Stokes who brought with him close ties to the National Trust (for Historic Preservation) and their work on heritage areas. I worked first for Sam Stokes, then Chris Brown, and finally directly for Kate Stevenson, the associate director over all of them. It was a frustrating and challenging program between The Park Service resistance, and sometimes hostility, and the aggressive and sometimes hostile demands of the newly formed Alliance of National Heritage Areas. The difficulties were magnified because every heritage area came in on the strength of their congressional delegation, and at that time, all funding was line item

directed by Congress. The Alliance felt empowered, and the NPS felt powerless. A challenging climate in which to achieve any agreement or even collaboration.

My first year was spent trying to figure out how to relate to the heritage area directors, and more challenging, the Alliance of National Heritage Areas. Because there was a felt animosity from many in the NPS, I was selected to be the first coordinator because of my previous work figuring out how to work with and attain agreements with others outside the NPS, and a demonstrated ability to go around roadblocks, and come up with creative proposals.

To be clear, the heritage area directors knew and felt the hostility of many in the NPS and they were angry and empowered by their strong connections with their congressional delegation. There was anger and frustration in the NPS from the feeling that the heritage areas wanted nothing to do with the NPS emphasis on preservation, and authenticity and integrity. The heritage areas had promoted their project locally and to Congress on the basis of economic development. We did not have shared principles and goals or mission.

The idea of making money off the NP System and off the arrowhead was anathema to NPS. There is a sense of purity of mission and of preservation in the NPS. A sense of what we were doing was for perpetuity and had integrity. To have a group of aggressive and demanding people come along and say they wanted to make jobs and money off the agency was not well received.

The use of the arrowhead was never resolved while I was the Coordinator. The heritage areas rebuffed any and all attempts to set standards for the display of the arrowhead. The NPS was horrified at the use of the arrowhead just to draw tourists and make money.

The goal of the NPS was to calm these people down. Hopefully infuse in them respect for the NPS mission, and the use of the arrowhead. I was dedicated to educating and inspiring them about the benefits of preservation and interpretation, but they wanted to talk about all the jobs they were going to create locally from tourism.

The other thing that complicated it for me was a desire from my bosses to tell the heritage areas what to do. The heritage area managers were revolting and doing everything they could to resist NPS. Telling them what to do was not working, just making everything worse. I remember arguing with Chris Brown when the national heritage areas organized a conference for themselves on best practices and allowed us to attend. Chris wanted to start off the conference with a speech by him and I had to tell him that they were the organizers and were not asking the NPS to speak. Chris thought it was appropriate to tell them what to do and the heritage areas were incensed by any direction from NPS.

I once brought a seasoned and well-regarded facilitator for a meeting of NPS and national heritage area representatives. Both sides rudely and aggressively walked all over him. Neither would even go along with the facilitator's schedule of subject discussions. They yelled him down and just argued and talked about anything they wanted. Nothing was accomplished except the increase in ill will on all sides.

Regarding Park Service regional coordinators: The character of someone who wants to work with the national heritage areas is different from someone who wants to work with the parks, I observed in those days. The NPS regional office people working part time with the heritage areas wanted to be free spirits. They could be as aggressive and hostile as the Heritage Areas, especially in their demand that *control* of the heritage areas should be from the regional offices, not headquarters in Washington.

Regarding working with the Alliance of National Heritage Areas: The spokesperson was one of the most difficult people I ever had to deal with. His demands were unpredictable, and always aggressive. It was the wild, wild west. Some of the members such as Augie Carlino were thoughtful and had a consistent message. I was trying to be persuasive, educational, and inspirational. It was not what the national heritage areas people wanted.

Regarding WASO National Heritage Areas staffing: Deny thought it was an advantage to the agency overall to have heavy hitting members in Congress connected to their own heritage area, and through them the NPS. That was one of the reasons he supported national heritage areas. He therefor supported Washington office staffing to work with them. More and more national heritage areas were formed, and management plans were being developed. There was more and more work to be done.

Mark Adams interned with me through the Student Conservation Association for a year and was superb support. Helen Scully joined me full time after Mark finished his year internship, so there were two of us working on national heritage areas.

Then Congress cut our administrative line-item budget by 40%. We guessed that the Alliance of National Heritage Areas lobbied for the cut, but never knew.

I had to make up the difference in my salary; to find some other program to pay 40% of my salary. Chief of Planning Warren Brown was pleased to take me on and assigned me work on the study to create the proposed new Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park. There was deep and heated disagreement between the Western Regional Director and Deny Galvin on the proposal and I was to find a way to agreement on the concepts, and then rewrite the study to reflect the new agreement before the rapidly approaching date for the congressional hearing on the Rosie proposal.

Agreement was reached, the study was rewritten, and Warren Brown and Don Hellmann and I worked closely on the legislation that was also forwarded to Congress, at the last hour. Helen had to begin working part time in the National Trails and Rivers and Trails programs.

Regarding oversight of the National Heritage Areas: The Alliance of National Heritage Areas energetically fought against any oversight in part because what they wanted was different from what NPS wanted. They wanted, and believed they needed, economic development and specifically, new jobs. NPS wanted preservation of historic sites with integrity. While there could have been a meeting ground, the Alliance chose to resist all efforts at guidance.

I probably visited every national heritage area as their innumerable meetings would travel around to various areas as did ours, so I got to see most of them. I would give my feedback, but they were not interested in the NPS concerns.

The NPS was distressed that every heritage area was line item funded so we had no leverage over them. The national heritage areas were supported in Congress by members sitting on our appropriations committees, and NPS didn't want to anger those members. Money was at the heart of many of the arguments because they weren't doing what we wanted with the money and felt they had no responsibility to us. Rivers of Steel was doing an excellent job and also willing to consider additional ideas. South Carolina was willing to listen. Silos and Smokestacks was willing to listen, but the Alliance as a group fought off any meaningful oversight.

Regarding NPS division of responsibility: I remember the tone of the free spirit NPS entrepreneurs who were drawn to the national heritage areas. They wanted to experiment with the new program their way. They hated any semblance of control from the Washington office. That was a huge contention. Of course, there was control of parks from the Washington office, but there should be none for this new program. There was a consistent cry from some of the regional directors that they should be in charge of all programs. Washington wanted some form and shape and predictability and control of the national heritage areas and it made sense to them to coordinate it from Washington. The regions wanted that control for themselves.

Regarding program congressional authorization: That really goes to why every park has its own authorization legislation. Congress passes a bill ordering NPS to study a possible new park in order to suggest to Congress, its authorization. Then Congress has to pass legislation to authorize the new park. This gives Congress control and a measure of ownership. That goes to the pride of members of Congress to have a park in their district. National heritage areas are more dramatically seen in that light. Bring more money into the area, create new jobs, new businesses.

Milestones: My greatest satisfaction was when Hand Made in America started its journey to become a national heritage area. By my values, everything they did was from the heart, from caring about the artists and crafts persons and small communities that were part of their extended family. Becky Anderson who headed it up had developed craft trails and a mini main street program. They had done a superb job and I could use that example to national heritage areas. There was a strong evaluation program with criteria for getting a sign and being identified as part of the Craft Trail. Becky helped start up a land fill which used the methane gas from the landfill to heat artist workshops. Hand Made in America highlighted and made possible the things that the community cared to do.

I did feel that the Alliance of National Heritage Areas relationship with the NPS was calmer by the time I left. Not so much animosity. I didn't feel I got very far with preservation. I believed I made some progress with promoting quality of life as a measure of success. Becky Anderson's program beautifully promoted quality of life in their small communities and at last I had an example to share with the heritage areas so fiercely focused on job creation.

I enjoyed working with Kate Stevenson. We had thoughtful conversations about future paths for heritage areas. Helen Scully was a treasure and a pleasure to work with. Alan Turnbull and others in the Rails & Trails were a pleasure to work with. I was sorry to leave them behind however I was not sorry to leave such a frustrating assignment.

Congress passed legislation creating the Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park. I was thrilled to be selected as the founding Superintendent and left for California.