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Cecil J. Doty  
October 26, 1962

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CECIL J. DOTY

REEL II

Incorporating changes and corrections

offered by Doty, received 3/17/64

## [START OF INTERVIEW]

- Herbert Evison: This is Herbert Evison, in San Francisco on the morning of October 26, 1962, and with me in the office of the Chief of the Western Office of Design and Construction of the National Park Service is Cecil J. Doty, who is chief of the Design Section in Architecture in this western office, and who has performed a great variety of chores for the National Park Service during his career.
- Herbert Evison: Cecil, how about starting off with a quick run-down of your Park Service career?
- Cecil Doty: Well, I started in the Oklahoma City office under Herb Maier in, I think it was, March of '34. He was needing a draftsman and a delineator to do some plans on the Two Medicine Museum in Glacier, and I was recommended; and the only payroll that I think he had available was a file clerk, so I worked a few weeks as a file clerk. I did the building, which was never built, but then I soon went on as a draftsman in the Oklahoma City office; and then the first of January, '35, I was made associate engineer and called a CCC inspector. I was teamed with Harvey Cornell on the Oklahoma and Kansas parks, State parks.
- Herbert Evison: Well, now, in connection with this first office in which you worked, was that by any chance the Central Design Office for the Oklahoma State parks?
- Cecil Doty: No, that was, I believe, District VII of the old CCC, and later it became Region III of the CCC.
- Herbert Evison: And you were part of the staff of that district?
- Cecil Doty: Part of the staff, and for several months I was the staff, with the exception of Vernon Randall and Milton Swatek, a student draftsmen. We did the filing and reviewed the State park CCC drawings that were sent in. Herb Maier, I think, did all the approving of the drawings, and I believe that included North and South Dakota and Montana, all the way down to Texas and New Mexico. Then it was later divided up; we only had the southwest – I forget the number of States or the names right now, but I know we lost Montana and the Dakotas and Wyoming. We still had the Dakotas in '34, because that was my first field trip, to Custer State Park to design the – I believe they call it – Custer Museum, but then it was the Grace Coolidge Lodge area. That was in the fall of '34, my first assignment.
- Cecil Doty: It was very close to Herb Maier's old designs of Yellowstone days.
- Cecil Doty: Then in the fall of '34, the two jobs that stand out in my mind there was I did the perspectives and the hypothetical hotel, I guess you'd call it, and

some administration buildings, and maps that went into the original Big Bend Report that was presented to Congress. We also worked up Padre Island and Badlands National Monument. I still have some of the original drawings in my home for Padre Island. And Badlands National Monument.

Herbert Evison: Your mention of Padre Island certainly induces speculation as to whether some of those drawings might not actually end up as completed structures.

Cecil Doty: I think there is one, a sort of shelter and restaurant, concessions building, that could easily be revived and used right now.

Cecil Doty: After, working with the CCC camps, and State parks, when the Service was regionalized in '36, I went back to the Regional Office as, I guess you would call it, regional architect; was there until the office moved to Santa Fe in '37. I started the preliminary plans for the Regional Office building in Santa Fe; the first preliminaries were drawn in Oklahoma City. I went out there about two months early, before the Region moved, to start plans on the regional office building; and incidentally, when the office moved, they moved everybody but Doty; they left my furniture and everything in storage in Oklahoma City.

Herbert Evison: How come?

Cecil Doty: They just forgot it. So, I was in the Santa Fe office until I came to Region IV in 1940. I was in Region IV until it started to shut down in the beginning of the war, and I was sent to Lake Texoma for 2½ months working on the original report with Al Kuehl and Lonnie Fuller! Then I was at Lake Mead for 3½ months, then I was laid off.

Cecil Doty: When I was laid off, I went to work for Barrett & Hilp Construction Company on the construction of Camp Parks and Camp Shoemaker east of Oakland. Then in approximately a year I came back to the Service and went to the Chicago office on the Alcan Highway payroll, and assisted Al Kuehl again on the reports and, I believe, Steamer Bursley, also worked up on the Alcan Highway; and then in the late summer I went to Lake Texoma again and was there for one year. Then from Lake Texoma I went to Shasta Dam and was up there one year. At Lake Texoma Lonnie Fuller was superintendent and Carl Lehnert assistant superintendent; and at Shasta Dam, George Collins was superintendent and Tom Williams was assistant superintendent.

Cecil Doty: In the fall of '46 I came back to the Region IV office, and in '48 I was appointed Regional Architect at Region IV when Scofield Long resigned. Then in '51 or '52 I was made Designer and George Norgard became

Regional Architect. I was there until WODC was established, and I came up here with Mr. Hill.

Herbert Evison: Now, I am interested in your first use of that word "designer." What was the significance of that? How does that differ from being appointed an architect?

Cecil Doty: I don't know myself, except I think all offices sort of automatically fall into a pattern; somebody in the office does most of the designing; somebody produces the working drawings; somebody writes the specifications; and that's the set-up in most private offices; and that's what my title became because Mr. Vint thought I was much better at the drafting board than I was at a desk writing letters and reports.

Herbert Evison: Well, I would take it from that that you were called upon actually to originate much architectural design, isn't that right?

Cecil Doty: Well, I have the job of doing most of the origination. Now whether it is me or somebody else, someone has to start all of the design, excepting, of course, the standard house plans and other standardized plans. When a job is presented in our PCP program, it has to be summarized, analyzed, and there's where your design starts, putting that PCP request into dimensions that you build by. And sometimes it goes through quite a few studies; it is changed and altered; from that design, then, if approved, come the working drawings. And those are the contract drawings from which it is built. But whether it's me or someone else in the division, the real designing starts when the PCP gets in the program and you are ready to build; then somebody has to start putting it on paper.

Herbert Evison: Well, does this usually start, or is it presented at a fairly early stage, in a pictorial way?

Cecil Doty: Well, that is primarily what my phase of it is, is presenting the scheme, the space allotment, and the type of design and how it appears, to put in in graphic form; you can't make a model of it, that gives you third dimension, but the next best thing is to do it on paper, to draw the picture.

Herbert Evison: That was my impression of what your work over the years has been. What jobs of yours I've seen have always been very clean, very readily understandable pictorial presentations of something it was proposed to build.

Cecil Doty: I have more or less specialized in the design and especially the delineation. I have always liked to draw; I draw at home, when I am not in the office; it is my hobby as well as my profession. So that's all I know; you just start designing and there it is.

- Herbert Evison: Well, now, I am interested in how a man gets training for that sort of thing.
- Cecil Doty: Well, most of your training of course starts in your architectural schools. Now some schools are rather strong on design phase, some are stronger on the engineering phase. In most of the higher rated schools, you have two or three majors which you can take; you can major in design, which I did, or you can major in the engineering phases; for instance, structural engineering. Mr. Kucera, here in this office, is our chief construction structural engineer. We went to the same school, and we had the same profs and we had the same classes, but I didn't do very well in mathematics; he didn't do very well in the delineation and design; so he's a structural engineer and I'm a designer, with the artistic side or art major rather than mathematics. You can also major in the mechanical side of architecture.
- Cecil Doty: Then, a lot depends on your luck, what kind of an office you get into. You may be just a draftsman in a big office, or you get into a small office. The depression forced me into quite a variety of things, even cartooning and drawing ads for a publishing company, and I even taught school. Things like that have bearing on whether you continue in the design phase or whether you continue in the structural or mechanical phase of it. And I have always felt that the depression did me a favor in forcing me to do a lot of things; I know a lot of fellows who got out of school before or shortly after I did were even forced out of architecture completely; some of them had to go to work as salesmen, some of them worked in a grocery store; but I managed to stick with architecture or a little advertising company there in Oklahoma City. That's one of the reasons I put more time in on delineation and the art perspective side of it, than a lot of the others do.
- Cecil Doty: Then, in the Park Service, there has always been considerable emphasis on the site, how a building, for instance, fits into a site, how a group of buildings fits, and delineation on those in a realistic manner has been interesting to me; I have been called on to do a lot of it for the landscape departments and – well, I like to do that; I did more of it than almost any of the other architects have; closer to the landscape section, closer to the master plan section, because often I have drawn other people's schemes in planning that I had nothing to do with; I was just strictly a delineator. But I think it has helped me in understanding trees, topography, rocks, and making a building fit, that I wouldn't have had if I hadn't majored somewhat in the delineation side of it.
- Herbert Evison: Well, don't you sometimes feel that it was a piece of considerable good luck for you as well as for the National Park Service that right at the time

you came along, the Park Service was concerned with a number of projects that called for that kind of thing; such situations as that at Shasta Dam and Make Texoma?

Cecil Doty: Yes, it was. I feel in a Park Service career that I was very lucky to start under the circumstances that I did, and I feel lucky that I started with Herb Maier and started close to Tom Vint. I know there have been a lot of architects who have come in since that have never had the opportunity of really knowing those two.

Herbert Evison: You feel that was profitable to you?

Cecil Doty: Definitely so. I feel that – well, that Mr. Vint is still the number one man. I know he has helped me, and one of the things I remember is a little lecture; he got a little sore at me in Walnut Canyon. I was talking about the different levels and how we could step down a cliff, and he shook his finger at me and said “Mr. Doty, the objective of this museum is not to permit an architect to demonstrate his ingenuity.”

Cecil Doty: During the CCC period, when labor was cheap, we could do things with blending and making a building fit its site; you learned more about rock work than you would now under the contractual type of construction, the cost would be prohibitive. I think, and at least I hope, that in many places, if we would take a chance on rock work, I believe we could get more of it than we do. In many cases I think we compromise before we ever start; we just assume that it is going to cost too much, and we don't try.

Herbert Evison: Give up before the fight starts.

Cecil Doty: Give up before it starts. I think that is a mistake in all phases of architecture, to compromise before you get a planner's scheme on paper. Take in almost all of our major buildings, like the visitor centers, administration buildings, residential groups, utility groups, that we should shoot for a real good sound architecture, both from the standpoint of operation and function, but also from the standpoint of appearance. If we have to cut it, cut corners and build it cheaper, we can do it, but I think we should shoot for the good stuff first in all cases.

Cecil Doty: That's another one of Tom Vint's, I have heard him say that these administration buildings and visitor centers are the city hall of the park. Utility buildings usually are out of sight and we can cut a few corners and put more emphasis on the functional, but even when we talk about functional architecture, there is an element of: do you like it, does it please? This is just as much a function as how many pieces of equipment you have in there, and how the equipment works.

- Cecil Doty: The pride of ownership has, I think, a big bearing; it has a bearing on how we maintain, take care of our buildings; I think it is even reflected by the public, their use of the park, the way they litter it. If they like it, if they are enjoying themselves, they don't litter it. There's a certain amount of vandalism nobody can anticipate or foresee, but there's a certain amount of vandalism I think that is lessened when the people enjoy and appreciate the good appearance of a park or building. So, I am very strong on getting the very best buildings, the very best-looking buildings we can with the money that we have.
- Cecil Doty: I think one of the weaknesses in many of the buildings is, as I said before, we compromise before we start; we just don't state the problem clearly and program the money—
- Herbert Evison: Well, do you think that some of these pictorial presentations of yours have had some influence in producing ultimately buildings that were pleasing to the eye that might not have been built if you hadn't presented them that way?
- Cecil Doty: I am very sure that they have. I also feel that there are other architects that should make a little more effort in presenting them. I don't believe that the laymen who are not trained, are not experienced, can analyze from a straight elevation and floor plans just what the building is going to look like when it's finished and in its setting. I think that if you look around, most private offices that are really successful even go much more in the way of delineation and making of models than the Park Service. It is only this summer with student draftsmen has the WODC ever attempted a model of a building to show it in third dimension.
- Cecil Doty: I think that delineation is real; we should do a lot of it. I think any major building like an administration building or a visitor center building should go through a stage of delineation, even from the standpoint of helping the designer, so that he can see this, the third side of it.
- Herbert Evison: You said that a model was made. What was the building?
- Cecil Doty: The Sequoia administration building and the school, the training school, at Grand Canyon, and I believe the apartment group at Teton. They turned out very well; the boys all knew what they were doing. It is taught in all the better schools now. I know that even juniors and sophomores know a lot more about the making of models than anybody in this office does.
- Herbert Evison: Cecil, one of the first delineation jobs of yours that I saw, back in the 1930's, was this prospectus on Big Bend National Park, and I think it would be very interesting to get on the record something of how you went about doing that job.

- Cecil Doty: Well, that goes back to Herb Maier. He was the regional director, and he was very personally interested in it. The land status maps were all gathered up. There was a rancher from Texas came up to Oklahoma City, I don't remember his name now; he owned quite a bit of land. He brought photographs. I think Mr. Maier and several others of them made two or three trips down there. I believe it was on one of those trips that Roger Toll was killed.
- Cecil Doty: We had that collection of photographs; we picked out various sites. First, I think, through Mr. Maier and with Mr. (I believe) Tripp—
- Herbert Evison: Ashburton Tripp?
- Cecil Doty: Ashburton Tripp. They worked out the over-all schematics of the road system. Then it was discussed, and I guess Mr. Maier and I pulled some of the requirements out of the air. We put down sketches of proposed cabins, a little hospital, an administration building, and quite an elaborate hotel at the basin site; also, some diagrammatic drawings on geology – I had nothing to do with the geology. We got several hundred photographs, discarded some and selected the best and with the sketches arranged them in a readable and good composition. All were then pasted in the report that was presented to Congress. That was about all I did. I believe that in general the schematics that we worked up and the sites still holds pretty well. Some of the requirements have changed; the headquarters area has changed. I don't believe we had anything at Panther Junction; but the basin and the river, we are still following pretty close to that old original report. Some of the cabins that were started, I believe a few of the motel units that were built, were almost directly off our sketches.
- Herbert Evison: That's in The Basin?
- Cecil Doty: Yes, that's in the Basin.
- Herbert Evison: You did your work without having actually set your foot on the Big Bend area?
- Cecil Doty: I never saw Big Bend until late in 1955.
- Herbert Evison: Is that a fact!
- Cecil Doty: I was down there with Mr. Kuehl, Mr. Hall, Mr. Sanborn of the company—
- Herbert Evison: National Park Concessions.
- Cecil Doty: We prepared rather an elaborate set of preliminaries for a hotel at the Basin. That was about the third or fourth design for a hotel in the Basin area. The site has been somewhat changed, but I believe the first unit of

the new hotel is under construction. But since, I have been down and spent a week there, getting the plans for their new administration building started, getting the information to make the preliminary plans from. I believe that's completed and is being occupied now.

Cecil Doty: I believe that the report which to me was quite interesting, that you mentioned, was on the Lake Texoma. I believe that had the Park Service maintained possession of Lake Texoma, that report would have been followed and would have been a considerable asset to developing Texoma, but when it was turned back to the Army Engineers, I don't believe the report was followed very closely. I still enjoyed the assignment.

Herbert Evison: Now, there you worked from experience on the ground, I take it.

Cecil Doty: Yes. Mr. Kuehl and Mr. Fuller, they had been there some time before I went there. The schematics of the thing, the different places which we were going to develop had already been selected, so all I did was draw up a few floor plans and make the presentation drawings, which are mostly perspectives. The working up the master plan, which basically that report was, that's primarily Mr. Kuehl's job, not mine.

Cecil Doty: I can't think of any other major report like that.

Cecil Doty: Alcan Highway. I did a few small buildings and one lodge, and I believe a checking station at the boundary between Alaska and Canada. But again, the report was already worked up, and all I did was develop three or four buildings, and a few perspectives of the buildings and their sites.

Herbert Evison: Well, now, was that on the basis of your having gotten onto the ground?

Cecil Doty: No, I have never been to Alaska or that section of Canada.

Herbert Evison: You just had to work from good photographs?

Cecil Doty: All from photographs that Mr. Kuehl and Mr. Bursley had, plus topography. After you have some experience in the parks, it's not too hard to work from topography and good photographs. That, I don't believe, is the way good buildings or good developments should be developed; you should do a certain amount of drawing or doodling, as I call it, at the site; the picture you take at the site is much more valuable than a picture that a stranger took. When I go to the field on several of these trips, I always take pictures. If I have time, I make a few sketch plans. Those are much better to remember by, when I get back in the office several months later to work on them. I feel that the Big Bend report gave me the first real insight into the national park system and the way the national park system functions, better than any other single thing up until that time or considerably later.

Herbert Evison: And that was, I take it, a combination of the job and the men that you were associated with on the job.

Cecil Doty: Job assignment and the individuals you work with. I don't think that anyone can underestimate the importance of the individuals you work with at times.

Herbert Evison: Cecil, I think it would be interesting to include on this a little further discussion of what I think is really one of the great buildings in – not in a national park, but it is essentially a national park building, and that's the regional office in Santa Fe. Now, you had a part in designing it, but I think it would be interesting to have here some of your observations on the circumstances, the conditions under which it was possible to produce a building like that.

Cecil Doty: I think, as I have mentioned to a few others before, that the building came at the right time. If it had been proposed six months or so earlier or a year later, it would never have happened. I also personally feel that it could have happened under nobody else but Herb Maier. With him as regional officer at that time, we got the regional office building. I don't think it could have happened in any other region or at any other period.

Cecil Doty: I have often said that's the job that drove me gray-headed. I have also a lot of pleasant memories about the building. I think I went out about two or three months early to start the plans on the building, and stayed at the old El Fidel Hotel; and I believe that we got the plans drawn to Mr. Maier's and my satisfaction, the foundations were started, the basement was dug, and some of the adobes were going in place before we ever got the building officially approved.

Cecil Doty: I think that we had a thousand or so dollars out of the current Santa Fe CCC camp left of that period, plus approximately \$2500 PWA money when we started. I don't believe anybody else would ever have started a building of over \$200,000 with less than \$3,000 in the bank. I don't know whether you could say that the Regional Office building was actually designed, it kind of grew. The basic scheme was presented; but there were quite a few changes; adobe constructions pretty easy to change. And with CCC labor and 150 to 200 WPA workers, we had to make a lot of changes, because sometimes the floor levels weren't what we intended them to be. I know the whole east wall of the one-story portion next to the employees parking area fell out; we got to laying the adobes too fast and the mud joints were too soft and the wall just toppled over.

Cecil Doty: We were to the second-floor roof rafters before we got any money allotted for heating and mechanical. We had bootlegged some pipe and conduit that would be under concrete. That's the circumstances under which the

building was built. As I say, I don't believe it could have been built or would have been built at any other time or any other place.

Herbert Evison: Or under anybody else?

Cecil Doty: Or under anybody else.

Herbert Evison: Well, now, what qualities are there in Herb Maier that made it possible for him to get a thing like that done, that would be so unlikely to be accomplished by somebody else?

Cecil Doty: Well, he just had a driving force during that period, anyway; I even heard it said that he had a rather disregard of regulations; his only objective in mind was to get something built and get it good. And even after he came to Region IV, ten or fifteen years later, he still couldn't pass my table without getting his fingers into the design. If I could talk to him a little while, he might be complimentary, but he was always critical, never ceased trying to improve the design. But I think it was qualities in Maier, that he was very vitally interested in developing parks, developing architecture, getting the thing built. I know he used to pound the table, "Why haven't you got it done?" I guess that's just about all I can—

Herbert Evison: How would you appraise his influence on the architecture that went into State parks during those 30's, particularly the State parks in the Regions or the Districts that he was concerned with?

Cecil Doty: Well, I think there is somewhat of a statistical approach to that. I believe the Park Structures and Facilities by Ab Good clearly illustrates the point, at least during that period of thinking. His book represents the best in park work done in the whole United States. I believe if you look through that book you will find that approximately one-third of all the projects in that book came under Herb Maier's direct supervision. And, being a little vain, if you don't mind, a good portion of that building was the result of my pencil. So, I think that clearly illustrates the effect that Mr. Maier has had on the Park Service design, at least during and shortly following the CCC era.

Cecil Doty: Now I think we are, since WODC was formed, and Mission 66, into the contemporary period. I don't know whether Mr. Maier would have the same effect now on the architecture and planning of the park system as he had during that period; I rather doubt it, because I know that Herb is still a firm believer in logs and rocks.

Herbert Evison: And, on occasion, adobe.

Cecil Doty: That's right. I think that adobe has a place in some of our parks, we have got too far away from it; too many people now are scared of adobe. I am

working on a plan now, remodeling of Casa Grande; I'll soon work on a plan of remodeling of additions to White Sands. These buildings are not in a high earthquake zone, I think we can still consider adobe, for the effect that we want, rather than be governed by dollars and cents; to get the effect you want, it is going to cost a lot more to go back to adobe. But for most of the other buildings, we have passed the period of log and rocks; we used to kid Herb about the Rocky Mountain Swiss, but we shouldn't get too far away from that, because that's indigenous materials, as he would say, and nothing blends quite as well as indigenous materials. He hammered that into my head for several years, so I am still a little bit in the CCC period myself.

Herbert Evison: Well, I have contended that the CCC period produced, among other things, the finest rock masonry work that was done anywhere in the United States. Would you agree with that?

Cecil Doty: I would agree with that. We still dig out the old portfolio and refer to some of the rock work, especially in the southwest where they had the stratified rock; I don't believe any place you'll beat it. California area, with conglomerate granite, the CCC didn't do too well, in many places; it's tough to handle. I don't think you will ever see the rock work again that you saw in the CCC period.

Herbert Evison: Cecil, you mentioned that you had an assignment in the Everglades. I wasn't even aware of it before. What did you do?

Cecil Doty: I went down in the spring of '54, we worked on the development at Flamingo, what was to be the visitor center, the marina, and the concessions development, restaurant, and some hotel units. We also did a preliminary for the administration building. I believe that's at Parachute Keys—

Herbert Evison: Paradise Keys?

Cecil Doty: Parachute, I believe. That administration building has had a different architect and a different scheme, but still fairly close, – I believe the development at Flamingo is quite close – to our original preliminary.

Herbert Evison: You had an unusual set of conditions to provide for there.

Cecil Doty: Yes, we had the tidal wave, because of which everything sets on stilts. I believe the first of this for me was back in '34 when we were doing the preliminaries on Padre Island; that also was on stilts. But in the Everglades, I worked with – Dan Beard was the superintendent. That was, from a personal standpoint, one of my most pleasant assignments, because I had only been married two weeks, and it was practically a honeymoon the Park Service was supplying me with. Also, I worked with Tom Vint;

he was down there a couple or three times. That's about all I think of on the Everglades.

Herbert Evison: Well, how much did you see of Dan Beard during that period?

Cecil Doty: Saw him every day. I still think very much of Dan. He was one of my favorite superintendents, now he's one of my favorite assistant directors.

Herbert Evison: Well, he's quite a guy.

Cecil Doty: I worked with him a few days when he was at Olympic. We came up with the visitor center at the Hoh in the Rain Forest, that is going under construction. It is almost exactly what Mr. Beard and I discussed and planned.

Herbert Evison: There must be an awful lot of satisfaction in that, to see ideas that really belong to you very largely – I use the generic you, the architect – see them take shape in a way that you pictured them before the first stone was laid.

Cecil Doty: Yes, it's a lot of satisfaction. I have been quite annoyed and sometimes irritated at the changes and things that happen on those buildings, and there are a lot of them, when I go back and see them. Well, it's still my basic idea; it has just been altered a little here and there. Some of them have possibly been improved; some of them have been cheapened, not by difference of opinion by somebody else, but due to the lack of money they weren't able to carry through in the original conception.

Cecil Doty: One of the very pleasant examples is the Death Valley Visitor Center, which has been very little changed from the original conception and my original presentation. But there were six or eight or ten different schematics and changes it went through between the first and the last. Some of them weren't very good, which became obvious, to people, so we eventually came back to the original.

Herbert Evison: That I guess you would consider also one of the notable buildings that you have been concerned with.

Cecil Doty: I think so. Partially, it's one of the few buildings for which we had the money and were able to wrap it up in one complete package – the building, the exhibits, the interpretive end of the building, and good landscaping. So many of the others, money for one or the other seems to lag, and once it is finished, they never go back and finish the landscaping quite as well as we do when we wrap one up like Death Valley.

Cecil Doty: Big Bend administration building is another example. The money was there; it was all a complete unit.

Herbert Evison: Have you seen it completed?

Cecil Doty: I haven't seen the Death Valley since it was started – I mean the Big Bend – since it was started. I have seen some very good photographs of the building, and a couple have described it to me. Some people may not like it as well as I do, but nevertheless they say it's a complete building inside and out, including the landscape. I am quite sure that in my own mind, if the Park Service continues to grow and visitation goes up as projected, it will only be a matter of a few years until we will have to put an addition onto it. It's the type of building which you can put an addition onto very easily; there's others that just don't develop that way.

Herbert Evison: Well, this has really been wonderful, Cecil. I have learned a lot this morning. I have always had a great appreciation of your ability, but it certainly has been heightened by this talk. And I am surely obliged to you for being willing to sit down here and fill it for me.

Cecil Doty: Fine.

[END OF INTERVIEW]