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Herbert Evison's National Park Service Oral History Project, 1952-1999



Thomas J. Allen
December 11, 1962

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

Reel #65

START OF TAPE

- Herbert Evison: This is Herbert Evison, and I am at Santa Fe, New Mexico, in the Southwest Regional Office on the morning of December 11, 1962. And with me is Thomas J. Allen, generally referred to just as Tom Allen, Regional Director of the Southwest Region.
- Herbert Evison: Tom, I would like to start this little reminiscence off this morning with a quick run-down of your Park Service career. You might start off by telling how you happened to start to work for the Park Service.
- Thomas Allen: Well, I expect I started to work for the Park Service because I needed a job. It happened to be a summer job; I was going to college, University of Washington; it was immediately after the World War I. I had been learning the lumber business, and I needed a seasonal job. The Forestry School knew I needed a seasonal job. I had also registered with the registrar of the college as needing a job for the summer. The superintendent of Mt. Rainier, Roger W. Toll, came to the college looking for men. The registrar's office called me one evening after my last afternoon class, and I was so anxious to get work – which was scarce in those days – that I actually ran across the campus to meet my appointment with Mr. Toll in the registrar's office.
- Thomas Allen: On my way I passed one man, Tommy Hermans, walking leisurely across the campus, hollered hello to him and he hollered back hello to me. I got the last job Mr. Toll had available, and when I came out of the room Tommy Hermans was sitting waiting to be the next man interviewed. So that's the way I got in the Park Service.
- Herbert Evison: Now what summer was this?
- Thomas Allen: That was the summer of 1920. I worked in Mt. Rainier that summer under Roger Toll, and the next season I also went up for the summer under Superintendent Peters, who succeeded Mr. Toll. Mr. Toll at that time had left the Service and did other private work in Denver, Colorado.
- Thomas Allen: Later, when I was finishing school, I got a letter from Mr. Toll saying that he was back in the Park Service as superintendent of Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado and he asked if I would come down there and be his chief ranger, which I did, although at that time after the usual correspondence between Horace Albright and Mr. Toll and Mr. Cammerer they decided I could be acting chief ranger but I couldn't immediately jump into the job as chief ranger.

- Herbert Evison: Well, now, had you had any previous regular employment with the Park Service before you got this invitation?
- Thomas Allen: I had not, and at the same time that Mr. Toll offered me the job as his chief ranger Mr. Peters asked me not to accept that until I had had lunch with him because he wanted me to come and be an assistant chief ranger on the White River side of Mt. Rainier for him. He asked me to have lunch with him in the Washington Hotel one day before I made up my mind. I showed up for the lunch but Mr. Peters never did.
- Herbert Evison: Maybe someone had just offered him that Grays Harbor job at that time.
- Thomas Allen: It could have been, it could have been. That Grays Harbor job came up about the time I went to Colorado in March of that following year.
- Herbert Evison: Did you go to Colorado – was it in 1924 when you went there?
- Thomas Allen: It was 1922, March 1922, the 16th of March that I reported to Rocky Mountain National Park to work under Roger Toll as chief ranger.
- Herbert Evison: How in heck a guy who still looks as much like a kid as you do can look back on forty years-plus with the National Park Service is something I'd like to understand.
- Thomas Allen: Well, that's the pleasant living in national park work.
- Herbert Evison: Yes. Well, you went to Rocky Mountain then in 1922 on a permanent appointment.
- Thomas Allen: That's right. I have my original appointment papers; in fact I have my original seasonal appointment papers. My first job at Mt. Rainier was \$90 a month.
- Herbert Evison: And glad to get it.
- Thomas Allen: Glad to get it. My first permanent job was only \$110, I believe.
- Herbert Evison: Well, let's go on from Rocky Mountain. You did go there first as acting chief ranger.
- Thomas Allen: That's right. And within a month or two I was actually and formally full chief ranger.
- Herbert Evison: And how long were you there and where next?
- Thomas Allen: I was in Rocky Mountain actually until '28. I went from chief ranger to assistant superintendent, meanwhile doing everything, because the park organization was very small in those days. Roger Toll had to set up a

complete organization and we gradually had a few rangers and a maintenance crew employed, and I was there with Roger doing everything there was to do, regardless. And I eventually, after six years, was offered the job as superintendent of Hawaii National Park by Steve Mather, who was still first director of the Park Service, still active at that time.

Herbert Evison: That was 1928.

Thomas Allen: That was 1928, in November 1928. It was interesting, my offer of that job. There had been some serious trouble at Hawaii, so serious that it involved a lot of things beyond park affairs. It was rather a mystifying situation, but it was so bad that Roger Toll was in Washington at the time and in discussing who should be the next superintendent there Mr. Mather wanted whoever got the offer to know about the trouble he was facing, so Roger Toll sent me an airmail letter, handwritten, telling me all of these troubles and saying that Mr. Mather was going to write me and offer me the job but he wanted me to know these things so I could consider before he made the offer.

Thomas Allen: That came by airmail, which in those days was a rare occurrence, to get an airmail letter; and within two days after I had received that letter and studied it, I had my offer from Steve Mather to accept the superintendency at Hawaii. And the troubles didn't bother me at all; I was young and full of vim and vigor and I just took it in my stride and said "Of course I'll take the offer," and I did. And the troubles were there all right when I arrived, but that's another story.

Herbert Evison: Yes. I want to get some of it after we get this round-up. How long were you in Hawaii?

Thomas Allen: I was there until January '31. After I had cleared up the troubles – I loved Hawaii and loved the work there, but all the troubles had spoiled it in a way for me for a while, so I immediately wrote Horace Albright, who was then Director, Stephen Mather having died, and said I was ready to leave Hawaii; and in the very next mail he asked me if I would like to go to Zion because Scoyen was being transferred from Zion to Glacier. It just happened that my letter hit him in Yosemite while he was making that consideration, and I got a break and I got my offer of transfer back in return mail. And I was in Zion shortly after that, by March of that year, of '31.

Herbert Evison: All right. You were at Zion until?

Thomas Allen: I only spent a year in Zion. At the end of that year Horace Albright came out – toward the end of 1931 – he came out to visit Zion, Bryce, and the North Rim of Grand Canyon with a committee of Congressmen, the sub-committee on appropriations. Horace jumped off the train at Cedar City

where I was meeting them with cars and said, "Good morning, Tom. I'd like you to go to Hot Springs, Arkansas. I want your decision when I leave here four days from now. Meet Congressman So-and-so." That was quite a shock, because at that time there never had been a national park superintendent at Hot Springs; it had been under the National Park Service for some years but we had used officers from the U.S. Public Health Service to represent us there and to get the place on a good medical basis and good bath examination basis, and those men had made the break between political superintendents and ourselves. And so Horace intended for me to be the first National Park Service superintendent succeeding that category of people. And to me it was quite a shock. I don't believe anybody in the Park Service had a very big idea of Hot Springs in those days, and I knew no one that would be any more enthusiastic about being superintendent there than I was, and I was not at all enthusiastic. So I had a very mixed-up mental four days while we chased around the three areas in Utah and northern Arizona with this group of congressmen.

Thomas Allen: But at the end of that period Horace sat Tillotson, who was then superintendent of Grand Canyon, and Patraw, who was assistant superintendent of Grand Canyon, down in the corner of the lobby at the North Rim Lodge and asked me if I had made up my mind. Well, I really hadn't but I knew I had to right then, because if I went Patraw was to get a promotion to be superintendent of Zion, his first superintendency, and Tillie would have to find a new assistant superintendent, and I would have to make my own way in a strange field. So I, after some talk among us, asked Horace if he would promise me, should I ever get so that I could not live away from mountains, he would get me back to them; and Horace made that promise and I accepted the job at Hot Springs.

Herbert Evison: And you were there how long?

Thomas Allen: I was there for four years, and it turned out to be a wonderful four years. It was different, altogether different than working in any other park that I had known or known of, but it was a wonderful experience. Horace's purpose in sending a Park Service man there at that time was to build public relations and expound on Park Service policies and procedures and use Hot Springs for that purpose as well as operating it properly. And because of that assignment I did get a very nice grade, and Horace backed me in everything: he introduced me all around the state; I made many friends; in fact, I found my present wife there. And I have had nothing but pleasure in my experiences at Hot Springs then and since.

Thomas Allen: And from Hot Springs I went to Rocky Mountain National Park as superintendent this time. I left Hot Springs just two weeks before the President of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt, was to visit there. The Director thought it would be better if I would go back at the end of that two weeks and be the one to greet the President and show him around

because my successor, Don Libby, would not have had time enough to really get acquainted good enough to show the President around. So I was away just two weeks, went back, and had the great pleasure of showing Franklin D. Roosevelt around. In fact, I have on my office wall right today a picture of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Senator Joe Robinson, who was then leader in the Senate, and former Governor Futrell and myself in the car on the streets of Hot Springs, and I am introducing Don Libby to the President of the United States. It was quite a pleasure.

Herbert Evison: I'll bet it was a real kick.

Thomas Allen: I only stayed at Rocky Mountain as superintendent that one year, the year of 1936 – partly '36 and partly '37, because the Service during that year had decided to form regions, and I was one of the first persons picked to be a regional director, and I went to Omaha as the first full regional director. There had been offices there and in Richmond and in San Francisco, and as regional offices over the depression work in State park activities and recreational demonstration areas and similar, but the Service itself and the Service areas had never worked under a regionalized system. And in August 1937 those offices were set up and I took over the one in Omaha, which was then called Region II and has been called Region II until very recently when it became the Midwest Region.

Thomas Allen: And after four years there Newton Drury at that time was director and he transferred me to take charge of the eastern region which then covered the complete East and the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico and was called Region I, and I succeeded Cammerer there as regional director of Region I, the eastern United States, that is now divided into the Southeast Region and Northeast Region.

Thomas Allen: Cammerer had taken that job himself after he became ill and quite disabled from a heart condition, as Director, and he had resigned as Director and taken over as regional director of Region I, following Tillotson who had been there. And when Cam died I was his successor.

Herbert Evison: I think it was some little time after that that you were appointed there, because Fred Johnston acted for quite a while, and of course he really acted much of the time that Cam was Regional Director, but I think he was on there for a while after.

Thomas Allen: Oh, yes. Fred did a fine job, because Cam wasn't able to do a full day's work a good part of the time, and Fred does deserve credit for doing a fine job there as acting Regional Director for many months.

Herbert Evison: Then as I remember it your service there was somewhat interrupted.

Thomas Allen: Yes, my service there was interrupted not too long after I got there; in fact, the fall of the next year, the year 1942. I got there in August of 1941, and

it was in 1942 that – the fall of '41 of course was Pearl Harbor and the World War II started, and I left Richmond in September of that year and went off to war with the Air Corps, I was gone until late in 1944. When I came home the war wasn't ended but I had seen no future for myself or for the United States in my staying with the Air Corps any longer, and when an opportunity came I came back to the Park Service and home.

Thomas Allen: I stayed in Richmond as Regional Director of that eastern territory until late 1951 when I went to Washington, D.C., as Assistant Director. Conrad L. Wirth had known a month or two before that that he was going to be the next Director of the National Park Service, succeeding Arthur E. Demaray who was retiring as Director. And one day as I walked past his office on a trip to Washington he motioned me in and said when he became Director he would like me to come to Washington to as his Assistant Director. Naturally, as with many field people, I said, "Well, Connie, you know what I think of coming to Washington." And he says, "Yes, I do know, but I still want you to come and be Assistant Director when I become Director."

Thomas Allen: So after discussion over a week or two I did agree to go to Washington, and I was very happy and proud to do so.

Thomas Allen: I stayed in Washington until May 1956 as Assistant Director to Mr. Wirth, and at that month and that year I decided that, happy as I was working with Mr. Wirth, life in Washington was not too good for me, and I seized the opportunity to transfer to Sequoia and Kings as superintendent in the same grade and with many many more privileges.

Herbert Evison: That of course was at the time Scoyen left the superintendency there to become Associate Director.

Thomas Allen: That's right. In Sequoia and Kings I likewise had just as happy a life as I had in all my other assignments, and had no expectation of leaving there for any other point in the Park Service, until one day during 1959 when the Director was visiting Yosemite and I had been up talking business with him, he advised me that Hugh Miller was retiring from Region III in Santa Fe and asked would I like to take that job. It was a surprise, but after consulting with the chairman of my board of directors at home, Kim Allen, we both decided we had not seen as much of the Southwest as we would like to see, and for no reason at all we happily accepted another transfer. And here we are.

Herbert Evison: Which brings you up to date.

Herbert Evison: Well, of course one of the interesting things about that is that I don't know anybody who has been regional director of three regions. Lawrence

Merriam had been of two, but you're the only one in the history of the Park Service who has been the head of three different regions.

Thomas Allen: Well, actually I can say quite truthfully that I have been the head of what now are four regions, because the former Region I is now two separate regions. And on top of that I can also say that I have worked in all of the present regions of the Park Service.

Herbert Evison: Well, I am sure that nobody can match you on either of those records, certainly as to the regional directorships.

Thomas Allen: It's nice to hear it and it's nice to realize that I have had such a broad experience. It has been pleasant; it has been worthwhile. And if I still look young and if I still act a little immature it's because of the great life in the Park Service.

Herbert Evison: Well, that's certainly a very interesting statement that should go down in history.

Herbert Evison: Well, now, Tom, of course I being who I am, should put in the record that during the year from September 1944 until September 1945 I was associate regional director in Region I when Thomas J. Allen was director.

Thomas Allen: That's right. You greeted me when I came back from the great war II.

Herbert Evison: Well, I had lots of experience in Region I as a greeter.

Herbert Evison: Tom, you really go away back when. You were in Mt. Rainier when Roger Toll was there, when Peters was there. I wonder if there are any events in your period of service there at Rainier that still seem a little out of the ordinary or particularly interesting to you.

Thomas Allen: Well, my first meeting with Steve Mather was while I was a seasonal ranger at Rainier. I was stationed at Narada Falls on the road between the Nisqually Glacier and Paradise Valley. At that time the road was a one-way road; cars left the top terminus and the bottom terminus on the hour, then they met at Narada Falls in the center of the road on the half hour. My job, besides helping the tourists and the visitors in various ways, was to hold the cars that came first until the other string came the other direction, and then let them pass.

Thomas Allen: One day a group of Cadillacs which the concessioner at that time used for special parties, pulled up right in front of my station. I was standing on the porch and a man jumped out of the first car, stuck his hand out, and said, "I'm Steve Mather." Well, I didn't have the slightest idea, being a nice fresh green summer ranger, who Steve Mather was. He happened to be the Director of the National Park Service, but in my ignorance and in my vigor at that time I stuck my hand out and said, "Well, I'm Tom Allen."

And that's how I originally met Steve Mather. It was quite an experience and I've never forgotten it.

Herbert Evison: Well, that seems to have been the proper thing to say. Did you have other contacts with him from time to time?

Thomas Allen: Not at Rainier, no. He was there just that one trip during my work there. But my contacts with Steve came later, in Rocky Mountain National Park which he visited two or three times while I was working there. And he and Roger Toll of course were great friends, and Steve came out once and he brought his daughter with him at that time. I remember I had the pleasant job during that trip of arranging a horseback trip and a climb to the top of Longs Peak for the whole party. At the same time there was going on in Estes Park at the Craggs Hotel a meeting of the legal profession – a ladies' branch of the legal profession of the United States; I have forgotten the name of the association. But Mabel Willebrandt then was the attorney general of the United States and she was leading member of that group, and she was invited on this party up Longs Peak with Steve Mather and the rest of us. And that was quite a day for a young fellow.

Herbert Evison: You went up with the party?

Thomas Allen: I organized the party and went along with the group. Of course once the party started I wasn't in charge of anything, I was merely along. Roger Toll and Steve Mathers operated things from then on.

Herbert Evison: Well, now, I am interested in that from this viewpoint: Mather the last years of his life, the last several years of his life, had a heart condition, and Longs Peak is over 14,000 feet high, and it's a little surprising to learn that at that time he went to any such altitudes; although I was with him in 1928 when he was up at an altitude of over 10,000 feet at Cedar Breaks.

Thomas Allen: Well, we rode the horses to a little over 13,000, the Boulder Field, and then hiked the rest of the way.

Herbert Evison: And of course he loved it.

Thomas Allen: Yes, he did; he loved all his trips. I was on other trips with him to Fern Lake and Bear Lake, shorter trips and not high trips. Of course everything in Rocky Mountain high anyway, and I don't remember any indication of Mr. Mather's heart condition then, but it may have been so, because I wasn't as close to him then as I got afterwards.

Herbert Evison: Well, now, this would have been about when? This was when you were assistant superintendent or chief ranger?

Thomas Allen: It could have been either one. To tell you the truth I have no notes on it and I don't remember just which year it was, that particular trip. Later,

when I was being transferred to Hawaii, Horace Albright had me meet him in San Francisco in early November of 1928. Horace's purpose then was to introduce me around San Francisco to people from Hawaii who were there and the people who did business with Hawaii – people like the Matson Navigation Company officers and so forth. And after just a few days of that Horace got the word that Steve Mather was stricken with his final illness, and so he immediately left for the East and allowed me to make my own way to Hawaii from San Francisco. And that was Steve Mather's final illness. I never saw him or heard of him alive after that.

Herbert Evison: Yes. I was interested in that particular date, because I knew that it was while he was listening to the election returns of the election when Hoover was chosen President that he was stricken, in Chicago, I think he was.

Herbert Evison: Well, I have no doubt that you look back on those contacts with Steve Mather very grateful that you had them and that you had some personal contact with a really great man.

Thomas Allen: Yes, I really am proud of that, for I have the original letter which Steve offered – in which Steve offered – me my first job at Hawaii after Roger Toll had dropped me a note with all the warnings about what was wrong with it.

Herbert Evison: Did you save that note from Roger too?

Thomas Allen: I have Roger's note, which is handwritten, and in fact I have kept all of my original appointments and a few little mementoes like that that sort of highlight events. I didn't do it for any particular reason, but I am very happy I have it now. In fact, I wish I had saved a lot of other things.

Herbert Evison: I think all of us look back on past events in our lives and wish that we had saved more physical reminders of them.

Herbert Evison: Of course I started that out with a question about Rainier, but I want to ask you now to think back over your career – and I hope, as a matter of fact, you have been doing so since I first suggested taping you – for what you would call the highlights of it. Of course I am sure that some of the highlights were your appointments to these different jobs that you had, but I hope also you recollect some other events that you consider highlights.

Thomas Allen: Oh, it's hard to say what were the real highlights. Of course my appointments and my promotions were highlights, as they are with everyone. Becoming one of the first regional directors of the Service was a real highlight. I expect if you study the records you'll probably find I am the only original regional director still left.

END OF SIDE 1

- Herbert Evison: You just mentioned while I was changing the tapes, Tom, that you were the last superintendent that Stephen T. Mather appointed, and I think that's certainly something that has a place in this record, too.
- Herbert Evison: Tom, you became a regional director in 1937 and here at almost the end of 1962 you are again a regional director, in a different region. I know that there are vast differences between being a regional director in 1937 and being one in 1962, with respect to the kind of staffs that you had, the degree of authority that you had, the kind of tasks that were expected of the regional offices and the regional directors. I wonder if you wouldn't point up some of those difference over the past twenty-five years.
- Thomas Allen: Well, it's hard to put it into a brief account, but certainly the basic reason for the Service regionalizing at all was because things were so centralized in those days and becoming so widespread in activity that something had to be done. Mail on the projects was backing up because Washington only had so many hours in the day and so many days in the week and could not keep up, and the regions were designed to spread this work and spread the load, which they did right from the start.
- Thomas Allen: But the early crew for the most part in the regional offices were men who had come in as part of the depression activities, men who were finely trained and had good jobs, had good training, but who found no other work expect with the government in those bad years. So we had good men in their activities and in their professions, but they were not too familiar with the National Park Service as a whole. And that was our crew.
- Thomas Allen: There were some men taken from other Park Service activities and brought into the early regional pictures – men like Red Hill. Red Hill was one of the planners in Region II at that time; his special assignment was caring for the needs of Yellowstone National Park. Howard Baker came into the region just a week or so before I did, and he had been a field landscape man and in regular National Park Service work, and also had included in his work a lot of the depression work and Howard came as head of all planning work in Region II almost at the same time that I did; he was ahead of me a week or two. In fact, we had been in Rocky Mountain together; Rocky Mountain was one of his assignments on professional work while I was there as superintendent.
- Thomas Allen: Paul Brown was the man who became my immediate associate in charge of Region II. Paul had been in charge of the State Park regional office which I took over. Paul was experienced in planning and particularly in landscaping, because he had been head of the Sate Park system in the State of Indiana under former Colonel Lieber who was there as head of their Conservation Department. Paul had good training and he was a fine assistant. Paul has just recently retired from being the head of the Municipal Park System in the city of Seattle.

Thomas Allen: But the original work grew from that beginning by gradual changes, nothing drastic at any one time, but over the years the change has been gradual. The old days in the original years of regionalization when we were trying to get authority into the field in order to carry out the work more directly and lessen the work on the Director himself in Washington particularly, are over. We now have that authority. It took a long while to get it. No Director was hesitant to give it to us, but there was the usual resistance from department heads in the Service who naturally wanted to keep things under their own control as nearly as possible.

Thomas Allen: And eventually the present system was devised where the regional directors are now the Director's immediate representatives in the field, have direct authority over field matters, and those in Washington have plenty of room for their prerogatives and for their abilities as staff people for the Director, helping him set policies and standardize procedures; and we all have gotten into that way of working and it works very smoothly and with practically no hitches nowadays. It's a great change from the early days when everybody was running in every direction and everybody was playing for position. It's no criticism of the Park Service that there was that confusion; work went on; but private, or rather individual, desires to keep control of this and that were a constant struggle among all of us.

Thomas Allen: Fortunately we had at that time, even, our present Director Connie Wirth heading the CCC work and the other emergency activities. That furnished us the big bulk, practically all of the money we had to use; and Connie being the executive he was, headed that and with his leadership the troubles were smoothed out and bit by bit our present organization came into being, and he now heads it. The experience he gained in those days had a lot to do with the efficient way in which he has organized as Director of the Service.

Herbert Evison: Of course the emergency activities passed out of existence during World War II, and I know that when you were regional director in Region I the total regional office was a pretty skimpy kind of organization. I know it was when I went there in 1943 from Chicago. As I remember it there were about 23 employees of the regional office. And one of the things of course that you have seen has been a growth in organization and a quite considerable change in type of organization, isn't that so?

Thomas Allen: Yes. The type in general is similar, but the size of course dropped drastically after CCC ended. Many fine men left to other activities. But the type of organization hasn't changed too much. The responsibilities have been assigned a little more definitely than they were in those days, and that has been the big change. And the organization is not near as large now. For instance, in Omaha in those days we had four floors in the Keyline Building; and when I went to Richmond, Virginia, in Region I we had as much or more in the Grace Securities Building in that town. But

later when I came back from the war, and the CCC and ERA and other activities had been either reduced or entirely abolished, we had a very small organization in Richmond. In fact, we were so small we could move into the former Shrine Auditorium which the City of Richmond had taken over, and that happened to be the only space in town available to us, because the Reynolds Metal Company had purchased for their own purposes two buildings right out from under the Park Service and we were without space. In fact, we almost left Richmond in those days and almost accepted the offer of a building available from an insurance company in Roanoke, Virginia; but the City of Richmond, seeing the situation as it was, made the City Auditorium available to us, and we were very comfortable there for quite a while.

Herbert Evison: Of course, I think that statement might produce some misunderstanding in somebody listening to this tape fifty years from now, let's say, because the auditorium, the former Shrine Auditorium there, had what you might call office spaces all around the auditorium proper.

Thomas Allen: Yes. There were club rooms for members to spend over-night in if they needed to. And they had been used as office space during the war by the military, so the change-over for that purpose had been made before we ever moved there. We didn't use the auditorium itself; it was the space surrounding the big auditorium room that we used.

Herbert Evison: Of course one thing that I remember about it was that of course the rear of an auditorium is curved, and that curvature was reflected in some of the offices that backed up against the auditorium.

Thomas Allen: That's right. There were some very nice little cubbyholes to hide things in in those corners.

Herbert Evison: That's right. Well, you and I were talking together a little bit ago about what I referred to as Bloody Thursday, and that was one of the events which preceded the first regionalization, the regionalization that took place on June 1, 1936. And nobody that I have talked to of the many that I have talked to on the tape have even mentioned that event. But as I look back on Park Service history that was the start of a sort of a turning point. I wonder if you wouldn't have any observations to make on that, Tom?

Thomas Allen: Well, that was quite a year. I remember the Director had called a superintendents' meeting – and we actually called our meetings that in those years – in Washington, D.C., and all of the principal superintendents were called in to Washington. And on the particular trip you referred to we had had tea with Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt in the White House. Mrs. Roosevelt had been entertained in the national parks and she was so appreciative she wanted to reciprocate in some little way, so she asked us

all to tea, together with whatever wives were with us in Washington. It was a very pleasant afternoon.

Thomas Allen: At the end of that week the Director had permitted Connie Wirth, who was head of the State Park and other emergency activities, to have a joint meeting between his organization, which was quite large, and the superintendents, in order to coordinate our thinking and to get together closely.

Thomas Allen: Well, of course the work that Mr. Wirth was heading in those days was the principal financing for all of our activities; our own regular Park Service appropriations were rather meager then, and naturally these fellows were spreading themselves in a great many ways, and it was becoming a major point in Park Service history. Some of the superintendents were fearful that the new group of young men were going to take over, and of course to understand that attitude you'll have to recall that a park superintendent up until that time was rather a little king in his own domain. He reported directly to Washington to the Director. There was no regional office between him and Washington. He was given complete authority in his area as far as regulations permitted in those days. He had been trained for the most part and had a career of some sort even before he came to the Park Service. They were not the young men that a lot of our superintendents are nowadays. They were men who already had accomplished things outside the Park Service before they came with us. So they had their own opinions and their own ideas.

Thomas Allen: And on this particular trip they actually sat down in a meeting in the hotel the night before to guide their presentations at the Bond Building where the meeting was to be held. We were staying at the Roger Smith Hotel; it was the Powhatan in those days. So one or two of the men wanted to make sure that the fellows expressed themselves at this little rump session in the hotel, actually found it feasible to furnish a bottle or two of whiskey to get the talk going. And it did. It was quite an interesting session.

Thomas Allen: And the next day Roger Toll had been designated by us to do the presentation for the group of park superintendents.

Herbert Evison: Now that was a presentation in opposition to regionalization, I take it.

Thomas Allen: No, it was not a presentation in opposition to regionalization, because regionalization was not the topic of the meeting. In fact, I don't remember that the meeting had a topic, except that these young men were tending to move in to national park work in a way that the superintendents were a little fearful of, that their former authorities would be taken over and they would be replaced, not as individuals, but as heads of their work. So that was what was disturbing them.

- Thomas Allen: It was a matter of growing pains. The Service was growing up and none of us apparently realized how fast the Service was going to grow from then on. Connie Wirth probably was the only one who was looking ahead that far and able to see the future as well as he did.
- Thomas Allen: The meeting was warm in spots, and there was a great deal of misunderstanding; but the meeting finally – while it has been talked over for years – the meeting was the means of straightening a lot of things out and getting everybody working together for the future which came.
- Herbert Evison: Well, now, at this meeting on what you refer to as Bloody Saturday after – which I judge took place the next day after your so-called rump session, was there not – I take it that Cammerer was present at that meeting –
- Thomas Allen: Cammerer was present, and Connie Wirth was definitely in charge of the meeting. I say Cammerer was present; I don't really remember whether he was or not, but he knew about the meeting, he had approved it, and I have just taken it for granted in my memory that he was there but I don't actually remember whether he was or not.
- Herbert Evison: I'm pretty sure that he was. But even at that meeting was there no intimation that somewhere in the offing probably was a form of regionalization?
- Thomas Allen: Oh, that had been talked about in Washington for a year or so. In fact it had been talked about away back in my early days in Hot Springs – not with the superintendents, but in Washington it had been considered and there had been rumors going around. So it probably was in a lot of minds, but I don't recall it as being the topic that was bothering anybody at that particular meeting at that particular time.
- Herbert Evison: But I judge that the superintendents, some of them, got up on their hind legs and expressed themselves pretty freely about their fears.
- Thomas Allen: Roger Toll did a nice job. Roger, you may recall, was a very kindly person, and he did it nicely and politely and gentlemanly, and he was very serious about it. He would have preferred that somebody else had been given that choice, but when it fell on his shoulders he accepted it and he did it nicely, as far as I recall.
- Herbert Evison: Since I knew Roger well, I would expect that you would be able to say that of him.
- Thomas Allen: It was an incident in our growth and a focal point in the change, because the change could not be avoided. At that time we didn't realize it, but since then we all look back on it many times and talk about it until now Bloody Saturday is just one of those amusing incidents in Park Service history.

Herbert Evison: Well, now, you made some notes down there and I don't know whether we have covered what you were reminding yourself of, but if we haven't I wish you would go ahead with whatever subject you have in your mind.

Thomas Allen: Well, they are very incomplete. But one of the privileges to me in having worked in the regional work for so long has been the opportunity to pick men who will have a great deal to do with the Park Service's future. It has been a great pleasure to spot good men and encourage their transfers here and there and their promotions here and there into better Park Service positions. Many of those men are in high positions now; many of the younger men will do the same. And that to me has been one of the advantages of regionalization and one of the privileges which I myself had out of working in regional work so long. Men like Dan Beard, Ed Hummel, Red Hill, Howard Baker; there are many many of them of course, many others, and all over the country. And that I think has been one of the nice things of the work. Of course it would have happened in one form or another whether regional offices had been set up or not, but regional offices gave it a more direct contact in my own case and made it possible for me to help steer these people into places where they received experience that was worthwhile and showed their abilities from that experience.

Herbert Evison: Tom, I would like to ask you a very direct question: Do you think that as the Service is organized now, that machinery exists – say machinery that is effective as it ought to be – for uncovering the what you might call the latent talent, the suspected talent, of Park Service people and then giving that talent a chance to be demonstrated?

Thomas Allen: Yes, I do. The organization is larger now; there are more people; but travel is easier, we get around faster and oftener than we used to; we may not stay as long at one place but we get the chance to see what people can do; and the superintendents with their new authority bring them to our mind; and the methods of choice for transfer and promotion are more formalized now in order to be sure that nobody gets missed in the consideration. And there are opportunities through the lateral transfer practices at the present time of trying out a man in responsible supervisory positions. And that shows him up right fast. When he becomes the boss, whether it's a secondary boss or a major boss, right away his abilities appear or fail to appear.

Thomas Allen: So I think, while the choices do not come as directly as they did twenty or more years ago, still the opportunities are there to be sure that nobody is passed by.

Herbert Evison: I would gather from that that you feel that in the past the machinery didn't exist as effectively as it does now, and that even pretty darned good men sometimes would just be left for years and years and years in one job.

- Thomas Allen: That is – they may not have been left in one job, but they were left in one place too long and their abilities were not always recognized; if they were recognized by one person he was not necessarily always the person in a position to do something about it.
- Herbert Evison: But you very definitely feel that that situation is greatly improved.
- Thomas Allen: That is very definitely so now. A lot of minds enter into these final choices now, because of the system of considerations of all the names available. No name is passed by.
- Herbert Evison: I know that there are many more names given initial consideration in connection with jobs now.
- Thomas Allen: The procedure requires that. It isn't a matter of choice any longer; it's a matter of required procedure now, so if one person passed them by, other people more than likely catch them, and all these opinions get together. And while it takes a little while perhaps to push somebody along, more than it did before, it nevertheless in the long run gives you broader choice; there's more jobs and more people looking for who is the best man for those better jobs.
- Herbert Evison: Now, I'd like your opinion on another question. Of course the Director had kept to himself the authority for making final choices of superintendents, but I know that the procedures permit regional directors and even – well, I would say regional directors – to make their recommendations and to back them up, and that their recommendations have a good deal of weight in Washington. Do you feel that generally speaking superintendents – the man who goes in as a superintendent – is usually sufficiently informed about the extent of his authority and about the limitations, because of course limitations do exist – limitations on his authority say with respect to personnel or with respect to finances?
- Thomas Allen: Yes. And what he doesn't know when he becomes a superintendent he knows and can be told where to find it. The series of handbooks and manuals now is so improved that everything is there, and about all that is missing is really current changes. And there's no reason why anybody with the ability to be chosen as a park superintendent cannot find what he needs in a few minutes; and if there is anything missing he merely needs to write a letter to the right place, to the regional office or to Washington, to be brought up to date on it, because the system of manuals and handbooks has improved greatly, and it's all there.
- Herbert Evison: Do you feel that the machinery exists now for spotting and getting on top of failures in functioning as promptly as they should be?
- Thomas Allen: You mean failures by individuals?

- Herbert Evison: Yes, by individuals. Let's confine the question to superintendent now. Do you feel that – let's take this region – that you and your assistant directors and the other people who are on your staff who make frequent field contacts, that things are set up in such a way that if a superintendent – well, let's just say for example that he is doing a bad job public-relations-wise with his community – that the machinery exists for spotting a situation like that reasonably promptly?
- Thomas Allen: Well, there's no particular machinery for spotting it, but those who supervise him and help him should be able to spot it, because there's quite a number of us when you put it all together between the people traveling out of Washington and those traveling out of the region. And we can correct him and do our best to train him. We do that through meetings; we do it through materials we send; we do it through conferences with him personally. And that is the machinery for doing it. A superintendent always will be on his own to a great extent, because that's the kind of a job it is. In fact, I have expressed over and over to anybody that will listen, that superintendent choices are the future of the National Park Service. They are the key to all of our activity with the public and in our areas; and if our superintendents are not chosen properly and are not trained properly, why, the future of the Park Service is going to be altered accordingly.
- Herbert Evison: Of course I think that's a very true statement. To my mind there's no question about it: he is the key man.
- Thomas Allen: That's what I meant in referring to the pleasure of picking good men previously; that most of those men were picked to go through the superintendent category and they have gone from there to still higher places. And if we pick good superintendents in the future, why, the Service will continue successful in the future. Everybody practically wants to be a superintendent. They state that on their personnel preference forms. And they all should have the chance. But everybody actually is not the proper person to be a park superintendent. Many men are fine professional men; they do excellent work; but they are not necessarily men who can control and supervise other people. And that's what we have to find out. And there have been mistakes made, but they are minor, I think, compared to the successes.
- Herbert Evison: Well, is there anything you would like to add before this tape winds up?
- Thomas Allen: There is one thing. I could not enter into any such discussion as this without bragging a little about how proud I am of the part that I had to play in the establishment of Everglades National Park. It is one of those – not necessarily little things, little perhaps as far as I was concerned, but big as far as the Park Service was concerned. The establishment of Everglades Park: I am very happy to have had a part to play in that. It was considered and decided upon and worked upon for a great number of years

before I had moved East and took a share in it, and from then on it seemed to move, not necessarily because I was there, but I just happened to get there at the right period, and it was a great pleasure to be there at the establishment of the area, and even entertain the President of the United States.

Thomas Allen: Dan Beard and I had a lot of pleasure in putting on that particular event, and Dan Beard and Ray Vinton and I collected the two-million-dollar check donated from the State of Florida for purchasing land for the park and delivered it to Washington.

Herbert Evison: I was interested in noticing when I was in your office this morning that you had on your wall a replica of that two million check, which I had in my hand too at the time that it came in.

Herbert Evison: Thank you immensely, Tom, for being willing to come away from your desk and come down here and make this recording.

Thomas Allen: Well, it was fun, Herb.

END OF TAPE