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NPS Oral History Collection (HFCA 1817)
Harpers Ferry Center's 50th Anniversary Oral History Project



Richard Helman, Jack Spinnler & Winnie Frost
December 19, 2019

Interview conducted by Betsy Ehrlich
Transcribed by Rev.com
Edited by Richard Helman, Jack Spinnler, and Winnie Frost

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Interview Date: December 19, 2019

Interviewer: Betsy Ehrlich

Transcription by: Rev.com

Release Form: Yes

Transcript Status: Final

Transcript has been reviewed by the narrators.

START OF RECORDING

Winnie Frost: 00:00:00 You all got.

Rich Helman: 00:00:01 I'm glad you got me so I can think about it.

LuAnn Jones: 00:00:01 We're going to get so right now.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:00:03 Yeah I'm going to--oops. Did I already hit it? Yes, I did. So I'll do this little preamble like I always do.

Jack Spinnler: 00:00:09 When in the course of human events? Or that--did in preamble.

Rich Helman: 00:00:10 I already did that joke, Jack; you were in the bathroom.

Jack Spinnler: 00:00:13 Oh really?

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:00:14 Yeah, yeah. So that looks like it's going into the right recordings zone. Okay. I'm going to start off by introducing us here today. I'm Betsy Ehrlich from Harpers Ferry Center and we also have--

LuAnn Jones: 00:00:26 LuAnn Jones from Park History.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:00:28 And our guests of honor here today are Jack Spinnler, Rich Helman, and Winnie Frost, wayside planners. We're here today to chronicle their careers as wayside planners at Harpers Ferry Center. It's December 20th, 2019, at the Mather Training Center. And do we have verbal permission from each of you to do the interview?

Winnie Frost: 00:00:48 Yes.

Rich Helman: 00:00:49 Yes.

Jack Spinnler: 00:00:49 I don't know. Oh yes, yes.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:00:52 Thank you Jack.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:00:55 And you know the routine, if there's any questions you don't want to answer or you want something--when you want us to pause the recorder, just say so. So we'll get started. You were just about to talk about the year that you started as wayside planners and now we want it on the record. So if each of you could just share when you started in how many years you were wayside planners.

Rich Helman: 00:01:19 I'll go--

LuAnn Jones: 00:01:19 Can I just ask you to identify yourself initially so the transcriber will--

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:01:23 Knows your voice.

LuAnn Jones: 00:01:24 Knows your voice.

Rich Helman: 00:01:26 Okay. This is Rich Helman and I'll go first since I was the first one to arrive here. I got here 1986. I'd spent five years working--excuse me, nine years working in various parks as a park ranger. And then I spent the last 21 years of my career here at Harpers Ferry Center--completely as a wayside exhibit planner. I was in the Division of Wayside Exhibits the entire time.

Jack Spinnler: 00:01:46 I'll go second because I came in 1988. My name is Jack Spinnler and I had 12 years in the field before coming to Harpers Ferry Center and then nine years as a wayside exhibit planner. And then my last 11 years as an interpretive planner.

Winnie Frost: 00:02:07 My name is Winnie Frost and I'm the last one to come here. I'm the new girl on the block. I came in 1989 in November and before that I spent 19 years in various parks and regional offices. And then I spent 15 years as a wayside planner and the remaining time as a park project manager.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:02:32 So what is a wayside planner?

Winnie Frost: 00:02:36 Let the old guy answer.

Rich Helman: 00:02:40 Okay. How do we start with this?

Winnie Frost: 00:02:44 How about what Dave Hennessy would say?

Jack Spinnler: 00:02:46 John Hennessy.

Rich Helman: 00:02:47 What did he say?

Jack Spinnler: 00:02:48 Capture the landscape.

Rich Helman: 00:02:50 Capture the landscape. Did that start with John Hennessy? That sounds like Dick Hoffman.

Winnie Frost: 00:02:56 I think so.

Rich Helman: 00:02:57 John Hennessy and Dick Hoffman were wayside exhibit planners. Dick Hoffman was here when I got here. John Hennessy came later, and he stayed for--don't know, three, four or five years maybe. And then he went off as a chief interpreter, I think somewhere.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:03:12 Fredericksburg Spotsylvania.

Rich Helman: 00:03:12 Fredericksburg.

Rich Helman: 00:03:15 Basically there's a variety of interpretive media like publications and audiovisual films. And wayside exhibits go out in the parks, in the field, in the resource and they connect the visitor with the resource. And a planner is the person who puts the ideas together that ultimately end up out there on that wayside exhibit. The planner works with the park staff to determine what exhibits are going to be done and what the purpose of those exhibits will be. The planner assembles reference materials to develop the content for the exhibit. The planner writes the text for the exhibit and then works with the designer to put it all together into a wayside exhibit that captions the landscape.

Winnie Frost: 00:04:08 Yes, that was it more towards early years of wayside exhibits and then expanded where it's more collaborative with a designer and planner working together to create a wayside plan and leaving all the writing to the planner, writing the plan, taking the lead. I would say the planner is usually the lead person on a wayside project but has a team

that they all work collaboratively to create it. That developed more down the road which had the wayside designer coming to those planning meetings also. I'm just sharing the evolution of our--

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:04:56 But that was--yeah--

Winnie Frost: 00:04:56 --our work.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:04:56 --that was where sort of the next question.

Winnie Frost: 00:04:56 Oh geez.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:04:59 It did seem like there was a time when you put things in envelopes. Can you talk to that? Was it sort of the routine of work?

Rich Helman: 00:05:08 When I first got here, the chief of the Division of Wayside Exhibits was Ray Price and there were two planners, Dick Hoffman and Dave Guiney when I got here. And so I would have been the third one. Things were kind of gearing up, I don't know how many people were in the division then. I would say maybe 12. And so I was like the third planner at the time. And a new project, if Ray Price decided there was a project to be done, he would assign it to the planner. And then the planner would get in touch with the park and arrange for a trip. And at that time there were only two full time designers. And as I recall, the planner would basically put everything together and then at some point a designer would be assigned.

Rich Helman: 00:05:59 And the idea of this envelope--there would be like a big oversize Manila envelope and the planner would gather anything they could think of related to that particular exhibit into the envelope. It would be written materials, reference materials that would be used to develop the text. It would also be anything related to graphics that they might come across that could be used as illustrations on the exhibit.

Rich Helman: 00:06:26 And at that time, once the planner sort of had everything all together, I think then even before the designer came on, the planner would draft the first go around of text. And once they sort of felt like they had all the materials they needed and had the first text drafted, then they would sit down with a designer. I don't really recall how that assignment

happened. I think maybe the planner would say, "well I need a designer now." And then it was Rhonda Smith was a designer then--can't remember the name of the other one at this point--and then you would sit down and go through each exhibit and the designers--

Jack Spinnler: 00:07:07 Judy something.

Rich Helman: 00:07:08 Yeah. Judy something. And some--

Winnie Frost: 00:07:14 It was almost like a hand off.

Rich Helman: 00:07:15 Yeah, some of the designers were just simply illustrators. Hugh Brown was an illustrator and would do designs and David Guiney I remember he did his own designs. He thought of himself as a planner-designer and he would kind of do his own thing. I would say at that time, designers--I don't want to say, hadn't really developed yet as a kind of a separate, an integral part of the whole process. I think that came a little later. I think maybe, oh, I can't remember who came on the scene whether Nick Kirilloff came at that time or I know Ray Price, the assistant division chief was Phil Myerly and he primarily headed the fabrication of the exhibits. But a lot of the design was done during the production when they were doing fiberglass embedded exhibits and when they were doing films and everything with the fabricator, some of the design actually occurred at that time.

Rich Helman: 00:08:19 But I think then, Phil Myerly and Ray Price this--one thing early on, every project had a different look. There'd be a new project, and somebody would design that project. Scotts Bluff would have its own look and whatever other park would have its own look. And Ray and Phil decided there needed to be a common look within the waysides and I think in conjunction with other interpretive media. And at that time, the Division of Publications had worked with Massimo Vignelli to develop the unigrid, which it's kind of signature thing was a black band. And so they got in touch with Massimo Vignelli to take a look at waysides and see what they come up with. And basically, they said, they got to look like the brochures. They ought to be unified with the publication program. And the black band, which was a pretty thick heavy black band at the time, became the standard. And there some push back from within the

division, particularly David Guiney who didn't like that idea and he sort of resisted it and argued against it.

- Rich Helman: 00:09:27 And then when Phil and Ray decided, nope, we're going to go with Vignelli's suggestion. David wasn't all too happy about that. And I think eventually that led him to actually leaving the division and going on to different divisions. But I think it was at that time with the Vignelli idea and Phil and Ray said we needed to upgrade our design. We can't be having a different look to every one of these projects that then--at that time I think Rhonda left too in frustration with--she was frustrated over the bureaucracy and the red tape--
- Jack Spinnler: 00:09:56 Anything bureaucrat, yeah.
- Rich Helman: 00:09:57 --involved with contracting and so forth.
- Jack Spinnler: 00:09:59 But I saw Rhonda--
- Rich Helman: 00:10:00 And then Judy left.
- Jack Spinnler: 00:10:01 Rhonda says hello to you. I saw her--
- Rich Helman: 00:10:02 Oh good.
- Jack Spinnler: 00:10:03 --at the artist's gallery.
- Rich Helman: 00:10:04 She went on to bigger and better things. She ended up heading up the graphics department at Shepherd University. So she did well for herself. And I think it was at that point when they decided to hire full designers, I think. But I couldn't tell you right now. Who came at that point?
- Winnie Frost: 00:10:26 It was Phil and Betsy right?
- Betsy Ehrlich: 00:10:27 Frank Sierra.
- Rich Helman: 00:10:28 Frank Sierra.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 00:10:30 Cheryl Hill.
- Rich Helman: 00:10:33 Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Betsy Ehrlich: 00:10:35 And Nick Kirilloff were there when I arrived.

Rich Helman: 00:10:36 Nick. I think when they got Nick that followed up the Vignelli thing and then he sort of headed up the overall look of what the waysides were going to look like at that time. And Nick Kirilloff, he was from Publications, wasn't he?

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:10:49 He had been in Publications, but he went to National Geographic.

Rich Helman: 00:10:52 Okay.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:10:52 And then he came back in Waysides I believe. But it sounds to me like his return or somewhere around there is when the role of the planner shifted a little bit from sort of doing a lot of the work alone to collaborating with a team.

Winnie Frost: 00:11:09 Yeah. I think it really happened when you and Phil got there.

Rich Helman: 00:11:14 The planners still--

Winnie Frost: 00:11:17 Was a lead.

Rich Helman: 00:11:17 --started everything off. Once the planner got assigned, then the planner needed to contact the park and arrange a site visit. And during this evolution, the participants on the site visit evolved, I think. That early on, I remember my first training trip was just me and Dick Hoffman and there was no designer involved in that. Well, actually the first one was Badlands. It was Dick's project and I went along to observe. The next project I had was Voyageurs and I was the planner and he went along to observe me and to help me along. But there was no designer involved at that point. So that all occurred sometime later.

Jack Spinnler: 00:12:00 I think back to even before the era that Rich's been talking about, that early wayside exhibits didn't have any designers at all because there was other than text when you think about the 1920s and '30s, it was routed wood and there were no graphic elements on it. May be a very--

Winnie Frost: 00:12:17 Primitive.

Jack Spinnler: 00:12:17 --primitive. Routed wood, something to give them a little bit--

Winnie Frost: 00:12:19 Lines.

Jack Spinnler: 00:12:22 Yeah. And then it got a little bit more sophisticated after World War II because they changed over from routed wood to aluminum. And as someone explained to me once is because they had geared up for building all these airplanes during World War II and as the war came to an end, what are you going to do with all this aluminum? Right. Let's make wayside exhibits. So they did and they were somewhat easily routed--

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:12:43 To aluminum.

Jack Spinnler: 00:12:44 --aluminum and sometimes with a little paint on the inside and also would maybe with a couple of graphic elements. So it really wasn't until the late '50s, early '60s that the first graphic elements were coming in. So then they thought, "Well, designers should get involved with this at some level."

Rich Helman: 00:12:58 I do remember--you've reminded me too--when I got here, it was right at the very beginning of four color process printing on wayside exhibits. They had been screen printing, but they couldn't do four color process like photographs for instance on a wayside exhibit. It would just be a flat color, a background color screen and then maybe a text color and they may be one or two pretty crude colors and they use some crude illustrations. They use somebody like Hugh Brown to do some line art and they might be able to do a cut and then they actually literally they took that print that had already been screen printed and if they wanted color, like on a flower for instance, show the color of the flower, they literally went in and hand painted every one of those--

Winnie Frost: 00:13:43 Yeah. That's right.

Rich Helman: 00:13:43 --every one of those prints. Well, then when I got here, I remember they were all excited because they had just gotten these first four color process screen prints from General Graphics out of Cumberland and I think it was Sitka as I recall. And there was these four-color process images. So now they could print anything on the wayside exhibit.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:14:05 So this was around '86 '87?

Rich Helman: 00:14:07 Yes. '86 is when I got here and that's when they were first doing that. They'd also tried some other materials that had failed. There was a thing called chromelin. It was going to be the great thing. And some of the contractors actually bought expensive equipment for chromelin and they got it out in the field and the sun destroyed it like immediately. And so that was a fiasco, but that was an attempt to get four color process on these wayside exhibits. But then they were able to do it with screen printing. And so now it opened up the whole world of graphics that you could use on these waysides. And so I think that was one of the elements that led into it. Later, they developed the porcelain and you could do amazing, you could do anything, with the porcelain. It was actually absolutely beautiful. So that enabled the designers of the exhibits to just--

Winnie Frost: 00:14:50 And then we got computers. And you could do things on computers.

Rich Helman: 00:14:54 Yeah. Well, that's another, when I first got here, people--

Jack Spinnler: 00:14:57 We had to share computers. We had those little sort of laptops, I guess. And we shared them and the idea--and then to get them printed. You had to ask permission to get somebody to hook up with the printer and that was just amazing--

Rich Helman: 00:15:10 Well you're a new guy. When I got here, the only thing being used was Selectric typewriters.

Jack Spinnler: 00:15:13 Yes.

Rich Helman: 00:15:13 Word processing was just coming on. So to develop text, you'd type, and you'd have to white things out and whatever. But once then you could do word processing, the ability to write text and change text and correct text and all that just really jumped forward.

Jack Spinnler: 00:15:29 Those early layouts for the text line--

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:15:31 Oh my.

Jack Spinnler: 00:15:31 --just put lines. They maybe wrote in--

Rich Helman: 00:15:34 Right.

Jack Spinnler: 00:15:34 --a caption or maybe a subtitle, but then just lines under it. The text would fit there, and the planner writer needed to write to fit whatever space was allotted. That was a challenge.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:15:47 So somebody gave you a word count, you had to write to?

Jack Spinnler: 00:15:50 Yeah, sort of a space.

Winnie Frost: 00:15:51 Well, a space--

Rich Helman: 00:15:52 A space. And you knew that what you wrote had to fit into that space.

Winnie Frost: 00:15:55 Yeah.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:15:56 So in terms of your writing, and going back and forth with the parks to get that approved. Obviously, it's different than it would be today when you're sending something digitally and you can almost get an instant response. So how did that work? When you're writing text, you're going to put it in the envelope, you're going to give it to a designer at some point. Does the park review that text? Are they involved with you?

Rich Helman: 00:16:22 Yeah. It was a plan. You did a wayside exhibit plan and it was 11 by 17, and the layout, the design layout would be on the 17-inch paper. And it was a pretty crude facsimile image of what it would look like.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:16:43 And that was developed by the designer?

Rich Helman: 00:16:45 The designer. Now the designer was usually an illustrator. Like I said, Hugh Brown who did kind of crude illustrations would do a layout. And if you had a graphic or if you say, well, we want an image of a Civil War soldier. And rather than like a great image, he would sketch in a civil war soldier. And we'd say, well, we want a caption. So he would just do a couple of little lines of where the caption for that soldier was going to be. And then he would block out a section, like Jack said, just do blank lines and cross where the main text would be. And there might be two paragraphs of main text and you might say, okay, we're going, down here have an image of the rifle that he was using and then we're going to need a little couple of lines.

Rich Helman: 00:17:31 So that would be the image and that's what the park would see. It was pretty crude. Then over here, you had a page, the first page was the page from the proposal that defined what the exhibit was going to accomplish. It had a purpose statement. That was the key to it. The purpose of this exhibit is to tell visitors about Captain Smith's march through the field in front and the death of 28 soldiers. That's the purpose of this exhibit. So they know that. And it would say which direction the exhibit's going face and any unusual things about the installation.

Winnie Frost: 00:18:02 The size.

Rich Helman: 00:18:02 There's a lot of rock here, so they're going to have to drill into--things like the size of the panel. And then the next one had the actual text, it would say title, Captain Smith's Assault. And then it might say quote, and then it would have the quote from Captain Smith, "We marched through a hail of bullets." Then it would say--then it would have the main text behind it. And so you had to send that out and all the reviewers had to read through that and then go, "Okay, that's going to go over here."

Winnie Frost: 00:18:34 There was number one dash one, they look on the layout there. Go, "Oh one dash, one okay."

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:18:40 So it was keyed.

Winnie Frost: 00:18:40 So it was all keyed, but it was all two pieces of paper. One would be the layout and the other would be the actual text. When you think about it now, it's all unbelievably crude.

Rich Helman: 00:18:51 Yeah.

Winnie Frost: 00:18:51 Compared to what goes out now, which is everything's together and you see just one layout with the text and the graphics.

Rich Helman: 00:18:58 And then there was a graphics page, the last page--

Winnie Frost: 00:19:00 Yes.

Rich Helman: 00:19:01 --and it would say what the graphics were going to be. It would say illustration to be done by Hugh Brown showing infantry soldier from Smith's unit or something like that or

there might've been historic--well I don't even know if they were using historic photos.

- Winnie Frost: 00:19:13 Yeah they were using historic photos, but the illustrator would kind of pencil it in like say the Washington Monument or Captain Smith or whatever the picture of Captain Smith going across the Delaware River. Totally wrong stories. And just sketch it in, but then you'd have a copy of the actual image or I mean a Xerox of the actual image. This is what it really looked like. But for layout purposes and--
- Rich Helman: 00:19:39 Yeah, and you might--
- Winnie Frost: 00:19:40 --introduce to that design.
- Rich Helman: 00:19:40 --for the graphic, you would put any reference information that needed to be known. Like from the Library of Congress such as dah, dah, dah and then the planner would have to round that up. The planner would have to get the image.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 00:19:54 So you didn't have a graphic researcher, you were the graphic researcher?
- Winnie Frost: 00:19:58 We were our own graphic researchers.
- Jack Spinnler: 00:19:58 And it had to be reproduction quality. And so initially the park would often times give us a photocopy of something, well where's the original? Is it in your park files or is it somewhere nearby? Or is in the Library of Congress or National Archives. And you had all those reference numbers on it and then put it in a little kind of a wax paper like sleeve and put that in the big envelope once you actually found it. So it's--
- Winnie Frost: 00:20:22 And label it.
- Jack Spinnler: 00:20:22 And label it.
- Rich Helman: 00:20:23 You've just reminded me too, there was a planning envelope that had everything in it. Stuff that you might not even end up using. But then once everything was approved, you had a production envelope where you actually had the production ready graphic that you put in there. Might be a 35-millimeter slide or it might be an 8 by 10 black and

white glossy photo, reproduction quality or whatever it was went into there. Or maps. Remember we did all the maps with overlay.

Winnie Frost: 00:20:49 Oh we did hand maps.

Rich Helman: 00:20:49 Overlays and--

Jack Spinnler: 00:20:49 Overlays and--

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:20:49 Yeah, talk about the planner's role--

Winnie Frost: 00:20:51 Oh my God, I forgot about that.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:20:51 --in early wayside maps.

Rich Helman: 00:20:54 We did a lot of work.

Winnie Frost: 00:20:55 We did.

Rich Helman: 00:20:57 I forget how much stuff we did.

Winnie Frost: 00:20:58 I forgot that. Yeah, we even had colored pencils to color in the different kind of contrast.

Jack Spinnler: 00:21:02 Yeah,

Rich Helman: 00:21:03 That's right.

Winnie Frost: 00:21:04 On the terrain.

Rich Helman: 00:21:04 If there was going to be a map. The maps were always a big issue.

Winnie Frost: 00:21:09 Yes, they were.

Rich Helman: 00:21:09 I remember one time Phil Myerly said, "We are never ever going to do another map on the wayside exhibit!" For one they changed so quickly. If you put a map on a wayside exhibit and then the park changes a trail, then your map's obsolete. So that was one issue with them.

Jack Spinnler: 00:21:24 And any sort of topography and terrain was so crudely done. Like if there was a hill, there were these little lines almost like a long thin triangular shape lines and one denoted downhill on one denoted uphill and--

Rich Helman: 00:21:38 Right.

Jack Spinnler: 00:21:38 --so had to get those all straight. And then the troops with those bars, either the red, if they're confederate or blue if they're union or the Revolutionary War, red if it was a British. And so you had these like crude ways of just- But most visitors understood them though. Once you did that, they're pretty simple to read.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:21:56 So your role in prototyping those maps or putting something together so that the map could be designed and put into the layout--

Rich Helman: 00:22:05 It was scribed--

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:22:06 --could be substantial right?

Rich Helman: 00:22:06 --Larry Matson was the map guy. Oh yeah. You had to get a base map. In other words, if it's a trail area you had to get like the topo map or maybe a park map.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:22:15 And this is you the planner getting this topo map?

Rich Helman: 00:22:16 Yeah. A lot of the park folder maps were used as base maps and so--

Winnie Frost: 00:22:20 And we'd do layering over it.

Rich Helman: 00:22:22 Yeah. You'd lay that down and then you get a transparent-- what's the word, a Mylar that you could write on.

Winnie Frost: 00:22:29 Yeah, that sheet of paper that--

Rich Helman: 00:22:29 Went over and then you would draw in the things that were going to actually end up on the wayside map and eliminate all the stuff on the base map that wasn't going to be used. And then eventually that stuff went to a map scribe. Larry Matson use to scribe maps.

Jack Spinnler: 00:22:46 Like Gus did. Gus Bartoli and--

Rich Helman: 00:22:49 Yeah.

Jack Spinnler: 00:22:49 --in our shop.

Rich Helman: 00:22:50 And there were a couple--

Winnie Frost: 00:22:51 I know in our shop it went to--

Rich Helman: 00:22:51 --of companies that we did it too.

Winnie Frost: 00:22:53 Yeah, we went out. We resourced that with that--

Rich Helman: 00:22:54 Contracted the maps.

Jack Spinnler: 00:22:54 Yeah.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:22:54 There was never a cartographer in waysides?

Winnie Frost: 00:23:00 Never. We always wanted one.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:23:02 And is there a reason? Do you remember why they never did have a cartographer and--

Rich Helman: 00:23:08 I think it was--well, if you did a park folder, there was always a map, right?

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:23:15 Yeah.

Rich Helman: 00:23:15 Pretty much. But in waysides it was sort--

Winnie Frost: 00:23:17 It was size specific--

Rich Helman: 00:23:18 --of come and go. I don't think you could employ a cartographer full time; I think. And there were ways to-- Well, we were getting by I guess, and the waysides and the maps were pretty crude. Usually it was a trail head and you were just showing that particular trail. It wasn't heavily--it wasn't really detailed.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:23:42 Right.

Rich Helman: 00:23:43 I do remember too, we also often talked about maps on waysides--a lot of parks wanted to put maps on their waysides and Phil--as I mentioned, Phil Myerly resisted it partly because they became outdated, but also because they weren't of much value, that a map on a wayside, as I forget who it was that pointed out to me, a visitor only uses that to make a decision because once they walk away from that, they forget everything that's on it. If they're hiking a trail, they need to have a map in hand on that trail, but the map on the wayside will tell you how long the trail is, what the trail surface is, is it difficult? What the elevation gain is, so

they make a decision, am I going to do that trail or I'm not going to do that trail.

- Rich Helman: 00:24:27 So you don't need a lot of detail on it because like I say, once you walk away, you forget all the detail, but you decide am I going to do the trail or not do the trail. And so they were pretty simple things. They were--
- Betsy Ehrlich: 00:24:39 So that was before cell phones or cameras where people take pictures of things like this and take it with them.
- Rich Helman: 00:24:44 Yes.
- Winnie Frost: 00:24:44 Well, yes.
- Rich Helman: 00:24:44 Yeah. Before GPS when they can look on their phone and see the trail as they go.
- Winnie Frost: 00:24:49 They don't even need to see our overview map.
- Rich Helman: 00:24:50 Yeah.
- Jack Spinnler: 00:24:51 And we did some pretty complex maps in that--remember you were National Capital Region still when we started the Mall directories map.
- Rich Helman: 00:24:57 Yeah.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 00:24:58 Oh my goodness.
- Jack Spinnler: 00:24:58 And that Larry Matson's job for six to eight months of just doing that because on these 18 locations, on the National Mall in Washington, one facing East, one facing West, and it had that whole vertical look to it. Larry just scribed that and worked on it. And you could see him day after day hunching over that and a couple of other parks wanted relatively complex maps. And Phil fought it, but sometimes the superintendent told the regional director, "I want it, I don't care what Phil Myerly said we're going to have what we want." And so they overrode Phil. Phil of course was a force to be reckoned with.
- Rich Helman: 00:25:31 That was another key element of maps on waysides is that they had to be oriented the way the visitor's facing. Because if you got a map with--it was always a question. I mean cartographers--

Winnie Frost: 00:25:43 Should they all face North.

Rich Helman: 00:25:44 --north always needs to be at the top of your map.

Winnie Frost: 00:25:46 Yeah.

Rich Helman: 00:25:46 Well, not on the wayside it doesn't. Because if a person's facing South and you put that North on the top, they're going to be looking the wrong direction. They're not going know where to go. So--

Winnie Frost: 00:25:55 The river is behind you instead of right in front of you.

Rich Helman: 00:25:56 So we had to take those base maps and orient them in the proper orientation, put that overlay on it and get all the labels now in the correct directions and all that kind of stuff. So the maps were always something that--

Winnie Frost: 00:26:11 Nobody wanted--

Rich Helman: 00:26:11 --you didn't do it unless you really felt that you had to do it.

Winnie Frost: 00:26:14 Yeah.

Rich Helman: 00:26:14 Now there were times when I was sitting with a base map and this thing, and I'm told draw, I think, am I really getting paid to do this kind of stuff, to sit here and draw a little-- what kind of job is this? This is great.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:26:30 So you enjoyed it at least some times.

Rich Helman: 00:26:32 Yeah, I enjoyed putting them together. It's like doing a puzzle and it's a little challenging and it's--

Winnie Frost: 00:26:36 It was challenging.

Jack Spinnler: 00:26:38 You asked about why Waysides didn't have a cartographer. I recall there being attempts to at least borrow some of the cartographers' time from the three cartographers working in Publications. But you have two very strong personalities between Phil Myerly on our side and Vince Gleason on the Publication side of giving up even 20 hours of Nancy Haack's time or--anyways--

Winnie Frost: 00:26:59 Well, part of it was the funding sources.

Jack Spinnler: 00:27:02 Yeah, that's true.

Winnie Frost: 00:27:02 And we were major rehab funding sources for our projects and that was line item funding source from Congress and so never they should interfere with each other.

Jack Spinnler: 00:27:13 But if you had two really cooperative managers it--

Winnie Frost: 00:27:15 Well yes--

Jack Spinnler: 00:27:17 --it could have happened.

Winnie Frost: 00:27:17 --they would be creative and try to find a solution.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:27:19 So you mentioned major rehab and line item funding sources, which if you mentioned to a new employee today would mean nothing.

Winnie Frost: 00:27:25 That's true.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:27:26 How much did the planners have to deal with and manage the money and understand the money sources--

Winnie Frost: 00:27:35 Very little--

Rich Helman: 00:27:36 Let me start with that again because I was here first and Ray Price told me--

Winnie Frost: 00:27:41 Well, we never get to talk.

Rich Helman: 00:27:41 No, well I told you guys that when we get together it will be hard to get a word in edgewise. Although I thought it was me that wouldn't get the words edgewise.

Winnie Frost: 00:27:50 I know and you said that to me an hour ago.

Rich Helman: 00:27:51 Well, I know that the things I have to say are really important.

Jack Spinnler: 00:27:53 Whatever that means--

Winnie Frost: 00:27:54 Well, you're the old man.

Rich Helman: 00:27:54 Yeah.

Winnie Frost: 00:27:54 So we'll let you get away with it.

- Rich Helman: 00:27:57 Well, when I first came here--when I came, I was a young man and the snow--
- Winnie Frost: 00:28:02 Back in the day.
- Rich Helman: 00:28:02 --was three feet deep. Ray Price told me, Rich, you don't worry about the money, I'll worry about the money. And so I said, okay. So I went into work and I did what I needed to do and whatever. And if he needed funds, he used to get together with Dixie Shackelford and Jim Beltusnick and they would go to lunch together, and they'd come back and they'd have more money. But it was then, it was major rehab funding where Harpers Ferry Center got so much money, as I think a line item, for Harpers Ferry Center for major rehab projects. And then the different divisions, not Publications they were separate. The different divisions would then get money out of that pot for the projects and the Center, would work with regions to determine the priorities for the projects.
- Rich Helman: 00:28:51 And so then such and such a project would get funding through major rehab and so it wasn't park money and that was hugely different later. Because if we said these are the exhibits we're going to do, and we had control over that. Well later major rehab money dried up and parks were getting their own funding sources from parks, park ONPS or park donations or whatever their sources was and if they said, "We don't want you guys, you're too expensive." Fine, they can go to whoever they want to.
- Winnie Frost: 00:29:25 They could use our contract--
- Rich Helman: 00:29:25 But if it's our money, major rehab then they were happy to use ours. And so it really changed the dynamic later as major rehab funding became dried up.
- Winnie Frost: 00:29:36 Dried up, yes.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 00:29:38 Did it change how you planned waysides when you could go into a park knowing that you have the control of the money and the parks aren't paying, so you have a way of doing things to the later stages when parks are paying and they can ask for things that you might not necessarily agree with makes a good wayside, for example?

Winnie Frost: 00:30:00 Well, yeah, as we all know, whoever owns the purse strings tends to get sort of their way.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:30:06 What they want.

Winnie Frost: 00:30:08 So when we were in charge of the purse strings we kind of--
-

Rich Helman: 00:30:12 Well we didn't have to worry about that. Like I said--

Winnie Frost: 00:30:14 We didn't worry it at all.

Rich Helman: 00:30:14 --don't think about the money. Do the job. And so until someone said stop doing the job, you just kept going about your business.

Winnie Frost: 00:30:21 And as a project manager when I got into that, the superintendents would let you know, this is how much we're giving you and we're not giving you anymore, so you better figure out how you're going to use that money wisely. So it really did, and you'd really have to talk with your staff to make sure that they were aware that they only had a limited amount of funds to do their component of the job.

Jack Spinnler: 00:30:43 Oh let me--

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:30:43 Your staff meaning the wayside folks or the park staff or both?

Winnie Frost: 00:30:49 No. The wayside folks. Okay. They know that.

Jack Spinnler: 00:30:53 Just thinking about the proposal stage, Rich was talking early on had the one page that had the subject location, orientation, purpose, et cetera, that on that first trip that needed to be decided on and that was really important to come upon agreement because that was essentially your contract with the park. Because when you're out in the field with the chief interpreter, you might be talking about 20 to 30 wayside exhibits, but the final list might be 12 to 15 and once you had that, the last morning, Thursday afternoon before you left, or Friday morning before you left, you had a meeting with the superintendent. Superintendent wasn't involved with these discussions and he or she might have particular resource or whatever story that they really wanted told, but you knew, and you explained to the chief

interpreter, it was not an appropriate wayside exhibit story because it wasn't site specific enough or whatever.

Jack Spinnler: 00:31:42 But the superintendent got their way, then it was added and you kind of hated to do that because it made your job that much more difficult. First of all, as a wayside exhibit is going to be tough to write and tough to plan a plan with whoever. So I remember those meetings with the superintendents, like we're going in here with a list of 13. I'm not going to go any higher than 15. So almost like you're going through their mindset all right. I'm not going to go above this, what's the deal? That's right. This is the final deal. And once it was there, then regional directors signed off on it and managers signed off on it that this is the 14 or whatever exhibits you have.

Winnie Frost: 00:32:15 And that was your Bible.

Jack Spinnler: 00:32:16 That was your marching orders anyway.

Winnie Frost: 00:32:18 Yeah was your marching orders to stay within that and that was the commitment because all that--all the other things were built on that, including if you did any contracting or artwork or anything. It was built on that agreement.

Rich Helman: 00:32:34 You asked, Betsy, about the funding related to people at Harpers Ferry. Later funding changed and there were more finite pots of money. There wasn't any of the major rehab where Ray would say, don't worry about the money. I'll take care of that. You had X amount of dollars that might've been a park account or something like that and you had a certain amount, where you do certain number of exhibits. I remember sitting with Nick Kirilloff to design exhibits. I remember specifically Grand Canyon and I'd go through a package and he'd say, yeah this or that. And then I would see his eyes light up and he'd get real excited because he would envision a major piece of art that will really do this exhibit.

Rich Helman: 00:33:11 And when he did that I thought, "Oh no, we're adding a year and \$5,000."

Jack Spinnler: 00:33:16 Ka-ching ka-ching.

Rich Helman: 00:33:18 To that exhibit. And I remember at Grand Canyon there were two specific exhibits I remember. It was great fun

doing them because we got to go into the Smithsonian and research paleontologists and all kinds of stuff. But those exhibits lagged behind the project probably by two years and they had a pile of money to that project and we did that. So we had to be conscious of the design of the exhibit and what the cost implications of it were going to be. And the time implications.

Jack Spinnler: 00:33:48 One of the, you just said reminded me of the influence superintendents have after the sort of contracts written that you know what exhibits you're working on is the timing and what their expectations are. Most superintendents were pretty understanding. We explained that while yours is one project, but I have 12 projects going on right now so I'm sort of like the plate spinner. I'm trying to keep things moving but sometimes superintendents didn't care. I'm number one and I want to make sure that you get my project top of that list and I need it by this date and this date and this date. You try to explain to them your position and sometimes you had to go to Ray or Phil to go to bat for us to kind of fend off that sort of pressure.

Jack Spinnler: 00:34:24 It's hard enough just trying to keep the balance going. Much less having someone being really demanding. I remember Marilyn Paris superintendent at Fort Necessity. Nick and I were working on a project there and I know Marilyn because we'd helped put on training courses. I thought we were friendly, and she called me on the phone and acted like she was my teacher and I was a second grader and she was yelling at me over the phone and if she didn't get her way. She was going to the regional director in Philadelphia. I don't need this kind of pressure; I have enough job as it is. Probably still happens today. That's not all that different.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:35:02 Well the time frame that it takes to do waysides must, I mean you'd think it would change because so you went from paste up and making maps by hand essentially and handing that off and to digital. And which I think is a huge transition because it changed your roles and it changed the way the work got done both. Did things speed up?

Rich Helman: 00:35:26 I would say no. Again, when I first got here, David Guiney he was here and he had done a small project, I think it was seven exhibits, can't remember the park now. But I was asking him about how long does it take to do these things.

And he said, "Well Rich I did a little experiment so I had a real small project and everything, I tried to make everything go just as quick as I could make it go and these six, seven exhibits still took me two years." Now a lot of that has to do with the reviews, sending things to the park for review and we had them review lots of different stages. They reviewed the proposal, they reviewed the first draft, they reviewed the second draft, they reviewed the final.

- Jack Spinnler: 00:36:12 And it goes to the regional office and they got their 2 cents worth.
- Rich Helman: 00:36:14 They had to review the artwork if there was any artwork. And as I talked a little bit in my individual interview, park's staffs are busy people and they've got a lot of things tugging at them. They're also federal employees who take annual leave like we all did and so forth. So a review when you sent something out, whether it was the proposal or the plan or whatever, the most diligent person out in the park, it would take a couple of weeks to get back. And the way they did the review, there was one park I know that they had what they call a review table. And if something came into the park for a review, they put it on this table and anybody in the park could take a shot at it, no matter what div-the chief of maintenance could criticize the text if he wanted to. And you'd get things back--
- Rich Helman: 00:37:05 --we always asked them to funnel it through one person and that person was supposed to resolve any differences before it came back to us. Sometimes that happens, sometimes it didn't. Sometimes you would get ones that said, well, so-and-so says this, but so-and-so says this. And so-and-so says this. And so and so says this. So the review, I think the reviews were the biggest time eater in all of it. And that never really changed. It made us write texts a little faster.
- Jack Spinnler: 00:37:33 But even when you get to the production, there's always a line there that people don't understand. The contractors have other jobs, not just National Park Service, but it's coming from all over. And when I started in February of 1988, one of the first projects Ray gave me was the White House Liaison President's Park, foreign language. It was only three steps I had to get into the White House, but they wanted it in 14 different languages. So I started getting that together and going through state departments and embassies to get the translations done. And about three

months later, Audrey Calhoun, who was my former supervisor at Clara Barton, George Washington Parkway, now she's the manager of Presidents Park. She calls me and says, "We really need this by Memorial Day." All right, mid-June at the latest. I said, Audrey you know I just started this job in February, but I don't think that's possible. I said, well, more sarcastic tone. I really don't think that's possible. It took another full year and then some before she understood that, plus you have to get all the approval for all those languages.

- Rich Helman: 00:38:37 I'm glad you mentioned foreign languages, do we have the time to go down that little rabbit trail? Oh, that used to be hilarious because as time went on, we needed more and more foreign languages and diversity and more Hispanic and for safety messages at the Grand Canyon had to be in German and French and Japanese. And we never really had a good way to get our translations. We were supposed to go through the State Department, and I remember early on there were some exhibits up. They were in a proof stage, production proof stage laying up on one of our big light tables and somebody escorted some Japanese VIPs through, and Ray Price was there. And I mean this was at a production stage. So they're already being produced, and these Japanese folks come by and they started chuckling and Ray's like, "Well, what are they laughing at?" Well, they're laughing at the translation. "So is there something wrong?" "Well, it's okay. But it was a style of Japanese that was used a hundred years ago."
- Rich Helman: 00:39:40 It was like, "Oh!" And that had come through the State Department because somebody on the State Department knew that.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 00:39:45 Oh my goodness.
- Rich Helman: 00:39:45 And then when I was doing Grand Canyon, like I said, we had to have those different languages and we didn't have--if you went through the State Department, you might never get it back. We drop down in there and never come back. We had Kareen Earlbach--
- Jack Spinnler: 00:39:56 Kareen Earlbach.
- Rich Helman: 00:39:58 Was working in--

Winnie Frost: 00:39:59 Would do German, right?

Rich Helman: 00:39:59 --Audiovisual. She was German.

Jack Spinnler: 00:40:02 Yeah, she was born there--

Rich Helman: 00:40:02 So we'd say Kareen, you got a little time? We got a little account; you can charge a couple of hours. Would you read--you know, do the German. Lynn Nakata worked out in the Western region. Her father was from Japan and so I actually sent things to Lynn and say, "Hey, would you have your dad translate this for us?" And so foreign languages were just a nightmare to get done. Right? They just took forever.

Jack Spinnler: 00:40:25 Kareen read my German translation said, "You can't put this out there." Well, why not? "Because it's like Third Reich German." I said what do you mean? Cause it's demanding, you must do it this way.

Rich Helman: 00:40:34 You will not walk on the trail and obey.

Jack Spinnler: 00:40:42 All those translations.

Rich Helman: 00:40:46 Oh, the good times.

LuAnn Jones: 00:40:47 I'm going to peel out now. Thank you so much for letting me be part of this. I think this is wonderful. I wish I didn't have to bolt, but I hope you all have great holidays and again--

Rich Helman: 00:41:01 Very nice meeting you. Thank you.

LuAnn Jones: 00:41:01 It was great to--

Winnie Frost: 00:41:03 Thank you.

Rich Helman: 00:41:04 Carry on with the Park Service.

LuAnn Jones: 00:41:05 Thank you.

Winnie Frost: 00:41:06 Yes.

Jack Spinnler: 00:41:08 I know we're carrying on, but most of it is just--

Rich Helman: 00:41:09 Yeah, we're carrying on all right.

- Jack Spinnler: 00:41:13 --war stories.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 00:41:14 Well, in Jack's interview he talked about coming in and having training from Dick Hoffman and David Guiney but also from you as a mentor. So there's some similarities because you came in last, so you're getting mentored by Jack and Rich. So I'd like to hear what you think of, and maybe there isn't, but the differences between your approaches to waysides. Did you mentor each other enough so that you're really all doing exactly the same thing, or do you have your own style, your own thoughts about how you approach that work?
- Jack Spinnler: 00:41:52 Well, I was showing Betsy, she took a picture of my chart, I think David Guiney gave me this chart or Ray Price did to help me kind of keep organized of which projects I have, how many waysides, what's the stage as they go through all the production or planning production. And it was just so difficult to kind of get a sense of how I'm going to do it. And I was seeing Dick Hoffman of course as Mr. brevity, boom, boom, boom. It was done. And David was Mr. layers and subtitles. So everybody had their strengths and one of the things I wish we had done more of was have a round table discussion evaluation of anybody's project if you're willing to put it on the table. But as Ray Price told me early on was, "Jack, when you're writing wayside exhibit text, you might as well put your heart on the table and ask people to stomp on it."
- Winnie Frost: 00:42:47 Yeah, I remember that too. Uh-uh (affirmative).
- Rich Helman: 00:42:51 I don't think the actual exhibits themselves would have been much different between us, they would have ended up about the same. But the way we had to go about organizing our lives and our way of going about it might be different. Because I say Jack's thing there. I had a similar thing, but it was different, but I developed it on my own too, to sort of keep track of where things were and kind of keep myself personally organized.
- Winnie Frost: 00:43:19 Well, I basically used the large envelope. That was my lifestyle and I would put the dates on where I am on that large envelope, so I wouldn't lose it. It would be with the project. And I think we approached doing the work similarly. We all had our envelopes. We all were collecting stuff from the parks; we'd have our meetings with the

parks. We had our contacts with the parks. We did the same thing as far as doing the plan.

- Jack Spinnler: 00:43:51 Yeah.
- Winnie Frost: 00:43:51 The proposal rather than getting that approved. And as Jack mentioned, it was much more complicated in our early days there because the regions had to be involved. That slowed things down. As the money changed the regions were decentralized, so the regions didn't have to be involved with each project, which changed the movement of things a lot more. But the whole envelope concept was very helpful to keep things all together. We had those boxes where we put everything. Now Jack had very organized boxes. He had files for every single thing all listed. And I'd go and look in those boxes go, "Wow, that's so amazing. Maybe I should do a couple of those." Those folders in the boxes.
- Rich Helman: 00:44:44 I want to be just like Jack.
- Winnie Frost: 00:44:45 And that's because Jack and I were in the same office so I can sort of watch what Jack was doing and I go, "I can never be that detailed. I just can't." But both of them gave me lots of good ideas. Of course Rich was my mentor and he helped me tremendously. He would help me when I felt like I had to do designs and I was getting so worried about "Was this right?" And he would review my text and I presented and--
- Rich Helman: 00:45:16 Correct everything.
- Winnie Frost: 00:45:18 --correct everything. I had my heart out here for him to--
- Rich Helman: 00:45:19 Did notice my--
- Winnie Frost: 00:45:20 --stomp on.
- Rich Helman: 00:45:20 Did you notice the correction I made on the email you sent me there about a week ago?
- Winnie Frost: 00:45:25 Did you, oh Storer College--
- Rich Helman: 00:45:25 Did you notice?
- Winnie Frost: 00:45:26 --or what?

Rich Helman: 00:45:26 No. Santa Claus. It's not C-L-A-U-S-E as in clause, as in written clause. It's C-L-A-U-S so I corrected it on your [crosstalk].

Winnie Frost: 00:45:32 Thank you. Are you giving that back to me?

Rich Helman: 00:45:33 [Crosstalk] use a Santa Claus. Yes.

Winnie Frost: 00:45:33 Yes. Well she corrected me on Storer College though.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:45:42 I'd call it a case [crosstalk].

Rich Helman: 00:45:43 There you go. The difference between you and me was I was okay with texts, but you got the projects done, mine languished forever, you got things done.

Jack Spinnler: 00:45:51 Oh you mean those boxes?

Winnie Frost: 00:45:51 Yes. Yes. I was--

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:45:52 [crosstalk]--the gray boxes.

Winnie Frost: 00:45:52 The other thing was I didn't work full time and I felt like I had to get the stuff done. I mean I wasn't there all week where you could do a lot of sharing of thoughts and ideas.

Rich Helman: 00:46:08 It occurred to me too, when you talked about funding changes. It was really, I think you can correct me if I'm wrong here, funding changes is what brought about the technical assistance program because parks would have a small project, two or three or four or five exhibits. But to try to get it into our program was virtually impossible. But yet they had some money, they had a little bit of their own money. Rehab was no issue and they wanted to get the job done and they wanted quality. So they wanted Harpers Ferry Center involved. So the technical assistance program got it covered.

Winnie Frost: 00:46:43 Yeah. And that moved a lot faster mainly because they had such vested interest in it. And they actually did the draft text and found the graphics.

Rich Helman: 00:46:49 Yeah.

Winnie Frost: 00:46:50 Now how much are they going to complain about that? They're doing a lot of that initial work. Whereas while you

are a real planner, I mean, that's like soup to nuts planner, you had a much more vested interest. I didn't have as a vested interest; I didn't go to those parks during this wayside technical assistance program time. They gave me what they thought they wanted, and I just had to kind of fix it up and make it production ready.

Rich Helman: 00:47:20 And it was pretty much all their money. Right.

Winnie Frost: 00:47:24 And it was--no, not all their money, but we came up with a two or \$300 per wayside.

Jack Spinnler: 00:47:29 But they weren't paying your salary though. You used--

Winnie Frost: 00:47:31 No, I was on overhead. My whole salary was on overhead.

Rich Helman: 00:47:33 Right.

Jack Spinnler: 00:47:33 Yeah. That was a big thing.

Winnie Frost: 00:47:35 And of course that was during the time when you all had to start using Godzillian account numbers.

Rich Helman: 00:47:40 Yes.

Jack Spinnler: 00:47:41 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Winnie Frost: 00:47:42 --for your time and needed those work--

Rich Helman: 00:47:43 One of the reasons why retirement looked very inviting.

Winnie Frost: 00:47:47 Yeah.

Rich Helman: 00:47:48 That and other things that evolved around that time.

Winnie Frost: 00:47:51 Yeah. I really don't even think I ever had to do a work plan, but I had to teach all the people that I've worked with who are doing it right, how to do it. I'm thinking, "I'm going to teach you?" I never did one. Because I was always on overhead. So yeah, my experiences were a little different, though the early years it was the same.

Jack Spinnler: 00:48:11 And in a way you had a leaning toward making the customer happy and we wanted to make the customer happy too with those larger projects. But we knew that

there was a bigger system that we had to go through. And you--

- Winnie Frost: 00:48:22 Yes.
- Jack Spinnler: 00:48:22 --were looking at one, two, three panels and you just want to get it done and get it through.
- Winnie Frost: 00:48:26 That's right.
- Jack Spinnler: 00:48:26 I mean, you probably had edited their text somewhat, but you didn't do it with a fine tooth comb and have it back and forth two or three times.
- Winnie Frost: 00:48:34 I mean, certainly, some stuff was pretty horrible--
- Jack Spinnler: 00:48:36 Some stuff yeah.
- Winnie Frost: 00:48:37 --and it didn't even seem like it was at a location, a specific site talking about that.
- Rich Helman: 00:48:41 That's when I would hear Winnie, "Hey, Rich. Could you come over and take a look at this?"
- Winnie Frost: 00:48:45 Yeah. I know--Rich was so great--
- Rich Helman: 00:48:47 Oh, who could I charge this to? Which account am I going to charge this to?
- Winnie Frost: 00:48:51 Well, when we had to start doing individual accounts then I started feeling bad, not as good about that.
- Rich Helman: 00:48:57 Yeah. Well, yeah. I wished I'd have the fat account. I'd go, okay--
- Winnie Frost: 00:49:00 Because I definitely didn't want to give it to Dick Hoffman to review before somebody else did because I didn't want to listen to anything.
- Rich Helman: 00:49:06 And you always bribed me with candy in your drawer down at the bottom.
- Winnie Frost: 00:49:12 Candy and pretzels.
- Rich Helman: 00:49:14 Pretzels, lots of pretzels.

Winnie Frost: 00:49:15 Many times I would come to work after not being at work for a couple of days and it seemed like my treat drawer was empty. There were munchkins around somewhere.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:49:25 Yes.

Rich Helman: 00:49:25 That was before Keto.

Winnie Frost: 00:49:27 That was way before Keto.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:49:28 And no doors on the offices.

Rich Helman: 00:49:30 We should probably talk a little bit about the introduction of contract planning and design because that was a huge thing. And when I first got here all I did was plan and worked with the designer and we were all Park Service people and time wasn't that big of a factor. Like I said, Ray said you don't, you just do the best job and don't worry about the money, whatever. Then came the thing where, okay, the Center is going to contracting. And we went through this whole indefinite quantity contract thing, which in itself was major hurdle. I mean things we were just sitting on the review things and writing up justifications and all that kind of stuff--

Jack Spinnler: 00:50:10 We had to go to training for it.

Rich Helman: 00:50:10 Yeah.

Winnie Frost: 00:50:11 The COR training.

Rich Helman: 00:50:11 The training. It became much more bureaucratic, much more red tape involved.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:50:14 Were you all CORs?

Jack Spinnler: 00:50:16 Yup.

Rich Helman: 00:50:16 Yeah. We all became CORs. And then--

Winnie Frost: 00:50:20 I think it was mandatory if you're going to work with any contractor.

Rich Helman: 00:50:23 Yeah. And then you had to work with these contractors who had no Park Service experience really. I'm trying to remember some of them. And for a contract it was so

different because the contract--one, they didn't know the Park Service culture and their style, their goal was, because they're contractors, they don't get paid until the contract is satisfied. They would give you something and try to get to it approved.

- Winnie Frost: 00:50:54 Exactly. They wanted it done.
- Rich Helman: 00:50:55 And review times became a real problem because they had to get paid. And I remember getting text from them and I was like, this stuff is awful. And we ended up eventually for most of them, we'd reach a point and say, "Fine, you've met your obligation, here's your check." And then we'd fix it. And we'd have to find--we'd find accounts to charge it to or get some more money somewhere. It was a nightmare. It was just an absolute nightmare.
- Winnie Frost: 00:51:25 And I--
- Rich Helman: 00:51:26 [Crosstalk].
- Winnie Frost: 00:51:26 --don't think our skill sets would not knowing all the details of contracting and money sources. That was the best use of our time, but we were getting into having to do that. Whereas when we moved into the project management thing, it was dumped on the project manager to deal with all those things so their media specialists could do the real work.
- Rich Helman: 00:51:47 Yeah.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 00:51:48 So you went from somebody who was supervising you and said, don't worry about the money too, having to worry about every dollar.
- Winnie Frost: 00:51:57 That's right. On every aspect of the job really.
- Rich Helman: 00:51:59 And we're now the go between, between the contract planner and the park and they're giving stuff to us that we know isn't going to fly at the park. And then we got to work all this stuff out and knowing that this isn't going to be any good, I'm going to end up fixing it myself.
- Jack Spinnler: 00:52:18 Well that was the best--when we were talking about my transition from Wayside Exhibits to Interpretive Planning. And why did I go to--after nine years of being really pretty

comfortable with wayside exhibit planning and go to interpretive planning, which is really uncomfortable for the first couple of years because they were going into this new NPS Six new way of doing interpretive planning. I thought, "Why did I do that?" Well now that I think about it, you were looking forward to retirement. I was looking forward to a transfer within HFC to get away from the contractors because Paul Singer was driving me nuts and the other group from Oregon, I forget their name--

Rich Helman: 00:52:50

Oh yeah, I remember them.

Jack Spinnler: 00:52:51

--interpretive exhibits. Dearborn/Geyman and even though Bruce Geyman had kind of a Park Service HFC sort of background, Bruce and Nan--were driving me. And so it was like, all right, I just need to be done with this. Let me go over there. Because they're not doing any contracting in interpretive planning yet. Fortunately when I retired in 2008, they were just getting into contracting. It was my time to exit stage left.

Betsy Ehrlich: 00:53:17

So talk about the quality changes. Because it sounds to me like when you're first talking about the original waysides, they were mostly text with a little bit of graphic because of technological limitations. So then you can do four color and you're working in-house, and you have an idea of what a good wayside is, which I think we should talk about a little bit and that your contractors are not giving good material. So can you talk about that quality shift from where you felt like we Harpers Ferry Center we're doing great waysides and what was going on sort of before and after and where are we today?

Rich Helman: 00:53:53

Want me to jump in?

Jack Spinnler: 00:53:56

Yeah.

Rich Helman: 00:53:57

Well, here's where I will give a big shout out to the designers that I think once we got more professional design and full color, when the designer started taking like a background image and filling the full panel and then putting text appropriately in places and so forth I think the design of them got a lot better. I see ones out there in the park now when we were limited by very limited screen printing and I see some of those old exhibits and then I see some of the newer exhibits with full images on it,

particularly a porcelain panel. I think there's some really nice stuff. So the design ended up good. The difficulties came in the process of getting there when we were using the contractors. Just that pulling of teeth you had to do to end up bringing it in-house, fixing the text and having one of our designers take what was done and maybe tweaking it or doing whatever. So I think that design ended up--

Winnie Frost: 00:54:58 And I think--I'm sorry, excuse me.

Rich Helman: 00:54:59 No, go ahead.

Winnie Frost: 00:55:00 And you hit on a really good point. I think part of it was getting good designers that also educated us on what a wayside was. It was really more a graphic medium than a lot of words on a stick. And with the evolution of using technology that was more evident, and could be presented better. And I think that certainly educated me as when I would go out in the field that or talk to the parks, "Hey, this is more a graphics thing. We don't want a lot of words." Hopefully we can tell the story through good images. And I didn't really get that that much when I first started in the waysides. So bringing in more professionals, I don't know how you guys feel about it, opened my eyes a little more to the value that the design really brings to making this more dramatic and powerful exhibit that people may want to read it beyond the title and the little captions. And trying to really be more succinct in what you have to say and let those images speak.

Rich Helman: 00:56:10 In the individual interview she asked me what was one of my favorite projects that come to my mind? And Fort Scott was one that always comes to my mind. You did Fort Scott with me, right? That's one of my favorites. One, it was a sort of a concise project, was about 20 exhibits in a small park. And they had--it was pre-Civil War so there were no historic photos and we contracted Keith Rocco and he did a half a dozen images that depicted scenes that were very dramatic scenes that occurred on those fort grounds historically.

Winnie Frost: 00:56:43 Didn't Betsy probably do those--

Rich Helman: 00:56:45 She did the design--

Winnie Frost: 00:56:46 She always served as COR right?

- Rich Helman: 00:56:46 --and she was the COR with Keith Rocco and I'm so pleased and proud of the whole project, which I thought overall was really good. But those illustrations which the park can use, and they were very well done. Park can use for forever as long as the park exists, and they don't lose track of them. They can use those for multiple things. So that was a really good one. And that was a case where we had much better design. And when you and Chad came on the scene, I loved working with Chad--Sequoia. He came up with some real great graphic images to illustrate how huge a Sequoia tree is. He got all these things about how many gas tanks you could fill with gasoline if you filled that trunk full thing, how many basketballs you could put in and stuff like that. And he did it graphically. I thought, well that's really good.
- Rich Helman: 00:57:39 I've been to both of those parks recently and Fort Scott and just watching people using those exhibits and I was at Sequoia and I was at Grant tree where the whole thing was to try to convey how huge this tree really is. When you're standing there looking at, you can't quite grasp it. It's just this big trunk. But there's all these images, and there was a young man and young woman and the man said to the woman, "This whole thing is just to show us how really big that that thing is."
- Winnie Frost: 00:58:06 An ah-ha moment [inaudible].
- Rich Helman: 00:58:06 I was yes. Yes, boom.
- Winnie Frost: 00:58:11 We saw that exhibit. When we went out there.
- Rich Helman: 00:58:13 Yeah. So--
- Winnie Frost: 00:58:14 I love that exhibit. That's a really great one.
- Rich Helman: 00:58:16 So yeah, the very best ones were when it was all kept in-house and we had the designers and the capabilities with these, the graphics to really create nice exhibits, toward the end. And I think for me, contracting and bureaucracy was really what frustrated me in the later years, having to deal with all of that.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 00:58:39 So Jack, do you have a favorite wayside project where you can imagine those panels just really working well? And what was that?

- Jack Spinnler: 00:58:48 Well, not one that jumps out, but we were talking about Rocky Mountain National Park and that was my first really big national park experience, almost a hundred wayside exhibits. And I like the diversity of natural history, human history, and even some recreational CCC stuff of course. And I was telling Betsy when you and I were on that baseball trip to see the Colorado Rockies play and then we went up to Rocky Mountain National Park, we're on that one trail and we're looking at a couple of waysides and we're talking about the waysides. This woman overheard us and said "Did you have anything to do with these? " I said "Yes, I was the planner on this" and "Oh yeah, these are wonderful--we were talking about it, and it does sort of--" Wow. I'm not sure where exactly. I can't remember which panel that was. It was up on Trail Ridge Road up near the summit. But it affected her. I just love seeing the reaction with something that you do is like really appreciated and you can always figure that somebody appreciating you somewhere, but until you actually see it, that makes you feel pretty good about what you did.
- Winnie Frost: 00:59:44 And that's such a good point, Jack, because we never got to go out when the waysides were installed to have that experience unless you went on your own.
- Jack Spinnler: 00:59:54 Yeah.
- Winnie Frost: 00:59:55 And I've gone to a few parks with other people and they are just like--this is how stupid--Catoctin, the coal trail, I mean the charcoal trail--
- Jack Spinnler: 01:00:06 Charcoal trail.
- Winnie Frost: 01:00:07 I mean talk about a sleeper and I had to do those. Well these people insisted, "No let's walk the trail." We walked it--even my husband said, "Man, I learned so much. These are great." I was like, to me it was learning about charcoal, it was killing me. You know, how bad can my projects be?
- Jack Spinnler: 01:00:31 That's right. If I was collier back there I would've shot myself.
- Winnie Frost: 01:00:34 Yeah, exactly. But for me kind of like you I did Arches National Park, but I did do it with an in-house designer, Olin Nave. And he was really talented, and they were porcelain. And they also had maps on them. Just a little

trail map. But he did such a clever job creating them. Anyway, I went with my girlfriends out there and they were just--I mean, they did know that I was involved in that. But they were just like, "I just learned a lot." So it was like little aha moments, so I had never seen them in place. Then I go to Craters of the Moon, no, Crater Lake with Chad to do a waysides there. And the last day we sit in the superintendent's office to go over the proposed project. Sitting on his desk, is this photograph, what is it? A wayside at Arches National Park.

- Jack Spinnler: 01:01:37 Oh.
- Winnie Frost: 01:01:38 He picks it up, it was facing him, it wasn't facing us. He picks it up, and said, "I want you to do waysides like this." He said, "I went to Arches, I just love those waysides." Wow. I was like, "What really?" I said, "Oh, is this a setup or something?" Did you read a bio about me or something. That was really kind of cool.
- Rich Helman: 01:02:01 That's great.
- Winnie Frost: 01:02:01 I know.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:02:02 Well, you think about visitor reaction, and about interpretive theory, because as my--during my work as an interpretive planner, is when Dave Larson who was an instructor here, was with the whole tangible and intangible and that was being taught everywhere.
- Winnie Frost: 01:02:17 Oh, yeah.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:02:18 And that was like, yeah, "You're going to apply that everywhere." And I was interpretive planner. I use them pretty well for developing theme statements and help guide the park for the next 10, 15 years but anybody who was with me from waysides on a team, didn't happen very often, but when it did, I don't know how I can figure this out, and I thought you're right. Waysides is a different thing. It just needs to be plain and simple. Put it there. It doesn't need to take this tangible land and make it intangible. I mean, yeah, you can put some words in there, that are really touchy-feely words, but--
- Winnie Frost: 01:02:55 You're hoping the resource speaks for itself--

Jack Spinnler: 01:02:57 Yeah.

Winnie Frost: 01:02:57 --as much as it can.

Jack Spinnler: 01:02:58 I mean, we'd like to tell that we're changing lives by putting really highfalutin theories together, but in fact we're changing lives with the simplest little information at the right place.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:03:12 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jack Spinnler: 01:03:13 That's my--

Winnie Frost: 01:03:13 Especially if we get oriented correctly.

Jack Spinnler: 01:03:15 Yes.

Winnie Frost: 01:03:15 Yeah.

Jack Spinnler: 01:03:15 In the installing it helps that.

Winnie Frost: 01:03:17 Oh, I know we never got to do that and wouldn't it have been fun?

Jack Spinnler: 01:03:21 Oh, well.

Rich Helman: 01:03:21 I got to go on an installation trip---oh, did you?

Rich Helman: 01:03:23 --with Larry at The Grand Canyon.

Winnie Frost: 01:03:24 Oh wow.

Rich Helman: 01:03:25 It was great, we were there for two weeks. And we got to a jackhammer into the rock, jackhammer, and get the things in. And I remember, one--

Winnie Frost: 01:03:34 You mean, he was actually doing the actual installation?

Rich Helman: 01:03:37 Yes.

Winnie Frost: 01:03:38 Wow.

Rich Helman: 01:03:40 We were working with a fellow in the park, Greer Price, I don't know if you remember his name?

Jack Spinnler: 01:03:43 Oh, yeah.

Winnie Frost: 01:03:43 Yeah, sure.

Rich Helman: 01:03:45 And, they couldn't get, because the location and Flagstaff and all that. They couldn't really get a contractor to do it and Grier couldn't get the maintenance staff to do it. So somehow, we talked to them and got funding. They said, we'll fund you to come out, if you'll install these things. So Larry and I went out for two weeks and worked on them and installed them.

Winnie Frost: 01:04:04 Along the rim?

Rich Helman: 01:04:06 Along the rim, yeah. And they had no issue. I mean, there had been so many things jack hammered into those main overlooks up there through the years. It wasn't like you're destroying the resource. I thought there might be an issue with that, there really wasn't. And so, we rented a jackhammer and one guy from the maintenance crew, a young guy who was really into this, we went up, and the four of us--Greer, and this maintenance guy, me and Larry--we spent two weeks putting waysides, and jack hammering into the limestone--

Winnie Frost: 01:04:30 Well, that is so unique.

Rich Helman: 01:04:32 It was wonderful.

Winnie Frost: 01:04:33 Oh, yes.

Rich Helman: 01:04:34 And I do remember one that we were installing and we're holding the thing trying to get in and people are standing there trying to read it before we even get it down into the hole.

Winnie Frost: 01:04:44 Wow.

Rich Helman: 01:04:44 That is really, really cool.

Winnie Frost: 01:04:46 See I wish we could have done some of the--

Rich Helman: 01:04:47 Yeah, I know.

Winnie Frost: 01:04:47 Not necessarily jack-hammering.

Rich Helman: 01:04:49 That's the only one I did, I got some pictures of that, me and Larry out there doing that.

Winnie Frost: 01:04:51 Wow, that's so cool.

Rich Helman: 01:04:52 The other thing is, I really get excited when I watch on a TV show, or a TV commercial and I see a wayside exhibit in it.

Winnie Frost: 01:04:57 Yeah. I do.

Rich Helman: 01:05:00 Oh really? Jack, we'll put this into recording. Jack has one up, at the battery in New York City, where an episode of Law and Order they found a dead guy next to his exhibit.

Jack Spinnler: 01:05:07 In the episode. Let--

Winnie Frost: 01:05:07 Is that--

Jack Spinnler: 01:05:08 Yeah, let--

Rich Helman: 01:05:09 In the TV show.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:05:11 You noticed your, there's a wayside you know?

Jack Spinnler: 01:05:14 Yeah, it was a wayside, there's the body.

Rich Helman: 01:05:15 We think he wasn't killed by looking at the wayside and he collapsed, "Oh that looks terrible."

Jack Spinnler: 01:05:19 Bored to death.

Winnie Frost: 01:05:19 Oh my God.

Jack Spinnler: 01:05:22 I had one installation with National Capital Region for the circle forts--

Winnie Frost: 01:05:27 Oh, yeah.

Jack Spinnler: 01:05:27 --on the edge, and there was one, at where Western Avenue and River Road come together. And it's a whole circle there, with traffic lights and George Vasjudah was with me, and two or three maintenance guys and they had one of those eight-inch augers in and I'll never forget the look on everybody's face, when we put the auger in, and it turns up these wires.

Winnie Frost: 01:05:51 Oh.

Jack Spinnler: 01:05:51 We looked around and all the traffic lights were out. Oh yeah.

Winnie Frost: 01:06:00 Oh, no.

Rich Helman: 01:06:00 No.

Jack Spinnler: 01:06:01 George said oh we are going to pay for this.

Winnie Frost: 01:06:01 Installation gone wrong.

Jack Spinnler: 01:06:01 Call Miss Utility before you dig a hole.

Rich Helman: 01:06:03 The wires came up.

Winnie Frost: 01:06:06 You were lucky you didn't have that problem [inaudible].

Rich Helman: 01:06:10 Oh, my God.

Winnie Frost: 01:06:13 Oh my God. So what did you do next?

Jack Spinnler: 01:06:13 We called the police and they came and they were blocking traffic while they called maintenance out, whatever it took them hours to figure how to--because we had just churned up this whole--

Winnie Frost: 01:06:21 Sure.

Jack Spinnler: 01:06:21 Thing of wires.

Winnie Frost: 01:06:23 Oh my God.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:06:23 A bird's nest of wires.

Jack Spinnler: 01:06:26 Yeah, it was like a birds nest of wires.

Rich Helman: 01:06:31 Let's see. What else can we talk about?

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:06:33 Well, you mentioned interpretive theory and I wonder, I mean, it's evolved, I mean we're sitting in Mather Training Center, so it seems appropriate to at least see if some of the different evolution of the theory of interpretation David Larson and onward had an impact on how waysides were planned.

- Jack Spinnler: 01:06:53 They tried some of the prototypes here. I think one right out here on Cook Hall and the one over in the corner here, try to incorporate some of that. I think even David Larson worked with Elizabeth Kerwin on getting that going. And I look at them once in a while and thought, oh, yeah, they attempted to get this tangible-intangible concept in there. Well, it's okay.
- Winnie Frost: 01:07:14 I think designers had more impact with us.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:07:16 Yeah. I think that when a wayside exhibit was written, where either the first line grabbed you or the last line was a punchline, that's what makes a difference.
- Winnie Frost: 01:07:27 Yeah, yeah. That's true.
- Rich Helman: 01:07:27 I will say, talking about interpretive planning, we didn't really mention one of the roles of a wayside exhibit planner was to represent wayside exhibits on interpretive planning teams.
- Winnie Frost: 01:07:36 That's right.
- Rich Helman: 01:07:37 Where an interpretive planner like Jack, and many before him, would assemble a team and go to a park to advise and develop a plan for all of the interpretation of the park, at least certainly all the media interpretation and sometimes parts of it would include some personal service stuff.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:07:55 Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Rich Helman: 01:07:55 But mainly it was for the media and the wayside exhibit planner would have their input on that. And that was wonderful because you got to go and you'd be on this team, you got to go see the park, you've probably got to see most of the greatest places in the park. And when you came back, all you had to do is write a trip report and submit it to the planner. And that was huge. And, I remember, I forget who the planner was, but I got to go to Glacier Bay, Alaska and we had to do two separate weeklong trips to Glacier Bay.
- Winnie Frost: 01:08:27 Aww.
- Rich Helman: 01:08:28 They had us set up in a lodge, we got to do an overnight kayaking and listening to whales, all this kind of stuff came

back and wrote my trip report. And that was kind of the end of it. So those were great.

- Betsy Ehrlich: 01:08:42 And your trip report was what? I mean it obviously went into this LRIP or Long-Range Interpretive Plan that you had mentioned in your interview, yeah.
- Rich Helman: 01:08:49 I don't think there was ever a definition.
- Winnie Frost: 01:08:49 It was site locations--
- Rich Helman: 01:08:51 Yeah, basically.
- Winnie Frost: 01:08:52 --basically.
- Rich Helman: 01:08:53 Yeah, I would write up whatever I--some of them got more involved than others depending upon the nature of the park, and the situation, and the interpretive planner involved. But basically it would be more general. I would say wayside exhibits have an appropriate role to play here and I would recommend maybe a trail up across the such and such, across the upper part of the bay to interpret the feature, landscape, whatever it is or the Indian history or the [inaudible] whatever it is. And just sort of have a general thing, I'd recommend probably no more than 30 exhibits for this park. And I mentioned the themes and the things. Sometimes I get real specific depending on the park and I'd actually include a suggested list of exhibits, that sort of thing.
- Winnie Frost: 01:09:44 Especially at parks that the people in the park had already really thought it through. So they really wanted that recorded that, because I went to some parks and they really knew exactly where they wanted all their exhibits and I certainly wasn't going to start arguing if I, well, they didn't think it was at all appropriate.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:10:04 Yeah.
- Winnie Frost: 01:10:05 But you pretty much listen to them and write down all those sites, and record them.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:10:12 I was telling Betsy that less than a year into--like six months into--me switching from Waysides to Interpretive Planning, I had one of those uh-oh moments, like "What did I get myself into?" Because they were switching over to

how they were done. It was different than the way Michael Paskowsky or Linda Finn did it previous to that.

- Winnie Frost: 01:10:27 And you had to handle that personal services too, huh?
- Jack Spinnler: 01:10:28 Yeah. And the personal service stuff, and they really wanted a strategy. They wanted a 10, 15-year strategy. So that was a more difficult and--being in front of a group, it never bothered me doing training courses, because I had my notes, I was prepared whether I had PowerPoints or not, I knew how to do that. So a lot of people have this fear of public speaking. Getting in front of any group at all. At a funeral, they would rather be in the casket, than giving the eulogy, most people.
- Winnie Frost: 01:10:54 Oh, wow.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:10:55 Well, when I found that public facilitation was three times ramped up from there to being--because there you're just, you're going out without notes, you have no idea what direction the discussion is going to go in. But at the end of the week, you have to have a group consensus on what you're agreeing on. You don't know the personalities, who gets along with who, or what dickering was going on in the background. So it's like you're a combination of a Henry Kissinger negotiator, and a psychologist, and a priest hearing confessions on the side, during your three or four days there at the end of it you're supposed to write this thing.
- Rich Helman: 01:11:34 And then there's the issues of what kind of restaurants are you going to eat in?
- Winnie Frost: 01:11:37 Oh, my. Yeah, food--
- Rich Helman: 01:11:38 What sort of standards people have for lodging? Who's going to ride in the car? Who's got to be an airplane? All those kinds of things.
- Winnie Frost: 01:11:45 Who needs to stop for lunch because they get low sugar or whatever? I mean, everybody's needs. Who snores, who doesn't.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:11:53 I know.

- Betsy Ehrlich: 01:11:56 Can you talk about some of your most memorable trips? You've all been on lots of wayside planning trips.
- Rich Helman: 01:12:05 One of my most memorable, one, this has to do with being on a wayside planning trip and getting sick--
- Jack Spinnler: 01:12:12 Oh, yeah.
- Rich Helman: 01:12:13 --which could be a disaster.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:12:14 Oh, yeah.
- Winnie Frost: 01:12:14 Oh, no.
- Rich Helman: 01:12:14 I went to Grand Canyon. It was a long trip because we had to do both the North Rim and the South Rim. We had a team of six to eight people going into some remote areas, sleeping on the ground all night, and I developed an illness and I was coughing and hacking. At one particular place were all sleeping out in the campground at night. And I'm sure everybody's hearing me over here. They say, "Rich, we thought you were going to die last night." And I went to their clinic and they gave me, I don't know, cough syrup or something or other, and I got home, and I had double pneumonia when I got home.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 01:12:47 Oh my God.
- Winnie Frost: 01:12:47 Oh my God.
- Rich Helman: 01:12:48 And that was just--it was all I could do to get through that trip. So, and I know there's other cases of people who got sick. I'd also, I'll throw this one in. It wasn't me, but I think it was Terry Lindsay and Ron Roos were up in, I want to say it was up Apostle Islands or somewhere in Northern Michigan or somewhere when 9/11 hit and all the airplanes stopped.
- Winnie Frost: 01:13:09 Oh they couldn't get back, right.
- Rich Helman: 01:13:09 There were no airplanes for like a week or two. They couldn't fly home. So they ended up renting a car and were able to drive home after renting a car. So there's things like that. It was on an interpretive planning trip with--she goes to the ball games with us now, Appalachian Trail--

Jack Spinnler: 01:13:24 Oh, Dave Gilbert.

Rich Helman: 01:13:25 No, no, no, no. A woman.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:13:26 Wendy.

Rich Helman: 01:13:27 Wendy Jansen. She was the head of the interpretive planning team at Voyageurs and we're out on the trail and she stumbled and fell and broke her ankle. So she had to, had to leave and come home. And I think--

Winnie Frost: 01:13:40 Oh, and she was the lead of the team.

Rich Helman: 01:13:41 Yeah. And I think Ben Miller sort of took over and sort of guided us through the rest of it with the park staff.

Winnie Frost: 01:13:47 Oh.

Rich Helman: 01:13:47 So there's things like that that would happen on planning trips.

Winnie Frost: 01:13:50 Well, Jack and I--

Jack Spinnler: 01:13:53 Cape Hatteras. We're stuck on Ocracoke Island because the storm came up and the wave did this, the ferries weren't running, and we didn't have our suitcases with us--

Winnie Frost: 01:14:01 We had nothing.

Jack Spinnler: 01:14:01 --we were there for an hour or two so now we're stuck on the Island and--

Winnie Frost: 01:14:05 And all of our bags are in hotels--

Jack Spinnler: 01:14:07 Another part of Cape Hatteras.

Winnie Frost: 01:14:07 --another part of the park.

Jack Spinnler: 01:14:09 So we go to the ferry terminal and this guy says, "I'm sorry there's no boats today." And Winnie said it was so funny when she saw me, because I'm in the driver's seat and I got all my team members around me, I roll my window down and he says, "I'm sorry sir, you can't get off the Island." I went, "Oh." And she said, "What do you mean oh?" I said, "Well, I don't know what else to say. I can't argue with him, I can't get off the island."

Winnie Frost: 01:14:30 He was so beyond shock. Like, you know I'm the lead of this team, now what do I do with these people and myself?

Jack Spinnler: 01:14:36 We found the park ranger, got her up, out of the night, we found where she lived.

Winnie Frost: 01:14:39 Yes.

Jack Spinnler: 01:14:40 Got here up in the night and she got us the last two rooms on the island.

Winnie Frost: 01:14:43 That's right.

Jack Spinnler: 01:14:44 And so you and Susan Barkus stayed in one, and me and Michael--

Winnie Frost: 01:14:47 Michael--

Jack Spinnler: 01:14:47 --Lacome in the other. Yeah, Michael Lacome was with us.

Winnie Frost: 01:14:52 Lacome, yeah.

Jack Spinnler: 01:14:52 Yeah.

Winnie Frost: 01:14:53 And then the next morning, Susan, of course you know, I always like to fix my face, but that wasn't possible. So Susan and I, are walking down the stairs, and Michael Lacome says to me, "Oh, sleeping beauty's arrived", hint, smirk, smirk, and we all, you know we didn't have any toothpaste, we didn't have anything. And luckily, we were able to get back. I mean the storm had passed but that definitely was not planned.

Jack Spinnler: 01:15:20 Yeah. Not planned.

Rich Helman: 01:15:27 Some of the traveling things were adventures. I did a planning trip with Ron Roos to Hawaii Volcanoes, and I'm a very frugal guy, and I will stay anywhere. And you could stay at the, it was a military recreation center there. It was pretty crude accommodations, but it was a recreation place for people in the military stationed on the Hawaiian Islands and can go to Hawaii Volcanoes and stay there. And it was cabins with wind blowing underneath the doorway, and a little bit not the best accommodations. Do you think my dear friend Ron Roos would stay at a place like that? No,

he wouldn't. He ended up going over and staying in the Volcano House overlooking the real volcano.

- Rich Helman: 01:16:10 I'm trying to save a few dollars for the government and the places we ate, you know were always an issue right? I of course would eat anywhere, but we had to eat at some of the better places.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 01:16:20 The three of you--
- Rich Helman: 01:16:20 And things like that.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 01:16:21 --other than interpretive planning trips, you didn't really travel together, you would've traveled with designers [crosstalk]--
- Rich Helman: 01:16:27 We did the--
- Winnie Frost: 01:16:28 Well, Rich and I did--
- Rich Helman: 01:16:29 Padre Island.
- Winnie Frost: 01:16:30 --Padre Island together because I was in training.
- Rich Helman: 01:16:32 The training thing.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:16:35 That has a side story.
- Winnie Frost: 01:16:36 That has a side--
- Jack Spinnler: 01:16:37 Turn the tape off.
- Winnie Frost: 01:16:38 We have to turn the tape off on that one.
- Rich Helman: 01:16:42 We'll tell you later, Betsy. It's a funny story. It's a good story.
- Winnie Frost: 01:16:44 Yeah. He wouldn't tell me for 10 years or something.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:16:47 My worst getting sick was in Independence going to--and I was in charge of the workshop, I was doing that tangible-intangible--
- Winnie Frost: 01:16:55 Oh-no.

Jack Spinnler: 01:16:55 --workshop thing and that night, I went out and I was going to my dinner. I thought, "Oh, just get a Philly steak and cheese." I want a Philly steak and cheese. I don't know if it was that, or I had already had a stomach virus going, but I was up all night just on the bathroom floor. And somehow, I called Joanne Blaco and she stood in for the first hour or two, and so I threw enough cold water on my face and got freshened up enough to get down to that conference room in the hotel, and somehow managed to continue on that work. When you get violently sick, and that happened three times to me on trips. Oh, I hate that.

Winnie Frost: 01:17:29 Yeah, it is--

Jack Spinnler: 01:17:29 And people are depending on you.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:17:32 So that work travel that everybody is so envious of you for--

Jack Spinnler: 01:17:33 Yeah, yeah.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:17:37 --isn't always so sweet.

Rich Helman: 01:17:37 No. In the trips, that was my really stressful time at Harpers Ferry Center. About two weeks leading into a trip, my wife would notice it. I started getting sort of testy and I'd start thinking about it, and just sort of knowing I was going to have this team at the park and didn't know who they were, and what the personalities were. And I knew at the end I'd have to meet with the superintendent and all of this. So when I was in the park, I never really enjoyed my time in the park if I was the lead planner on the team.

Rich Helman: 01:18:13 Now once--two things. Once I developed my list of exhibits and I knew in my mind if it was a weeklong trip, long about day five or six, that would all kind of come together and I would say, "Okay, I know what it's going to be." And I could kind of put my thoughts together for the final meeting. And once that meeting was over, and I was in the rental car heading to the airport, it was like, this thing is done. It was a big relief.

Winnie Frost: 01:18:38 Yeah, it was of anxiety to that.

Rich Helman: 01:18:40 Yeah.

- Winnie Frost: 01:18:40 Especially when you're the lead. People are expecting you to be just brilliant.
- Rich Helman: 01:18:43 Yeah.
- Winnie Frost: 01:18:44 Know all the answers. I think another part that would be hard on these trips is just all the driving and like towards the middle of the day or towards the middle end of the day, you're so tired, and there's so much information in your brain that you know, may I be excused my brain is full. I can't handle any more information. And I found between maybe 2:30 and 4:00 kind of a hard time to continue to really concentrate and participate because I was, especially if you're riding in a car, constant getting in and out, in and out. I thought that--
- Betsy Ehrlich: 01:19:26 With several stops by 2 o'clock in the afternoon.
- Winnie Frost: 01:19:29 Yeah. And people are talking to you, to you, to you, to you, and--
- Rich Helman: 01:19:34 That brings to mind a couple things, both related. One, is I learned early on, if you have--because at the wayside, you got to be out in the park and who knows where you're going to be. If you have a chance to go to the bathroom, don't ever pass it up. Even if you don't think you really have to go, you better go because you- And it was always mixed groups. There was always men and women. So I learned that. I remember one of my early Badlands trips, it was so funny. Now Badlands is a road through the park, it runs about 20 something miles and there's overlooks. So you're driving and you're getting out, and you're driving and getting out, and you're driving and getting out.
- Rich Helman: 01:20:06 And so you've got a team of about six people, we were in two vehicles. They had a radio communicating with the van behind, park staff, and so you come up to the first one, you get out, it's early in the morning, everybody's full of energy and we probably took a half an hour, 45 minutes. Everybody sharing their ideas. The next one, and you get out and you're all excited and you go on. Probably about 2:30, 3:00 in the afternoon, everybody pulls up to the overlook, "Do you think we could plan this one from the car? Yeah, we can do this one from the car."
- Winnie Frost: 01:20:31 Exactly, exactly.

Rich Helman: 01:20:32 Okay. What do you think? Should we talk about that rock out there? Yeah, let's talk about that rock. Okay, let's move on.

Winnie Frost: 01:20:38 Yeah, yeah. It was too much information sometimes.

Rich Helman: 01:20:41 That was.

Jack Spinnler: 01:20:43 I think it actually that kind of a day ended with a dinner and then you went back to your room, and you tried to get all those thoughts together. So people think, "Oh let's just eight hours a day, maybe a nine or 10 hour day." Was usually a 12, 13, 14-hour day because I wouldn't get to bed until 10 or 11 or 12, because I'm making all these notes, because all those thoughts mind, you don't want to lose them.

Winnie Frost: 01:20:59 And we didn't have computers we were taking with us back then.

Rich Helman: 01:21:02 Yeah.

Winnie Frost: 01:21:02 And we had to just keep--take all those silly notes and try to make sense out of it, because you knew you were going to forget some of it, because the next day was another bombardment of more information. And we're with people that are in love with these locations. This is their mission in life is to get those stories out and do--

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:21:23 So how did you talk people out of the bad ideas?

Winnie Frost: 01:21:27 That's a good question. Let's see.

Rich Helman: 01:21:29 One of the things I did was if there was a disagreement about whether to include an exhibit or not, I'll say, "All right, I'll think about that." Then I'd come back here, and I'd write the proposal and I wouldn't include it in the proposal, and I would send it out.

Winnie Frost: 01:21:52 How passive aggressive.

Rich Helman: 01:21:52 I would tend to--no, I would tell them about it. I'd say, let me think about that one. And when you get to proposal, if it's in there, fine. If it's not, we'll talk about it then. So I wouldn't get into argument at the park. I would tend to kind of avoid it and not put it in the proposal. And then if they

wanted to discuss, sometimes they would say fine. There was no issue. Sometimes they discuss it or whatever. And sometimes I'd include one back in.

- Winnie Frost: 01:22:18 He didn't share that when I was at training I think.
- Rich Helman: 01:22:20 I didn't?
- Winnie Frost: 01:22:21 No, you didn't share that.
- Rich Helman: 01:22:22 Maybe I hadn't developed that strategy yet, I don't know.
- Winnie Frost: 01:22:24 Well, I would usually ask, to me, the most important question, "Do you have graphics to support this story?" And if nobody could figure out if they had any graphics and didn't really know and so I wouldn't say, "Oh well, we'll do our artwork."
- Jack Spinnler: 01:22:40 Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, right. Yeah.
- Winnie Frost: 01:22:44 Definitely--
- Betsy Ehrlich: 01:22:47 Artwork.
- Winnie Frost: 01:22:47 Yeah. Artwork was the word I was using. I was mumbling it with my hand over my mouth for the record. Then I would suggest that maybe this isn't the best approach, to do it this way.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:23:01 I like to think that they would respect my experience. And if it was a category like geology or historic landscapes. As you know, based on my experience, I've found very few success stories in trying to interpret for the wayside exhibit, a geology story or a historic landscape story. There are exceptions but generally if they accepted my background, my expertise, my experience, then use they usually left it alone. But sometimes they'll come back at you, but this is such an important--I mean look at the historic landscape right out there, can't you see the little dip in the landscape?
- Winnie Frost: 01:23:37 How about you have a leader that says "dip in landscape?"
- Rich Helman: 01:23:40 But usually you could get them to not do it. I did have a disagreement with Dick Hoffman one time, my early ones at Badlands and, I still do--I was even at that site within the past year and I still disagree with him. We were on this

thing; in fact he was doing the plan and I was observing at that point and we're going around and most of that landscape Badlands is kind of rolling little moundy things and buttes and stuff and like that. And they're mostly red or brown or streaked and got some purple, but you turn there's a corner and there's these very distinct yellow mounds. It's a very distinct yellow, different from everything else. So in the park said, "Well, we need something here talking about the yellow mounds." And so they explained it's primarily sulfur. That's kind of it. The content of this stuff has sulfur. It's not found anywhere else, therefore, it's yellow.

- Rich Helman: 01:24:24 I thought, "Okay, that's good." And Dick insisted there had to be graphics. What graphics? There weren't really any graphics, they didn't--geology, talked geologic stuff in the formation. He's like, "Yeah, well this is, or we're not going to do it, there's no graphics." And I'm thinking, "Why can't we just do a panel with some words that just explain, that these are the yellow because there's sulfur?" Because people are turning that corner and they're going, "Whoa, why is that yellow?" But he would not do that exhibit. He never did do it. And a year ago I was there and there's these yellow mounds and there's still nothing there to explain--
- Betsy Ehrlich: 01:24:56 There are still visitors there going I wonder what that is?
- Rich Helman: 01:24:56 Yeah. So I think there's exceptions you could do. You can do--
- Winnie Frost: 01:24:57 That is almost doing like a plant ID or really like--
- Rich Helman: 01:24:59 Almost, yeah.
- Winnie Frost: 01:25:06 Those yellow mounds out there are because of the sulfur.
- Rich Helman: 01:25:09 These are the only yellow mounds you're going to see as you drive the road and it's because this is the only place where there's this sulfur deposit.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 01:25:15 So for the most part, you have a sense of what would make you good wayside. So when you're out in the field and you're walking a trail that has no waysides, how do you know where a good wayside location is? How do you lead a park through that?

Winnie Frost: 01:25:34 Usually I want to know, okay, if I put it away--what are we supposed to--what's the story right here that we're going to put something in the ground here? What is the story? Is it about the foliage out there? Something unique about it or did an event happen in that location? You know? I mean, something that--

Jack Spinnler: 01:25:52 I don't think I ever propose on my own, a wayside. I'm thinking "Keep your mouth shut, you're going to keep—"
"[crosstalk].

Winnie Frost: 01:25:57 Really?

Rich Helman: 01:25:59 As few as possible.

Jack Spinnler: 01:25:59 You're right.

Winnie Frost: 01:26:00 Well, I did-

Jack Spinnler: 01:26:02 But usually, they've been thinking about it. I mean, they've been talking about it at staff meetings, the chief interpreter has made a list. I mean they have what they think are going to be, so my job is more to listen to theirs some maybe nix ones that really don't either have a good story or good graphics or some reason to say no. So I try not ever to suggest. "Hey, why don't you ever put one here?"

Winnie Frost: 01:26:21 Or maybe just like along a trail, a trail maybe just have a trail head.

Jack Spinnler: 01:26:26 Oh yeah, trail head.

Winnie Frost: 01:26:27 And then also recommend that they put a little brochure in there, that talks about different--maybe just put a little numbers out or something along the trail to reduce the number of waysides that are necessary, and maybe compliment it with some kind of little site bulletin. I remember doing that on a number of places.

Rich Helman: 01:26:46 Like Jack said, usually we'd ask them ahead of time to come up with a list of things that you think are appropriate. So that was usually the main guy. But I would have times where I remember specifically at New River Gorge, and there would be park interpreters with you at almost all of these places. And often they had been out there with visitors at these sites. And so I'd say, "When you're

standing here with the visitors, what do you point out to them?"

Winnie Frost: 01:27:07 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Rich Helman: 01:27:07 And they would go, well look over there you'll see that, I go, "Okay, we got something there to look at, then tell me the story there." I remember one, at New River Gorge they were saying--you're looking out at the New River Gorge bridge, and the river down below. And they were trying to convey how high that is. And I said, "So if you're standing here with the visitor, you should know, what do you tell me." They said "Well, you could put the Statue of Liberty and the Washington Monument underneath that bridge." And I thought, okay, that's good. So I got Hugh Brown, in fact, now I came back as a planner and I wanted to make sure she was right about this. So I got the measurements for the Washington Monument, Statue of Liberty, and I found that if you don't include the base of the Statue of Liberty, you can put two Statutes of Liberty and a Washington Monument. So I had Hugh Brown do that--

Winnie Frost: 01:27:50 Oh, that's cool.

Rich Helman: 01:27:50 --so when you're there, there's two Statutes of Liberty and a Washington Monument underneath it. But it came from asking the park interpreter, what do you tell people when you're standing there with them? What do you point out to?

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:28:00 What do you point to? Yeah.

Rich Helman: 01:28:01 There were some other things that she did there too. I think we ended up doing a couple of exhibits just because of the things that she said she points out to them.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:28:08 Which keeps the wayside focused on the landscape.

Rich Helman: 01:28:10 Exactly.

Jack Spinnler: 01:28:10 Yeah.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:28:11 Right.

Rich Helman: 01:28:11 Yeah. Or if I'm in a place and I look out and I go, what is that? And if they haven't already, I mean a lot of times they've already said we need an exhibit to deal with that, so

what is that? That's really weird. They'd explain and I'd go, "Well, that's probably a good wayside exhibit."

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:28:25 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Winnie Frost: 01:28:27 Because let's face it, if you were in the park all the time, you may not see the forest--

Rich Helman: 01:28:32 Yeah.

Winnie Frost: 01:28:33 --for the trees at that point and you got new eyes. Do you have new eyes?

Rich Helman: 01:28:40 I do. I just have new glasses.

Winnie Frost: 01:28:42 He just opened his eyes really large.

Rich Helman: 01:28:43 Yeah, I did.

Winnie Frost: 01:28:45 But you're coming in there with those new eyes, that you had just put in. And so you might see things-

Rich Helman: 01:28:51 Kind of.

Winnie Frost: 01:28:51 --that they had forgotten about, because they're so--they're kind of missing it.

Rich Helman: 01:28:55 Yeah.

Winnie Frost: 01:28:57 Not that we liked to suggest additional waysides especially when we were in money situation, where we knew how much was available. And that's another thing that can control the numbers.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:29:08 Just budget.

Winnie Frost: 01:29:10 Just the budget. The budget can really dictate the movement of the project or the number of exhibits or whether you--God help us--you phase it, we know about that too, right?

Jack Spinnler: 01:29:24 Yeah, yeah.

Winnie Frost: 01:29:25 Phasing--

Rich Helman: 01:29:25 Phasing. Oh, my.

- Winnie Frost: 01:29:27 We hated phasing, it never seemed to go away.
- Rich Helman: 01:29:29 Yeah. Well at the time, we phased Grand Canyon so much, the Canyon was 10 feet deeper by the time I finished the project.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:29:37 You made a good point with the self-guided brochure with the posts, with the numbers in them because looking for an alternative, other than doing a wayside exhibit, that they can do in-house, gives them something to do and test it. Because we talk about evaluation here all the time, but rarely do we either do it ourselves or encourage others to do it and that's something they can evaluate. They can do something less expensive, try it out. That's a good way to try to avoid another five waysides here. Why don't we just do a little self-guide thing. Put the wooden post in there, if that doesn't work, you take the wooden post out.
- Winnie Frost: 01:30:11 Yeah, right, right, right.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:30:12 Just make sure when you dig post hole, you don't dig up wires.
- Rich Helman: 01:30:16 Let me say a word about non, what we call non-standard waysides. That would be audio waysides, tactile, braille, those kinds of things. Whenever those got introduced, I would go, "Oh no." Audio, audio ones, I tried to avoid those like a plague and some parks would want them.
- Winnie Frost: 01:30:35 Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Rich Helman: 01:30:36 How many times do you go up to an audio button and push it and it doesn't work, or you're standing there, there's a landscape battlefield you're looking across and some kid goes over, pushes the button and all of a sudden, rar-rar the kid runs away, there's nobody listening to it, rar-rar. And the weather destroys them, and the batteries need replacement and all that kind of stuff. So I would avoid those, and I knew if they wanted tactile, that's special fabrication by somebody and you're probably going to add a lot of money, and you're going to add a lot of time--
- Jack Spinnler: 01:31:11 And now that they're--
- Rich Helman: 01:31:11 --and now that they're going to deteriorate.

Jack Spinnler: 01:31:12 --going to [crosstalk] is that much more expensive. So when you replace the panel, do not replace a panel. Now it's the other thing on the panel.

Rich Helman: 01:31:18 You mentioned your braille brochures. I think it was one of those Ray Bloomer things where he gave a number that amazed me that how few blind people read braille, is a very small percent.

Winnie Frost: 01:31:31 It's like 10% or something. Wasn't it?

Rich Helman: 01:31:31 Yeah.

Jack Spinnler: 01:31:31 Just like 5%, 10%. Yeah.

Rich Helman: 01:31:33 So, I mean, so to do it on a wayside and go through all that for like that 5% and--

Winnie Frost: 01:31:37 On such limited real estate.

Rich Helman: 01:31:38 --they point out, out on a trail virtually every person who can't see has got a sighted person with them. They don't go out on the trails, if they can't see, might be different in a visitor center or if they've got a publication in their hand but- Anything non-standard, I said, "Oh man, I'll try to avoid this."

Winnie Frost: 01:31:55 It's true non-standard stuff [crosstalk].

Rich Helman: 01:31:58 I think I went through my whole career and I never had to do an audio [inaudible].

Winnie Frost: 01:32:01 Well, also audio outside with all that ambient noise and everything around, it's just--

Rich Helman: 01:32:07 It was.

Winnie Frost: 01:32:07 Unless you have really perfect hearing. It sounds like mumbo jumbo.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:32:12 Well, the last one we did was the climate change wayside in Rock Creek Park.

Winnie Frost: 01:32:16 There was--

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:32:16 A bird song. That's all it was.

Winnie Frost: 01:32:19 Yeah.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:32:19 There was some concern about whether if the bird is singing, what if, is that going to impact the birds in the forest?

Jack Spinnler: 01:32:24 Dear birds. So maybe it sees it.

Winnie Frost: 01:32:25 Or maybe coming over there.

Rich Helman: 01:32:28 I would have immediately say, "Yes it would, we can't do it."

Winnie Frost: 01:32:29 Yeah. And leaving their marking on the wayside.

Jack Spinnler: 01:32:32 Yeah, right.

Rich Helman: 01:32:34 That was an element way back to when we got here, bird wires, do you remember bird wires?

Winnie Frost: 01:32:38 Bird wires, yes, uh-huh (affirmative).

Jack Spinnler: 01:32:39 Yeah.

Rich Helman: 01:32:40 They'd put a wire across the top of the exhibits, so the bird would not perch on the exhibit and then poop all over it. Because bird poop on waysides was always a big issue.

Jack Spinnler: 01:32:48 Yeah.

Winnie Frost: 01:32:49 Well, when I was up in New York, like you, there were homeless people that would sleep underneath the waysides, out there kind of near Fire Island, not Fire Island, near the airport. What's out there? Jamaica Bay?

Jack Spinnler: 01:33:04 Jamaica Bay. Yeah, near JFK airport.

Winnie Frost: 01:33:07 Yeah, yeah, yeah. They showed me pictures of that.

Jack Spinnler: 01:33:10 Yeah. See about non-standard size.

Winnie Frost: 01:33:12 Maybe we need to put the wire on the bottom.

Jack Spinnler: 01:33:14 Non-standard size waysides are still out there from that era before Ray and Phil came up with the rectangle standard

sizes. I think De Soto still has some, and they mostly come from a park--

- Rich Helman: 01:33:25 Oh, yeah.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:33:26 --that has these shields shapes and other places that had to be special die cut, for whatever reason. And they just never converted them over. But one of the first projects that Phil gave me, was for White Bird Canyon Battlefield, which is in Nez Perce National Historical Park and there is this great overlook right on the scene and they had great artwork and all I had to do as a planner was to change the graphic or just reuse the graphic, re-purpose it onto a rectangular panel or two and tell the story a little differently, a little shorter and I did that and the park was really pleased. And then they told me later they were in contact, they said listen, this is like right after Dances with Wolves came out, said Kevin Costner came around. We were showing him around the park, and he went to that overlook and he said he really liked the way that overlooked was done and those panels.
- Winnie Frost: 01:34:10 Wow.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:34:10 Yeah, Kevin Costner.
- Winnie Frost: 01:34:10 That's wonderful feedback.
- Rich Helman: 01:34:14 All right.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 01:34:14 More wayside fame.
- Winnie Frost: 01:34:14 Yeah. Gosh, Jack.
- Rich Helman: 01:34:14 Yeah.
- Winnie Frost: 01:34:14 Surprised you didn't mention that first thing.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:34:14 I should--
- Rich Helman: 01:34:21 You should have said that [inaudible].
- Winnie Frost: 01:34:24 Yeah.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 01:34:25 Well there's one thing I want to have you talk a little bit about before we finish because it is December 20th, and that is, if you could talk about the Christmas quiz.

Rich Helman: 01:34:37 The Christmas quiz.

Winnie Frost: 01:34:38 Oh.

Rich Helman: 01:34:39 Can't give any clues. Well I do. I almost started something a little bit ago.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:34:43 What is the Christmas quiz?

Rich Helman: 01:34:44 Let me say a word about the people we worked with. I mean, that's one thing I think everybody here that pretty much worked here said, the people we worked with were great. And might have been Ed Zahniser or somebody that used to say, or maybe multiple people, but the people that worked here really got great things done despite all the obstacles-

Winnie Frost: 01:35:03 That was a--

Rich Helman: 01:35:03 --despite the management supervision or lack thereof and--

Winnie Frost: 01:35:05 Despite contracting.

Rich Helman: 01:35:06 --everything that we had to do despite contracting, everybody was really dedicated to doing the best we could do, trying to produce quality stuff and people here were great. So part of that greatness was we started--oh, maybe before you guys were here, might have been the first Christmas one I went to.

Jack Spinnler: 01:35:25 My first one with you was at Joan Seabright's house. The first time I remember you doing the Christmas quiz. It might've been a year before that, but that was 1987.

Rich Helman: 01:35:33 Well, there was one that was at a restaurant in Charles Town, the Iron Grill or something. And David Guiney was there with his fiancé. It was before he married--

Jack Spinnler: 01:35:43 Nancy.

Rich Helman: 01:35:44 --Nancy.

Jack Spinnler: 01:35:44 Yeah.

Rich Helman: 01:35:45 And I think that might've been a very simple--I thought, okay, Christmas party and I don't know where I had done it.

I think maybe my dad, might have done Christmas quizzes at one point in his life or something like that. Well, let me put this little trivia quiz together, and pass it around and see if anybody enjoys it. It was just a basic, it might've even been 10 questions of who starred in It's a Wonderful Life. And who co-starred with Bing Crosby in White Christmas that kind of stuff.

Winnie Frost: 01:36:08 What are the names of the chipmunks?

Rich Helman: 01:36:08 No that came later.

Winnie Frost: 01:36:09 Oh is it?

Rich Helman: 01:36:10 Later. Yeah. I didn't have that on then.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:36:12 And then it never went away.

Winnie Frost: 01:36:12 It never went away.

Rich Helman: 01:36:14 It never went away. I'll clue you guys in, because you're here, it's not going to go away this year either. Everybody will be disappointed.

Winnie Frost: 01:36:21 Yeah, they would.

Rich Helman: 01:36:22 And so I just started doing this quiz and it started out as a pretty simple trivia, Christmas trivia. And then time got on and I guess I got a little feisty or tired of doing it. So I started putting in little inside jokes, and inside stories and screwball answers. And then Jack, we realized that every year, Jack is going to violate a traffic law somewhere, I don't know, traffic lights are red and green. So there was a Christmas connection in there somehow. So now we have an annual traffic, Jack Spinnler traffic violation question.

Jack Spinnler: 01:36:52 And the first time that happened was because Rich loaned me his vehicle after I dropped he and Deborah at Dulles airport. He said, "Use my car for the next week. You just make sure you're okay with that." Yes. So I ended up that I went through only Maryland through one of those traffic light camera things.

Winnie Frost: 01:37:06 I know the area.

- Jack Spinnler: 01:37:08 And I didn't know that he got a ticket and it ended up he did. He wrote that question up and I got the answer wrong.
- Rich Helman: 01:37:14 I said, who drove whose car and they got a ticket as a result? He didn't- Well I got this ticket in the mail. And of course these tickets come weeks after the violation and I go, there's a photograph of the rear of my car going through this traffic light or speeding or something. I forget now what it was. And I thought where on earth? And so I had to backtrack and think that's when Jack had my car.
- Winnie Frost: 01:37:40 Oh the day--
- Rich Helman: 01:37:40 So anyway--yeah, I figured out that was when Jack had my car.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 01:37:42 You were out of town, Jack was driving your car.
- Rich Helman: 01:37:44 Yeah. So anyway, that started that. So now this quiz, I keep trying to make them so goofy people won't want to do them anymore so I can get out of this.
- Winnie Frost: 01:37:52 Oh, they're even more fun. I mean, they keep getting better and better.
- Rich Helman: 01:37:56 Yes they are. So anyway, it's fun. It's just a quiz I put together every year.
- Winnie Frost: 01:37:59 Well, people come--my husband likes to come just for those quizzes.
- Rich Helman: 01:38:03 We used to do the Christmas party before Christmas and then two things happened. One people started retiring and everybody kind of concluded, everybody's so busy before Christmas, "Let's wait," After kind of be the final thing in the holiday season or something. So now we do them sometime in January. And now the retirees definitely outnumber the employees, but people still seem to enjoy them and show up.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:38:26 It's a nice situation where everybody likes each other, even though we've got all kinds of weird differences. It really is for like three or four hours, it's peace on earth.
- Winnie Frost: 01:38:39 Yeah. That's a lovely thing to say.

Rich Helman: 01:38:42 A couple of names I want to throw in. I want to thank Ed Zahniser because through the years I could count on him really to review my text and I forget what happened, but at one point the divisions became less divisionalized if you recall, people were going to do things inter-divisionally and we started getting--Megan was doing a map for me, which I don't think ever did get done but anyway, we could use other folks. So Ed would review some of my texts and he definitely was- I would think he was the best in terms of grammar, use of English--

Winnie Frost: 01:39:14 And also all the military. Way to identify a general, captain, colonel.

Rich Helman: 01:39:21 Yeah.

Winnie Frost: 01:39:21 How to list them.

Rich Helman: 01:39:23 We developed a standard lexicon or whatever you want to call it.

Winnie Frost: 01:39:26 Yeah, that--

Rich Helman: 01:39:27 The other one I want to say it's Frank Sierra. Frank Sierra was a designer here and he was, I'd call him a good friend and he was a character, military background. And as a designer, as a planner, this was back before we got into the Vignelli thing and everybody was still doing their own designs.

Winnie Frost: 01:39:42 Stylized waysides.

Rich Helman: 01:39:43 And so you'd put a package together and give it to Frank and say, "Well, what do you think of this?" "If that's what you want, that's what I'll do. Here it is." And then he'd go back to sleep. He was "that's what you want? That's what I'll give you." Those other designers were "Whoa. No, I don't think so. I think maybe we ought to blow this fish up and extend it across the whole panel." You want it? You got it. Get out here. But he'd get it done. He'd get it done.

Winnie Frost: 01:40:08 And also for many years for our Christmas parties, we would do that other thing where you bring, we pick something--

Jack Spinnler: 01:40:14 Oh yeah.

Winnie Frost: 01:40:15 What was it?

Jack Spinnler: 01:40:15 It'd be--

Winnie Frost: 01:40:16 Pick an item that represents you or something.

Rich Helman: 01:40:18 We did shoes.

Jack Spinnler: 01:40:20 Photos. Baby photos, high school graduation photos.

Rich Helman: 01:40:23 We did a magazine that you subscribed to or something--

Winnie Frost: 01:40:25 Yeah, magazine, chairs.

Rich Helman: 01:40:26 Chairs, brought a chair.

Winnie Frost: 01:40:27 Chairs at Phil's house. Oh, that was really funny.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:40:31 And you had to guess who brought what?

Rich Helman: 01:40:32 Who brought it.

Winnie Frost: 01:40:33 What chair. Yeah.

Jack Spinnler: 01:40:35 One of the reasons that worked was that when we still worked in that same central area, we would display them there for days or sometimes a week or more ahead of time sometimes when you think--

Winnie Frost: 01:40:42 And other people wanted to do it. Every other--

Rich Helman: 01:40:42 Yeah. People would come by and they love it.

Winnie Frost: 01:40:47 --especially in Publications they come by and they'd want to try to guess.

Jack Spinnler: 01:40:49 Yeah.

Winnie Frost: 01:40:49 And of course Terry, you and I were sitting right outside the door of where all these things were lined up with our ears--

Rich Helman: 01:40:57 Yeah, we used to demo--

Winnie Frost: 01:40:57 --on the pulse of what people were thinking.

Rich Helman: 01:40:59 It was pretty good.

Winnie Frost: 01:41:02 You know to cheat.

Rich Helman: 01:41:03 So we were a little better at those than other people were because of that.

Winnie Frost: 01:41:06 Terry was really good at it. For some reasons they must've been particularly loud over by his office, maybe gathering or something because there was an open space because he seemed to get that all right quite often. I liked that game too. I thought that was a lot of fun.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:41:25 Well, and part of the reason we chose to do the three. I mean, I think that was your idea to do the three.

Winnie Frost: 01:41:31 Well, I wanted to enjoy these guys and you--

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:41:34 But the camaraderie of the wayside group has remained despite the fact that there hasn't been a wayside group for many years now.

Winnie Frost: 01:41:41 Right. Oh yeah.

Rich Helman: 01:41:42 Yeah.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:41:43 [Crosstalk] no office. The group still remains--

Winnie Frost: 01:41:44 Oh my goodness. Absolutely--

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:41:46 --close.

Winnie Frost: 01:41:47 Since what? The Aiming for Excellence thing.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:41:50 You brought up the word. I think that was--

Winnie Frost: 01:41:51 2004, 3.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:41:55 Yeah. It's early 2000s.

Winnie Frost: 01:41:57 Isn't that amazing?

Jack Spinnler: 01:41:58 Paul Kohler told me, Paul and I do some things together through the year. He said that Chad, for the P whackers apparently, they get together separately now, and Chad puts together some sort of a contest using images, using digital

images. I forget how--we'll have to ask Paul about that because--

- Winnie Frost: 01:42:17 Chad would be there too.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:42:19 Well, yeah, also on the bottom of my email I said, Chad would you and, I forget, Chad would be willing to bring along, the images of, the photos from years past?
- Winnie Frost: 01:42:31 Oh, you mean from Christmas party?
- Jack Spinnler: 01:42:33 From the Christmas party. And Elizabeth, I asked Elizabeth. And so I think there's some opportunity there maybe to do something with Chad's photos because he's a great photographer.
- Winnie Frost: 01:42:41 He is. And he's always so kind to get those pictures up and out to everybody like within a day or two.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:42:48 Yeah.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 01:42:49 Yeah.
- Winnie Frost: 01:42:49 So it's very thoughtful. Well, I do love your picture there of you Jack and various locations in the same photograph.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:42:57 Do you know the story behind this?
- Winnie Frost: 01:42:58 Does Betsy know that?
- Betsy Ehrlich: 01:42:59 No.
- Jack Spinnler: 01:43:00 Bruce Kaiser put this together before Photoshop obviously. He thought it was fun. Bruce knew that I was driving Phil Myerly crazy whatever my habits were. And so wouldn't it be funny, Bruce thought, if there were multiple Jack Spinnlers. So he'd make extra images of me and took a staff photo and then put me here and there, and what do you call it? Phil's nightmare. Was it-
- Winnie Frost: 01:43:23 Yeah, yeah. Phil's nightmare.
- Betsy Ehrlich: 01:43:26 [Crosstalk] thing normal but Jack. So there's one, two, three, four, five versions--
- Rich Helman: 01:43:35 That was a nightmare.

Winnie Frost: 01:43:36 I thought that was really, that Bruce he's got a really interesting brain. Very creative and curious.

Rich Helman: 01:43:45 What are we forgetting?

Jack Spinnler: 01:43:49 Well, only lunch time walks.

Winnie Frost: 01:43:52 Oh yeah.

Jack Spinnler: 01:43:53 You did mention that briefly, that probably the last 10 years that we worked together--

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:43:58 Probably, yeah.

Jack Spinnler: 01:43:59 What pretty much every lunchtime, sometimes I'd dropped off to play volleyball. Otherwise I was down there. And it wasn't an official walk and so we went down the route to lower town went across the bridge and touch the chain link on the other side.

Winnie Frost: 01:44:13 Oh, that's right Jack.

Jack Spinnler: 01:44:14 Had to touch the chain.

Winnie Frost: 01:44:15 Yeah. Yeah. And there was between three and five of us all the time.

Jack Spinnler: 01:44:19 Yeah.

Winnie Frost: 01:44:19 Even when there's sweltering heat.

Jack Spinnler: 01:44:23 Whatever was said in the walk stayed on the walk.

Rich Helman: 01:44:24 Perspiration coming back.

Winnie Frost: 01:44:27 Yeah, that was our motto. Whatever is said on the walk stayed on the walk. And it was good. It was great camaraderie, but it was good therapy for us.

Rich Helman: 01:44:35 It was, we did some serious venting and some of on some of those--

Winnie Frost: 01:44:38 We did a lot of serious venting. It seemed to be getting more intense as the years passed.

Jack Spinnler: 01:44:45 Yeah.

Winnie Frost: 01:44:45 I thought that was really very, very helpful.

Rich Helman: 01:44:48 Yeah.

Jack Spinnler: 01:44:49 We still do the Shep trek, which started in 1988 because during that first year I was working, I started walking, not with these folks but with Tracy and Jane and John Demer. The four of us were our walk group. There were other walker groups that went different places too. But we went almost always up to Bolivar past the Anvil up to Bolivar Heights and looped around and somewhere about late summer--

Winnie Frost: 01:45:13 You don't want to do that in Big Hill, huh?

Jack Spinnler: 01:45:16 Well we did. We actually went behind the Anvil and then went up on that road [crosstalk]--

Winnie Frost: 01:45:20 Oh that higher road.

Jack Spinnler: 01:45:21 --over there and then back down.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:45:23 The Ridge Road or something.

Jack Spinnler: 01:45:23 And also took about 30, 35 minutes if we were really quick about it. But Jane or Tracy said at one point, wouldn't it be cool to go on a really long walk sometime? Maybe some Friday. We should just try to find, if we can walk from here to Shepherdstown. So we set a date like the second Friday in October. Maybe it was the third Friday in October and the four of us did it then. Then I can't remember if we invited other people. But that's where it started, where each year I would put that in an email out and that went for 20 years and even after I retired now, we've not done it every year, but we've done it many years.

Winnie Frost: 01:45:55 You did it this year?

Jack Spinnler: 01:45:55 Yeah.

Rich Helman: 01:45:57 What was the biggest crowd, you remember probably?

Jack Spinnler: 01:45:59 I think on that 20th anniversary, I think we had about 20 people. The year the special shirts were made--

Rich Helman: 01:46:04 Yeah one year Angie designed the Shep trek--

Jack Spinnler: 01:46:08 Shirt.

Rich Helman: 01:46:08 --shirt.

Jack Spinnler: 01:46:08 Which you proofread after the fact we found some errors.

Rich Helman: 01:46:11 I did. I don't think she was pleased though. [Crosstalk] that.

Winnie Frost: 01:46:16 Oh, what was the year?

Rich Helman: 01:46:17 No, I don't know.

Jack Spinnler: 01:46:18 It was like--

Rich Helman: 01:46:19 I still have a shirt somewhere.

Jack Spinnler: 01:46:19 Yeah. It's around the edge and other dates got funny.

Rich Helman: 01:46:23 Yeah. Yeah.

Winnie Frost: 01:46:24 I remember Jack did some t-shirt--no, some shirts and it said Harpers Ferry Center.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:46:32 Yes.

Rich Helman: 01:46:33 And there was Bruce did "The you are here." T-shirts. You remember those?

Winnie Frost: 01:46:34 Oh yeah, the you are here t-shirts.

Rich Helman: 01:46:35 I wish I still have one of those, I don't have one of those.

Winnie Frost: 01:46:37 Yeah, I don't have one either. That would be really cute. Well, 20 years. When was that? When was 20 years?

Jack Spinnler: 01:46:44 In 2008 the year retired, oh no, 2007 was the 20th year. So the October before I retired.

Winnie Frost: 01:46:48 Oh, oh. Okay.

Jack Spinnler: 01:46:50 And Melinda Schmidt hosted a gathering at her place afterwards--

Winnie Frost: 01:46:55 Oh. I went on that one. We went over to her lovely home.

Rich Helman: 01:46:58 I would have been retired now.

Winnie Frost: 01:47:00 Well, I don't--did you come?

Rich Helman: 01:47:01 I think I did. I went to Melinda Schmidt's at least at one time. Did she only do it once or?

Jack Spinnler: 01:47:05 No, no. She--

Rich Helman: 01:47:06 More than one.

Jack Spinnler: 01:47:06 Well, no I think for her actually--

Rich Helman: 01:47:08 I think I was there though.

Jack Spinnler: 01:47:09 Yeah, she hosted it a couple of times. I saw Melinda on East Patrick Street about five days ago. I turned the corner and she's there. "Oh, hi Jack." "Oh hi Melinda." And "This is my sister. Oh. And this is my son and daughter", and I hadn't seen the son and daughter. I knew that that boy was going to grow up to be a big boy between, Tim was her husband, right?

Winnie Frost: 01:47:32 Jim.

Jack Spinnler: 01:47:33 Jim, I'm sorry, Jim.

Winnie Frost: 01:47:36 Tim is her son.

Jack Spinnler: 01:47:37 Tim's the son. And Tim was like 6'7 or 6'8.

Winnie Frost: 01:47:40 Oh, my stars.

Rich Helman: 01:47:42 Is he a big 6'7? Or tall?

Jack Spinnler: 01:47:43 Well, yeah. No he's not a bean pole, filled out and the daughter is somewhat tall too. I think about 5'10, 5'11, maybe six foot. It didn't occur to me at first. I'm looking at these two full adults now who I knew when they were this big.

Winnie Frost: 01:48:01 Wow. That's what happens when--

Rich Helman: 01:48:03 It's funny when now when I see a Harpers Ferry Center person out of context, like other day I was in Kohl's and I saw someone like, I know her. It was Cindy Darr and she--

Winnie Frost: 01:48:11 Oh my goodness.

Rich Helman: 01:48:12 --was shopping. Yeah, and I hadn't seen her in a couple of years. It was good to see her. She's doing fine.

Winnie Frost: 01:48:17 Is she working with a store or something? Works in the [crosstalk]--

Rich Helman: 01:48:22 She did tell me she was doing something I can't remember what it was. Oh, a winery. She's in a winery. She's doing wine tours.

Winnie Frost: 01:48:27 Oh, wine tours?

Rich Helman: 01:48:27 Some place down in Northern Virginia.

Winnie Frost: 01:48:30 Huh.

Rich Helman: 01:48:31 Yeah.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:48:31 It's like retirement advice for former wayside--

Rich Helman: 01:48:34 Yeah.

Jack Spinnler: 01:48:37 The opportunities are there. I remember when David Guiney before he retired, we'd go to lunch and he's, Jack, come to lunch with me. I want to talk to you about what you do in your retirement. Do you think that I can do this or that? David, the opportunities will fall in your lap no matter what you do, and we tried to get him to come golfing with us, like once a month. He doesn't have time to come golfing with us the past year.

Winnie Frost: 01:48:57 He's that busy?

Rich Helman: 01:48:58 But he's still working.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:48:59 He's still doing waysides. Yeah. Are any of you doing any waysides? Well, you came back as a retired annuitant.

Rich Helman: 01:49:08 Yeah. I did for a while. I did a few interesting projects with Ruth Bielobocky. She subcontracted to me some different things, but it's been about maybe two years since I did any of that. I hope she doesn't call anymore.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:49:21 You want to be done?

Rich Helman: 01:49:21 Yeah.

Jack Spinnler: 01:49:22 Same with me. It's been about four or five years for me.

Rich Helman: 01:49:25 Yeah.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:49:28 Well if there's--

Jack Spinnler: 01:49:29 Well, I'll just finish it up before you press the button with a quote that I found was from Dr. Seuss. "Don't be sad that it's over, be happy that it happened."

Winnie Frost: 01:49:39 Yeah.

Jack Spinnler: 01:49:39 And we had our own years together, it was such a great time and yes, we have great camaraderie. We still get together at least once a year. So, it's kind of, it's a little sad that it's over, but I'm so happy it happened and it's still continuing. At least--

Rich Helman: 01:49:53 I'll give you a quote from Yogi Berra, "It ain't over till it's over."

Winnie Frost: 01:49:57 Here we go.

Rich Helman: 01:49:57 We go.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:49:57 You don't get closing quote Winnie?

Winnie Frost: 01:50:03 Oh, I have a closing quote from Abraham Lincoln. Forget this entire conversation--this isn't Abraham Lincoln yet but--forget this entire conversation because "no man has a good enough memory to be a successful liar."

Rich Helman: 01:50:17 There you go.

Jack Spinnler: 01:50:18 Interesting.

Winnie Frost: 01:50:19 Have you ever heard that?

Jack Spinnler: 01:50:20 No. Mm-mm (negative).

Rich Helman: 01:50:20 No.

Winnie Frost: 01:50:20 I know.

Rich Helman: 01:50:21 No, I might have, but I don't have a good enough memory to remember that I heard it.

Betsy Ehrlich: 01:50:26 [Inaudible].
Rich Helman: 01:50:26 There you go.
Jack Spinnler: 01:50:29 Thanks Betsy.
Rich Helman: 01:50:30 Yeah thank you Betsy.
Winnie Frost: 01:50:30 Yeah thank you for leading us. We didn't have to--

END OF RECORDING