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

Gale Belinky
October 29, 1971

Interview conducted by S. Herbert Evison
Transcribed by Beverly A. Foltz
Digitized by Madison T. Duran

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

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

OF

GALE BELINKY

INTERVIEWED BY S. HERBERT EVISON

October 29, 1971

Tape Number 110

FINAL (Tape # 110 – Sides 1 & 2)

TYPED BY: Beverley A. Foltz

August 15, 1980

[START OF INTERVIEW]

Herbert Evison: Today is October 29, 1971. I'm Herb Evison, and this afternoon I would have a little hard time saying exactly where I am, except to say that I'm back in the wood, sort of in the foothills of the Southwestern Adirondacks. The nearest town from here is Lyons Falls, New York. With me is Mrs. Charles R. Belinky, who has been better known to me for a long time as Gale Koschmann Zimmer and then Gale Koschmann Belinky. Now, Gale, let's get a start of this thumbnail biography. You said you had no objection to saying when you were born.

Gale Belinky: All right, we'll start with that. I was born November 8, 1936, in Washington, D.C.

Herbert Evison: I think you're the first person I ever met who was born in Washington, D.C.

Gale Belinky: I guess they're pretty rare. My father worked for the government and so we were in Washington, D.C.

Herbert Evison: I'd be curious to know what your father did for the government.

Gale Belinky: My father was a geologist with the U.S. Geological Survey.

Herbert Evison: Oh, really? Well you have a Department of the Interior background, don't you?

Gale Belinky: Oh, yes, I knew all about it before I got there.

Herbert Evison: You got some of your schooling in Washington?

Gale Belinky: We lived there until I was ten years old and then we moved to Denver, Colorado, when my father was asked to go out there with the Survey. Then the rest of my schooling took place in Colorado. I went to high school in Denver. Then I went to college at Colorado College in Colorado Springs and at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

Herbert Evison: I remember reading somewhere that you had gone to the University of Denver at some time or other.

Gale Belinky: No, that was a slip of somebody's pen.

Herbert Evison: What were you interested in in your undergraduate days?

Gale Belinky: I was interested in just about everything, but eventually you have to major in something, which I had a hard time picking. So, I ended up with three majors. I ended up with a major in zoology, art and history.

Herbert Evison: Three about as thoroughly unrelated majors as I've ever heard of, but zoology was one of them anyway.

Gale Belinky: Oh, yes.

Herbert Evison: You got a degree?

Gale Belinky: Right.

Herbert Evison: And it was what? A B.S.?

Gale Belinky: I got a B.A. degree from the University of Colorado.

Herbert Evison: They put more weight on your history and other stuff than they did on the zoology.

Gale Belinky: You can choose. Even if I had only majored in straight zoology you can choose whether you want a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Science degree and there's a slight difference in which credits you take for either one.

Herbert Evison: I see. This would have been in what year?

Gale Belinky: 1957.

Herbert Evison: What did you do during the next two or three years?

Gale Belinky: First, I worked in the advertising department of a newspaper doing layouts and writing copy for advertising. Then I went back to Denver and worked for the Boettcher Foundation. The Boettcher Foundation is limited to the state of Colorado, but it's the same sort of philanthropic foundation as the Ford Foundation or any of these others. They have a very excellent scholarship program for students in Colorado. And as a matter of fact, they paid my way through college. So, I went back, and I worked there for three years under the title of scholarship secretary which meant I was administering the same scholarship program that had paid my way through college. I had the real privilege in those three years of working for Dr. Robert Stearns, who was then the head of the Boettcher Foundation and after that time was on the Advisory Board to the National Parks.

Herbert Evison: Oh, really? Did that side hookup with the national parks have any influence on you?

Gale Belinky: No, none. At that point I didn't even really know the National Park Service existed. I had visited a lot of national parks as individual areas. Really the whole beginning of my interest in the outdoor world started in

Rock Creek Park in Washington because we lived only two blocks from there and that was where my father took me walking in the woods in the fall, and so forth. And so that was really the beginning of the whole thing, but I didn't know it as a national park area. Even while I was in college, I didn't know the National Park Service existed, or that they might hire anyone like me.

Herbert Evison: What turned you in that direction?

Gale Belinky: Fate, I guess you'd have to say. It was very accidental. I went to Florida on a vacation with two girls from Denver and we visited the Everglades National Park. And we were parked in the parking lot at the Royal Palm Station with our car that had Colorado license plates on it. Mr. Christensen, who was then the chief park naturalist and was from Colorado, was interested in who these people were with Colorado license plates. And he came out and talked to us. He found out I had gone to the University where he had, too, and I had majored in zoology and I knew some of the same professors that he had had, and so forth. And I had been doing some kind of secretarial work, so he asked me if I would like to come and work as a secretary for him. I said, no, I really didn't think so. I liked the job I had. And with that I went back home and for a while that was the only contact, I had with the National Park Service.

Herbert Evison: Then what happened next? You finally did get there.

Gale Belinky: Yes, I did, sort of all around Robin Hood's barn. Then I got married. That did not work out well and when that ended, I was looking for some place away from Denver to go. I remembered that Chris had asked if I would like to be his secretary, so I thought I would write and ask if he'd ever filled that job. So, I did, and he had filled the job, but he said, "You've got the qualifications to come and work as a seasonal naturalist. Why don't you come on down and work as a seasonal naturalist?" So, I packed up and moved to Florida.

Herbert Evison: Then you went there as a seasonal. Did it actually work out that way, that you were there for a while and then quit the job?

Gale Belinky: No, I was there for the next seven and a half years.

Herbert Evison: I know various things; I think more particularly from "The Anhinga" than anything else. First, I know that you had the job of editing "The Anhinga" and you did extraordinarily well. I know also that during that period you devoted yourself pretty assiduously to observing the Everglades and all that went on in them.

Gale Belinky: Oh, yes.

Herbert Evison: And you experienced a hurricane or two. I know that you got pretty well acquainted with the factors that make me refer to the Everglades as a beleaguered national park. That indicates some of what I want to get on this tape. I'll probably have some other questions, stumping or otherwise for you. You went there as a totally "green" park naturalist and I think it would be interesting to get on here what it means to start in a place like the Everglades, which you presumably knew only very slightly.

Gale Belinky: Right.

Herbert Evison: But you were expected to spread the gospel and information about the natural history of the area and a little dipperful of inspiration once in a while to the people who came to the Everglades. How about just going into a little account of your start at that business?

Gale Belinky: First of all, of course, it was all terribly new. The organization was completely new to me. A national park from that point of view was new to me. And the Everglades was new to me. The first thing I was assigned to do was design an exhibit about the effects of the hurricane that had gone through the previous autumn. That was in the fall of 1960 that this big hurricane had gone through there. Unlike most seasonals I was not just thrown out to talk to the public right away. As I said, the first thing I did was design an exhibit. While I was in the process of this, I had a wonderful chance to go out and walk the trails and talk to this person and that person and listen to other people give talks, and you know all of this kind of thing, before I really had to get my feet wet spewing forth this information for anyone. It takes a long time to assimilate the material that you really need to do this. And it isn't just a matter of a week's work of going around seeing this, looking at that, talking to somebody and then you know it all and you can go forth. It takes a long, long time and fortunately I was given that time because I was assigned to do something else in the beginning.

Herbert Evison: You would, I suppose, have had really to accumulate vastly more knowledge than you would ever display as a part of a formal presentation.

Gale Belinky: Oh, yes.

Herbert Evison: But I would also suppose that the best audiences you had were the ones who asked you questions.

Gale Belinky: That's true.

Herbert Evison: Therefore, you had to know the answers to as many as you possibly could.

Gale Belinky: Right.

Herbert Evison: I didn't mean to make a statement about that for you.

Gale Belinky: This is true. You can only say in answer to visitors' questions, "I don't know; I'm sorry I don't know; I'll look for you, but I don't know" so often, and you feel like you'd like to cut your throat. Probably in the years I was there I acquired a fantastic knowledge of the place, really, although it is such an involved place that you can spend a lifetime there without feeling that you know it thoroughly.

Gale Belinky: But probably the most helpful thing to me and I think to other people who worked there was that we took coffee breaks. It was quite a religious observance, you know. At 9:30 in the morning we took a coffee break period, the whole naturalist staff. That was, of course, when you could still call these people naturalists, and it was the whole naturalist staff plus the park biologists. And we would gather in a little back room and have a cup of coffee together. And the conversation was not about what the children did last night or the prices at the supermarket or what's on TV, but rather what was going on in the natural history of the park. And boy, you have a coffee break with Bill Robertson, for example, and you can get an awful lot out of a coffee break. So, I had seven years of coffee breaks like that.

Herbert Evison: You had what I think is a chronic national park habit of talking shop in your leisure time.

Gale Belinky: Yes, and, of course, if you really love the thing that you're doing this is fine. You don't take a coffee break to get away from the whole idea of the thing. You may want to get away from something routine that you're doing, but the concepts and the ideals, and so forth, you don't get away from when you're drinking coffee.

Herbert Evison: How long had you been there before you were up against the chore of actually taking a party out and showing how much you knew?

Gale Belinky: Oh, gee! quite a while. Let's see, I came in April and basically, I think all that spring and summer I worked on exhibits and trail labels and that kind of thing. It was probably well into the fall, maybe the start of the next busy season, which would have been around Christmas perhaps when I was actually faced with this, which is much longer than most people go before they have to do this.

Herbert Evison: Did you dread it?

Gale Belinky: You wouldn't believe! I have a horror of public speaking like you just can't imagine. It is practically impossible for me to get up in front of an audience and do this sort of thing. I've had this problem all of my life to the extent that when I was in school, I would never even put my hand up in class and volunteer to answer a question. Not me! Yes, it was quite a thing. And what I did and what I've always had to do with giving talks is

to write them out completely ahead of time and memorize every word. Now this doesn't mean that if I get stumped, I have to go back to the beginning like some people do. I had to memorize the whole thing and then try to go through it and not get taken off in a different direction by something that happened, until I felt easier about the situation. So that's what I did, and it worked out pretty well.

Gale Belinky: But each and every time I had to give that talk at Royal Palm, which, heavens! was only a ten- or fifteen-minute talk, but even so it was just an ordeal really. The trail walks didn't bother me. They were much easier. You were in closer contact with the thing you were talking about. Everybody's attention wasn't focused just on you. It was focused on what you were telling them about, too, which seemed to make it a little easier. To try to give a major talk like a campfire program or one of the evening talks, – the first time I was asked to do this I went through such agony you just wouldn't believe. I was sick for a week ahead of time and practically a week afterwards. I couldn't eat. I was awake all night. I had headaches. It was a talk that I had written out possibly two years before I ever had to give it. It was about reptiles. It was a good talk. Mr. Christensen had given it on many occasions, and I had heard him. It took him an hour and a half to give that talk.

Herbert Evison: This was one you had written though?

Gale Belinky: This was one I had written. One of my problems has always been that I run out of material before I'm supposed to. If I'm told to give a 15-minute talk I give an eight-minute talk, you know this kind of thing. So here was this talk that took Mr. Christensen an hour and a half. These campfire or evening-type programs were supposed to take between a half-hour and 45 minutes. I figured surely, I was safe giving an hour-and-a-half talk. It took me exactly 25 minutes to go through Mr. Christensen's hour-and-a-half talk! I was in a cold sweat all the time. I was practically paralyzed.

Herbert Evison: That was a successful accomplishment then, wasn't it? I gather that you didn't go through it so darn rapidly they couldn't understand you.

Gale Belinky: They understood me, and I think they were even kind of impressed with the information that I had about reptiles, and so forth. Nothing dreadful happened. It was just that I was a total blank while I was doing it. I just went through this talk and of course I knew it word for word and everything went fine. And then I heaved a great sigh of relief and collapsed in a heap. It was really something. Before I left Everglades, I'd gotten to where I could do this with a certain amount of ease. When Charles, my husband, and I were corresponding before we got married, we corresponded on tape recorder. Talking to him as much as I did, which

seemed like I was talking perpetually, helped tremendously to just get me used to the idea of putting ideas together and talking about them, more than anything else that happened.

Herbert Evison: That's an interesting sidelight on training. Now you mentioned reptiles. And, of course, one of the first pieces of work of yours that I saw was a little pamphlet called "Turtle Lore," written by, not an expert but an enthusiast, if I remember rightly. Here we are looking out at a kind of a sun porch at 40 or 50 turtles. Whatever got you into that particular line?

Gale Belinky: When I was a very small child one of my mother's friends gave me a pair of little red-eared turtles for a birthday present. Now lots of kids get little red-eared turtles at one time or another. And I really had no better luck with mine than most kids do, because they don't know how to take care of them, and I didn't know either. And my parents didn't know, and we didn't know where to go for information, so one of the turtles died fairly soon. And the other lived I guess about a year and a half. But that, plus the fact that, being close to Rock Creek Park, the box turtles from Rock Creek Park would sort of wander over through our backyard. And I thought those were most interesting animals. And since we knew nothing about them my father was very careful that I must not in any way hurt these animals. I could keep a turtle a few days and then when we figured it was hungry it had to be let go. So, I was forever letting these turtles go and most frustrated about the whole thing. I suppose I was about eight years old and I met a boy in school who had a whole backyard full of turtles and he knew what to feed them. And boy! I sure pumped his head and then I could keep them, too, you see, because now I knew what to do for them. I was really fascinated with this and probably egged on by the frustration of having to always let them go and I didn't want to. So, I had my first turtle collection before we left Washington. Then I did almost nothing with it at all in Denver because Denver really isn't turtle country. Then when I got to Florida, my goodness! Here were all these turtles. You could hardly go out for a ride but what there was a turtle crossing the road. So, I started picking up turtles. I didn't know how long I was going to be there, of course, when I went, but I thought well if I'm going to be here a while I might just as well study the turtles. Like, here we are. Here's 50 turtles out on the sun porch. The whole thing just sort of mushroomed into quite an interest.

Herbert Evison: Incidentally, I assume that "Turtle Lore" is still a sales item at Everglades. I would suppose it would be and probably a very good one.

Gale Belinky: Well, I can't tell you about that. I assume it is still a sale item there, too, because when I left, which was a little over three years ago, they still had

quite a closet full of copies of that booklet, so I presume they still have some.

Herbert Evison: I suppose. I think while we're on turtles we just ought to go right ahead with what you've done. I know you've done some very serious studying of a good many varieties of turtles. How about telling something about that? Just what form your studies have taken. I remember your having traveled West with the whole back of a Squareback full of turtles.

Gale Belinky: My particular interest has come to be diamondback terrapins, which are salt marsh turtles found clear from Cape Cod all the way down the coast, around Florida and around the Gulf as far as Northern Mexico. I got very interested in them because they are very lively turtles and nobody else seems to have done very much with them. There are seven different subspecies of them, and it occurred to me, gee! it would be fun to have a sample of all the different subspecies! And so, this is what I've been doing. This too, of course, takes quite a while. I've now got pairs of six of the seven subspecies of these turtles. And now for the first time I have enough room that I can breed them. And I would like to and see if I can hatch the eggs and raise some little ones, – which will take more room. All the time, of course, it takes more room, you know. It never takes less. This is really what I've been most interested in and I'm still convinced that at least for me they are the turtle I want to put my effort in on. They're just kind of glorious fun.

Gale Belinky: At the park, while I was most interested in getting whatever information I could about the diamondbacks there, I was also involved in the sea turtle research that went on. A couple of the best experiences I think I had there were the turtle launching expeditions when we would get these baby green turtles that were flown in. We would pick them up in the middle of the night at the Miami Airport. And then we would take a boat and put them into the water while it was dark, which of course is when you're supposed to put them into the water. It was not only a great deal of fun, but you felt that you were doing something that had some meaning, too.

Herbert Evison: Let's get on here a little background on the green turtle.

Gale Belinky: You'd like to know how we got involved with the green turtle project.

Herbert Evison: Yes.

Gale Belinky: That's quite a story. Archie Carr, from the University of Florida, who is the green turtle man and has done all of the research, and so forth, had been written up for the fact that he was delivering these plane loads of little baby green turtles to areas of the Caribbean where they could be given protected status. At that time the park was not involved at all, but I

read this. Being interested in turtles I thought, well, why shouldn't we be involved in this. Here we have Cape Sable Beach. The green turtle is a native animal. We're not introducing anything new.

Gale Belinky: We could offer this beautiful, wonderful nesting beach within a national park to Archie Carr for his work, so why not? Sometimes it's not possible to just go right straight through channels and get something accomplished. So, Mr. Christensen wrote to Archie Carr and suggested that we thought this would be an awfully nice thing to do, but he felt the best way to get it set up would be if Archie Carr wrote to the superintendent and asked whether we would be interested in being a part of this project. Well, Archie Carr didn't write to the superintendent. All of a sudden – I think it was in September, which is when they launch the little green turtles – Mr. Christensen got a phone call at home saying, "The plane will be in at Miami in half an hour," and there we were with our green turtles. So, at the time it started it really didn't have official status or sanction. We were just kind of boondoggling our plane load of little green turtles. We collected the turtles and got the rangers to bring out a boat and we went out in the middle of the night and let out, I think, 900 baby green turtles, the first time, over the side of the boat into Florida Bay. And then after that it was just accepted that every year, we would get another load of these turtles. So, nobody ever really asked whether the Park Service approved or not. We were just doing it and it was great fun.

Herbert Evison: Did any words of commendation ever come along from anybody for this project?

Gale Belinky: Oh, yes, in an unofficial sense. Everyone thought it was perfectly wonderful. Of course, this was the sort of thing that the park biologists like to see go on. I think a lot of people, just the rank and file of the Park Service, felt this was the kind of thing we ought to be doing. So, we felt good about it, and I think almost everybody did. At least no word of condemnation ever came along, which was important.

Herbert Evison: This was in a so-called protected area, a national park, but as I remember it wasn't as simple as that protecting them.

Gale Belinky: It never is. In the first place it's only protected if you have a ranger that sits there with a shotgun 24 hours a day.

Herbert Evison: To shoot the raccoons?

Gale Belinky: To shoot not only the raccoons but the poachers. And there were turtle poachers at Everglades just like there are deer poachers and alligator poachers that you've heard a lot more about. There were people who'd go out there, and here was an unpatrolled stretch of beach, and of course, it

was illegal to take the turtles. But still and all, if someone was out there alone and saw a turtle come ashore to lay eggs and he wanted the turtle he simply took it, that's all.

Gale Belinky: So, unless you have enough personnel that you can hide a ranger behind every tree, you don't really protect the area at all. Then, of course, there was the raccoon problem. There were, at least at that time, just a prodigious number of raccoons in that area looking for anything at all to eat. During the lean season, which is the summertime out there, they would feed on anything. And once the first raccoon learned that if it dug into these spots there were turtle eggs, that did it. I think at one point they considered about 95 percent of the nests were "predated" by raccoons and the turtles never had a chance to hatch. So, then they instituted a management program whereby they live-trapped the raccoons off the beach and turned them loose in an area far enough removed that, hopefully, they wouldn't make their way back to the beach. They did mark the raccoons so that they could tell if they were catching the same ones again. They had kind of a feeling that it might only be one or two raccoons that were doing all the damage. Hell, they kept pulling raccoons off that beach. I don't know how many, but the beach was just full of raccoons. Raccoons are cute little beasties, but obviously they had pretty well gotten out of hand because nothing was in turn feeding on them. So, this is why there was a problem. I don't know what they're doing now. I haven't been told in the last couple of years. But during the time that they were actively trapping the raccoons out of there they figured about 90 percent of the nests were hatching that were laid on the beach.

Herbert Evison: Were hatching?

Gale Belinky: Yes, so it really did a tremendous amount of good.

Herbert Evison: Well, that would seem to have been a very effective job. Now, of course, you were talking about launching these green turtles. Incidentally, how big a thing is a baby green turtle when ready to be launched?

Gale Belinky: About the size of a 50-cent piece.

Herbert Evison: Really that small?

Gale Belinky: They're so tiny!

Herbert Evison: Don't they encounter underwater enemies too?

Gale Belinky: Oh, yes, they certainly do. Large fish eat them. Large sea birds will dive down and pick them out of the water and eat them. There are just many, many things that will eat them. I suppose if one percent lives to grow up this is probably about what you can expect from just natural dangers, even

without man intervening. You launch 900 turtles, and you figure nine of them may make it. These aren't really very good odds.

Herbert Evison: You said there were 900 turtles in the first shipment. Were there larger shipments or smaller ones after that?

Gale Belinky: It seems to me the second and third year we were doing it there were larger shipments and then there were a couple that were smaller. And then towards the end they were not only bringing us green turtles, but they were bringing us eggs to try to hatch the eggs, too. And that was just about the year that I left, or the year before, that Everglades was given a shipment of eggs also to try to hatch.

Herbert Evison: Did they bury the eggs in the sand and leave them there to hatch?

Gale Belinky: Yes. It was an interesting program and the green turtle is an interesting animal all in all. Archie Carr's research goes on as to their navigational abilities and, of course, their conservation problem, too. Like so many things, although you win individual battles, I don't know what the outcome of the whole war is going to be. And I don't think Archie Carr does, and I don't know how optimistic he is at this point.

Herbert Evison: If I remember rightly a green turtle is a very dainty morsel and it makes wonderful soup. I would suppose it will always be preyed upon no matter what legal protection there is. So that if it's to survive it's going to have to do it in about that way, raising them artificially and launching them.

Gale Belinky: Yes, and there is at least one program, I think it's being funded by Campbell Soups, to actually farm green turtles. A very fine biologist who used to work with Archie Carr, a fellow by the name of Bob Schroeder, used to do turtle things on the Florida Keys until he got disgusted with the people down there because even though he was doing this research program, they were killing his turtles as fast as he turned them loose. He moved off to Grand Cayman in the Bahamas and is doing his research there under the protection of their government and I guess getting along better. What he's trying to do is work out the bugs in a farming program for green turtles, so that there will be a supply of green turtles to provide soup, for those who feel they have to have it, but at the same time perhaps the wild population could be left alone.

Herbert Evison: Of course, I don't suppose very many soup eaters, or drinkers or whatever you call them, really concern themselves about whether the turtle was taken legally or grown on a turtle farm or what.

Gale Belinky: No, I'm sure they don't. Most people, being as people are, would feel, "Oh well, I'm just eating one little bowl of soup. What possible difference in the overall population can it make if I have one little bowl of soup?"

Herbert Evison: I think we ought to follow through on what you have done in connection with turtles since you left the Park Service.

Gale Belinky: I moved them around the country mainly. We moved them from Florida to New York, from New York to Connecticut, from Connecticut up here to Lyons Falls, then out to Laramie, Wyoming, and now back to Lyons Falls, where, hopefully, we are now permanently ensconced.

Herbert Evison: I wonder if they would say that traveling has a broadening influence.

Gale Belinky: I don't know, but they've survived quite well in spite of all of this. I've been pleased. At least so far as the diamondback terrapins are concerned, it doesn't seem to bother them a bit to be moved around. They eat just as well and seem just as healthy in one place as another.

Herbert Evison: Well, I would take the turtle for sort of a phlegmatic animal, anyway, not too much disturbed by what happens outside.

Gale Belinky: I don't know. We had a rather disastrous time with a research project in Wyoming, using wood turtles, which are supposed to be very, very hardy. I have five of them as pets that I've had for quite a long time and have had no real problems with them. But we got this group of 20 to use in a research project out there and I don't know just what the problem was, but we had a horrendous year just trying to keep them alive. That's the last time I'll do that, too.

Herbert Evison: Is your husband interested in turtles? Is he any student of them?

Gale Belinky: Well, he is now! Charles is a clinical psychologist and he is trying to get a Ph. D. in clinical psychology, so that he can pursue a career in that field. But he's a lot of other things at the same time. He's a professional photographer and he likes to pretty well stick to nature subjects for this. He bought this place up in the woods before I knew him. I didn't have anything to do with buying this. He already had this place when I met him. As a matter of fact, he often suggests that maybe I didn't really marry him, I married his forest. Anyway, he always had an interest in natural things. As a little kid he had some turtles around, too. I don't know that you could say he was anywhere near as enthusiastic about them as I was, but he sure didn't mind them. And he's been very good-natured about moving them around the country.

Herbert Evison: I was thinking that. He must be a very tolerant guy. Looking back on those seven and a half years in the Everglades, there must be a lot of things that happened there, many of which are interesting or that stand out rather sharply in your memory. I notice you made some notes, which you haven't consulted, so far as I know, since we started this.

Gale Belinky: Let me take a look here.

Herbert Evison: While I had this recorder turned off you and my wife and I were observing this gopher turtle of yours. I think you ought to tell something about the history of this longtime pet of yours.

Gale Belinky: Okay, that's tied up to Everglades, too.

Herbert Evison: He's a veteran of the Park Service, too?

Gale Belinky: Yes, in a very real sense. He was not a park turtle. Let me make that clear to begin with. I did not filch him out of the park. He was found in Florida wandering along the road by some visitors who came down to the park bringing him along. They got down to Flamingo and they were staying overnight. The naturalist down there at that time was Saul Schiffman. And Saul has a very deep sympathy with animals. And I guess these people got to talking and they decided that they would leave the turtle with Saul to be turned loose. Saul took on the turtle and had it for a week or so. He mentioned to me that he had this turtle. And I said, "Gee, I'd sure like to see it and take some pictures." I didn't just automatically appropriate everyone else's turtle. You know you can't do this. Anyhow Saul decided to go on a vacation to the Virgin Islands. And as Saul does things in a great flurry, all of a sudden one day he marched into the office with this turtle and shoved him at me and said he was going, and I could turn the turtle loose when I got through taking pictures of it.

Gale Belinky: Nine and a half years later I still have the turtle. He's a very dear turtle. He'll eat from your hand. As a matter of fact, he much prefers his lettuce handheld than to pick it up off the floor. He eats quite well and quite a lot when he's in the mood. He went through, I think it was yesterday, just about a whole head of lettuce.

Herbert Evison: Really?

Gale Belinky: That's his favorite, which is too bad because lettuce isn't very nourishing, so I have to try to sneak other things into him along with it. And so, when he's really going good chomping on the lettuce, I shove a banana in his mouth or something like this to try to balance his diet for him. This summer he was on a binge of cantaloupe. He'll eat something for a while and then he gets tired of it. The only thing that he's consistently stuck with for the whole nine and a half years has been lettuce.

Herbert Evison: Is he totally a vegetarian?

Gale Belinky: Yes.

Herbert Evison: One nice thing about him, he doesn't either meow or bark in the middle of the night.

Gale Belinky: No, but he used to snore. He used to sleep under the headboard of my bed in Florida and snore.

Herbert Evison: Really? Now to your notes.

Gale Belinky: Back to Everglades. First of all, of course, the whole experience at Everglades was just really one of the biggest things that could ever have happened to me. Having that whole area to be a part of, to work in, to look at, to get to know about, and to identify with was really just a fantastic experience. If I had gone out and planned something to really be a big thing in my life, I couldn't have planned anything that came on as strong as this did. I suspect I felt more about Everglades than I might have felt for any other national parks if they had been "the park" that I spent my years in, because Everglades has so many things of the particular type that are of interest to me, the herpetological stuff, the insects and this kind of things that I really love and really got deeply involved with there. Many of the Western parks, which are more geologic in nature, could never, I think, have made quite the same kind of impact on me. I just love all this teeming little life, particularly life that's connected with water. And, of course, Everglades was. And so, it was just awfully interesting all the time I was there. I could have spent the rest of my life there just learning about the park. The things that were highlights to me? – well, of course, some of the things like taking out the green turtles to launch and then whatever I had by way of field trips, canoe trips. It's a wonderful canoeing park and I so enjoyed going out down the little mangrove creeks in a canoe and seeing the park that way. I did as much hiking as you can do. It's not really a hiking park. It's not dangerous, but it's an uncomfortable landscape to do much hiking in, but I did quite a bit of walking around.

Herbert Evison: What makes it uncomfortable?

Gale Belinky: Well, the ground underfoot; much of it is so rough that you have to watch every step you take so you don't fall into one of these holes in the oolitic rock, you know, and get tangled up in that. The saw grass is, of course, scratchy. If you're walking through the actual glades area you almost feel like you have to hold your hands above your head to sort of keep from getting scratched with this grass. Then in the wooded areas many of them are so dense at ground level and up to about head level, anyway, that you almost feel you have to cut your way through to get through. And then of course, there's the heat. Much of the year it's a very hot experience to try to go out and walk in this area. There are bugs, a few mosquitoes and deerflies to add a little spice. So, it can be very uncomfortable to walk in the Everglades.

Herbert Evison: And most of your walking would have to be in a defined path then, wouldn't it?

Gale Belinky: Yes, and, of course, there aren't many excepting the few little trails that the Park Service has put in there so people can see what it's all about. And people may not realize it, but they should be very grateful for having a little path because it's rough doing it the other way.

Herbert Evison: I remember that when Shirley and I were down there four or five years ago, the only other time I ever saw you, you were on duty at the Anhinga Trail. You must have lived with that trail quite a bit, in the aggregate. I think it would be interesting to get some of your impressions of the trail itself and how it affects people who use it. Would you be able to offer something on that?

Gale Belinky: Probably. First of all, trying to lead a guided walk on the Anhinga Trail is one of the most frustrating experiences I can remember. Certainly, it isn't that people aren't interested. Everybody's interested in seeing the animals. If they're interested in nothing else, they're interested in that. So, it isn't a matter of having people on your hands who just aren't interested in what you're going to talk about, but it's a very surface kind of interest. They want to know what it is they're seeing. That's an alligator. That's a turtle. That's a this kind of a bird, and that's a that kind of a bird. And then something else moves and they have no time to go deeper in their thoughts. So, it's almost impossible to interpret this trail to people. All you do is end up pointing out the various kinds of wildlife and saying, yes, that's a green heron and that's a blue heron and that's an egret, and so forth, and answering questions. And after many, many years of many, many people trying to interpret the Anhinga Trail to people on a trail walk, I think almost all just sort of throw up their hands. It's really a hard thing to interpret. If you could get your visitor after he had done that trail a dozen times, then he would be receptive to deeper concepts, and so forth, but you don't. That's the first thing that they come to when they get to the park, and they go romping out on this trail. And oh! It's alive and new and it's wonderful and you can't go any deeper than this at that point with them at all. And of course, the animals keep moving around. You never know from one day to the next where anything is going to be. So maybe you'd like to save your alligator story until the climax of your walk and finish up with that. Well, you're five feet out on the trail and here comes an alligator and you can't just ignore him, so you have to tell your alligator story then.

Herbert Evison: I've heard many people refer to going over the Anhinga Trail as one of the really wonderful experiences that the Everglades offers, but what you had

to say about it raises doubts in my mind as to its interpretive value. It's a show really, isn't it?

Gale Belinky: Well it is, and there's no getting around it. It's like a zoo, excepting of course everything's free to come and go, only more come than go. It's certainly, for most people, the most enjoyable part of that whole national park. If there was nothing else out there it would be worthwhile just for the Anhinga Trail, but it's awfully hard to talk about. I loved it, too, when I could just go out there by myself and walk and look and count turtle heads or something like this. One of the loveliest things I've ever done is go out there and be the first one in the morning during the winter to go down that trail. The birds roost right on the boardwalk. All these big herons and egrets spend the night right there. And if you're the first one down the trail then you get there before they've left. And you walk along slowly, and you meet all these critters just standing right there on the trail. It's wonderful! But as an interpretive experience it's frustrating.

Herbert Evison: We made a trip with a guy with the very funny name, the ranger who, at the time we were there, was leading the groups up on the seven-mile trail up at the north end of the park. His name was Kelly—

Gale Belinky: Kelly Motherspaugh.

Herbert Evison: Looking back on that, it like the Anhinga Trail, was an extraordinarily interesting experience and we saw so much so darn many alligators and a really fine bird display. But again, I'm not sure that anybody who goes over it learns very much. I think they get some insight into how abundant wildlife can be perhaps. What would you say that they get out of that? Did you ever lead any trips along that?

Gale Belinky: Not specifically, but I was involved in trying to do the labels and the wayside exhibits, the first batch that was ever put up there. It was kind of almost like toss a coin, you know. These are the various concepts we'd like to expose people to and should we do it here or should we do it over there? It really didn't matter whether we did it here or over there. Then of course there's the wildlife part of it and you know that anything else is going to take second place if there's anything alive to be seen. It was designed for self-use, so that it wasn't just to be a ranger-led trip. It was designed so people could go in on their own and do it. You know, if you put your bird display in one spot the birds are going to congregate somewhere else. Even if they've congregated where you put the exhibit up to that point, they're going to congregate somewhere else and your alligators the same way, and other things.

Gale Belinky: One of the first years I was at Everglades there was a tremendous otter show up at the northern end. Oh, the otters were just wonderful! You

could go up there and see 20 otters as you were driving along. That was before they put the new road in up there, but it was really something. It was never that good again. You rarely saw otters after that. But okay, if that was the only time that you were up there, you'd think, gee! we must do something to interpret otters. And from then on out no one would ever lay eye on an otter up there. It was one of those things.

Gale Belinky: I had a lot of fun working out the stuff that we put up there the first time, doing the little exhibit boxes and the labels, this kind of thing. That was a lot of fun. It, too, because it is wildlife, is hard to interpret just as the Anhinga Trail is. There's a lot of information you can give, but information isn't interpretation. And so there you are.

Herbert Evison: Of course, I think there's an awful lot of what is really information that passes for interpretations in the Park Service.

Gale Belinky: Oh, yes.

Herbert Evison: Probably inescapably. What else do you have in those notes?

Gale Belinky: Of course, you couldn't be at Everglades in the years that I was, which was 1961 until 1968, and not be confronted perpetually with the water problem. Boy! I got there when it just about went into high gear, and they thought they might have a temporary solution when I left. So those were really the years of the water problem. And I remember being terribly concerned about this. I remember writing Anhinga articles about this and being frustrated about the lack of progress that seemed to be made and the bureaucratic red tape that seemed to take precedence over actually getting water into the park, where it needed to be; my real fury at the attitudes of some of the Florida State officials as to how it wasn't important to look after the needs of the national park, and so forth; and my, then and now, perpetual feeling that the values represented by the park are so much more important than those represented by the money to be made from land development. This is one of the things that I really get up on a soapbox and yell about, you know, the economic basis for everything. Well, you see it was all over, but it was very clear-cut there for a long time. And it was very much a part of what the water problem was all about. I remember one time I wanted a little soft-shelled turtle to observe and to study. And just when the water problem was at its greatest along the Anhinga Trail one year, we went out on a Sunday afternoon when there were loads and loads of people down there.

Gale Belinky: I had seen a little soft-shelled turtle swimming around and we took a big dip net and dipped out this little turtle, so I could put him in a tank and watch him because I had never really been exposed to a soft-shelled turtle before.

Gale Belinky: Someone asked why we were dipping the animals out of the slough. And, of course, the slough was practically dry. It was nothing more than a mud-wallow. It was just too opportune to miss, so Mr. Christensen said the water had gone so low that these animals were going to die, and we were trying to rescue them and take them to some place where there was a little more water. This made the newspapers the next day and was really kind of a kickoff to a lot of concern about the Everglades water problem. We had people call up and offer to bring some plastic jugs full of water from their homes if it would help the animals in the Everglades. This was good. This was really the beginning of the whole public awareness that this was going on.

Gale Belinky: The Park Service and the Corps of Engineers and the state of Florida had tried to keep it quiet. They had tried to handle it among themselves up to that point. And rarely did the public get to see that this really crucial situation was going on. All of a sudden everybody and his brother knew about it and there was fantastic concern, of course. There's a lot of people who aren't even down in Florida, and maybe never have been, who feel very strongly about the whole thing. And they certainly expressed their concern and kept on expressing it long enough that finally something got done. How permanent it is I don't know. Anyway, something did get accomplished finally. But I've laughed about that many times and I'm sure Mr. Christensen has too.

[END OF SIDE 1]

[START OF SIDE 2]

Herbert Evison: You spoke about your first job there having been to prepare an exhibit to tell about that hurricane of 1960. If I remember rightly from some stuff that you wrote in "The Anhinga," you, yourself, experienced a hurricane or two in the park.

Gale Belinky: Yes.

Herbert Evison: I wonder if you would tell a little something about what that experience is like.

Gale Belinky: It's both a really lovely, exciting experience and one that makes you keep your fingers crossed for the park. Properly taken, hurricanes are not dangerous. I never felt that I was in danger when the hurricanes came through.

Gale Belinky: And it's a terribly exciting time of the year and you sort of live from day to day and everybody listens to the hurricane bulletins and you very carefully follow the progress of these storms, you know. And at certain points you do certain things to get ready around the park for the hurricane.

The preparation was always much more fun than then having to take it all apart the next week when the storm was gone, of course.

Herbert Evison: Now what did that preparation consist of? What kind of things?

Gale Belinky: Oh, things like making sure that the books in the library were high enough off the floor that if the place flooded they wouldn't get ruined; putting masking tape on some of the windows in case they got broken so that hopefully they wouldn't shatter completely, – this type of thing. Certain of the trail exhibits had to be taken down and put away for the duration and then put back out. And then other exhibits had to be covered in case water came in. This type of thing was what I seemed to mostly get into. And then, of course, the storm itself lasts sometimes for the better part of a day. And if you're sensible you just pick a place and stay put. You go home and you just sit until the storm is over, and there's no particular problem. But what you're always afraid of is that some of the particularly endearing things in the park that you care about are going to get ruined in this storm. And, of course, it was true with the trees down there every darn time. Every tree that stuck its head up far enough above the other trees to be interesting would get its head taken off in the next hurricane. You could count on it. And this got kind of hard to take. Obviously, this is a natural process and you can't feel – at least, I can't feel – the kind of regret over natural calamity that I do when I see mankind devastate something. It's a different feeling altogether. But, gee! there'd be a big royal palm tree that must have been a hundred years old and you were terribly fond of it. And it was something you talked about on all your guided walks, and so forth, and then the hurricane went through and no more palm tree; this type of thing.

Gale Belinky: The big hurricane before I came there in the fall of 1960 really devastated the whole mangrove forest. Well, fortunately for me, I had never seen that forest before the storm went through. The people who had were just in shock yet six months later when I got there. Every time they thought about that mangrove forest, they were close to tears. It had been so beautiful, and it was nothing but gray, tangled skeletons after the storm had gone through. By the time I left it was beginning to grow back. And, of course, these things have happened throughout history and if you're around long enough you see it come back. And you know that in time it will go again, and it will come back if man doesn't do something to the land so that it can't recover from these things.

Gale Belinky: Those were my experiences with hurricanes. I never really had any bad experiences with them. I had the experience of driving the park road in the real height of the raging storm, so to speak, just to sort of see what it was like and it's just like a severe storm. The rain comes down very hard and

the wind blows very hard and that's about it. We went clear down to the shore of Florida Bay and saw the birds huddled in the parking lot down there all facing into the wind, which is what they do, and we turned around and drove back. People make so much over hurricanes, but I can't feel that, if you're at all sensible, hurricanes are really that awful. Of course, the areas now that are so hard hit by them as far as loss of human life is concerned are primitive areas that don't have radios and telephones, no communication. And so, people don't have communication and don't know the storm is coming and they don't make preparation. And so, then there's a very great loss.

Herbert Evison: That's a very good account. Anything else in your notes?

Gale Belinky: I suppose I should say something about the development of my interest in insects and photography which kind of got tied up together. When I came to Everglades, I knew nothing about cameras at all, and what I had seen of them I didn't like. They were machines. I don't like machinery. It was a whole bunch of calculating and setting little dials and buttons, one thing and another, and then you could take your picture. That just wasn't for me. I wasn't even remotely interested in this. Then somewhere along the line I discovered a little, tiny, silver commensal spider. This little thing is about the size of a pinhead and it shines silver when the sun shines on it and it lives as a commensal in the web of the very large, golden web-spinning spider that lives down there. And you see these little drops of quicksilver in this web. And I got fascinated with this teeny, tiny spider. We had no pictures in the park collection or anything and I decided I wanted to take pictures of that little spider. The park had a couple of quite good cameras, but the only way you could really take close-ups was to add on all these tubes and tubes and that was just ridiculous. The assistant chief naturalist at that time was Bob Haugen, who is quite an excellent photographer. So, I asked Bob, "If I want to take pictures of things like that little spider what do I need?" And he said, "You need a Nikon with an auto-micro lens." So, I bought a Nikon with an auto-micro lens and I love that camera dearly. It is just wonderful. You can take pictures of the teeniest, tiniest things without adding on all these tubes that many cameras have to have.

Herbert Evison: You did this on your own? That was your camera?

Gale Belinky: Yes, it was my camera and it still is.

Herbert Evison: At no small cost I am quite sure.

Gale Belinky: That's right. As a matter of fact, I used the royalties from my turtle book to buy the camera.

Herbert Evison: Good enough! So, you became a photographer, and you did a lot of it before you got through there.

Gale Belinky: I did. I was particularly interested in the insect life. And there's a lot of wonderful insect life in Everglades that largely gets bypassed because everyone's concentrating on something bigger, you know.

Gale Belinky: I was interested in what was in the park study collection. I have a thing about collecting animals for this kind of purpose. It's certainly better than some purposes that they can be collected for. I can't really go out and take a live animal and bring it back specifically to make a dead specimen out of. So, my ethics necessitate that these things come in already dead from being road-killed or something like this. We had quite a nice study collection there. It was my job to sort of curate the collection and go around and put in the preservatives and see that everything stayed in good shape. I did a lot of pinning up of insects to put in the collection, which I liked. It's not that I have such terribly steady hands, which would be very helpful, but somehow, to take an insect that's just kind of limp and position it so that each foot is still where it ought to be as if it were alive, and so forth, and then fix it that way and put it into the collection – I used to enjoy doing some of this. This was physical therapy, if you will. I remember I got terribly interested in thorn bugs. Do you know what thorn bugs are?

Herbert Evison: No.

Gale Belinky: Well, thorn bugs are little things that look like just what the name implies. They look like rose thorns really and it's a very good simile. They are well hidden. If they space themselves properly on a stick, you'd never know they were bugs instead of thorns. I remember I found several colonies of thorn bug eggs with a mother sitting guarding the eggs. And then I watched them. I'd come back to the same tree every couple of days and see how the little ones were progressing. And of course, I photographed all of this and took notes as to just what happens next as the thorn bugs grow. It was very interesting, extremely interesting. That was one of my favorites in the insect life.

Herbert Evison: I don't know what more to ask you unless you have some jottings there on that.

Gale Belinky: Aside from just overall impressions of how thoroughly much I enjoyed Everglades, how really much I loved that area and felt it was my park and no doubt about it, it's hard to think back to just specific highlights and pick them out. My highlights were ongoing contacts with the natural world there, luckily maybe two or three a week by way of something that really said something to me. And of course, it wasn't necessary to go through all

of the ordeal of taking a special canoe trip somewhere in order to enjoy this. I could go out for half an hour and walk around the headquarters building frankly, and, chances are, find something, you know, that was meaningful. And so, the whole seven and a half years were really full of this kind of thing. It was really a wonderful experience to be in an area like that. Of course, never having worked in any other national park my enthusiasm for Everglades is undiluted by my enthusiasm for anything else. I was a one-park naturalist. I loved it and I still do. I'm most interested even now in what goes on there. I don't know much now of what goes on there. I wish there was some better and more detailed communication system whereby I could really keep up with what is going on there because I would really relish this. I'll always be very partial to Everglades. In Everglades' corner so to speak.

Herbert Evison: I don't know about you, but I've enjoyed every minute of this. Unless something more has occurred to you to add on here, maybe this is as good a time as any for me to say, Gale, I'm sure obliged.

Gale Belinky: I've enjoyed it too. I could probably strike on several topics that will put me up on a soapbox and go on quite a while. I could talk about the idea of women in the National Park Service you know. I have thoughts on that subject, too, having been one for a while.

Herbert Evison: What are your opinions about women in the National Park Service?

Gale Belinky: Well! First of all, let me disclaim any association with the Women's Lib Movement. However, I have rather strong feelings about it in that I feel there are very few things in the Park Service that a woman could not be as qualified to do as a man. And I think if they want that opportunity, they should be given that opportunity. If they want to do the work that is assigned to a trail crew or a ranger crew, including carrying firearms and doing law enforcement with all of the dangers that this may entail, there are certainly women who are as well qualified to do this as any man. Myself, I had no particular desire to carry a gun and chase speeders down the road and all this kind of thing. That isn't my particular thing, but I don't see that that is something that a man should do, and a woman should not.

Gale Belinky: I worked with a couple of gals who would have been darn good at just that, and one was a judo expert besides and she could handle herself in just about any situation. And I think she would have enjoyed having that kind of assignment.

Gale Belinky: I had the feeling that there were a lot of people in the Park Service who wanted the women in the Park Service to be ornaments. It was wonderful to have women in the Park Service. They look so nice in their uniforms –

but keep them looking nice, you know. Don't let them get dirty. Don't let them really rough it and get their hands dirty. Keep them ornamental. Sit them behind a desk where the public can see them, and so forth. And I resent this very much. I am something more than an ornament or I am nothing. I think a lot of gals who would choose to go in the Park Service would feel exactly the same way. Heavens! Once you've gone through college course in zoology you think of yourself as being something besides ornamental.

Gale Belinky: I understand that now they're not specifically hiring naturalists in the Park Service anymore. They're not putting an emphasis on a natural history background for these people. Perhaps this is good. Perhaps it isn't. I don't know. Without what natural history background I had, I fail to see how I could have communicated very well what I was supposed to communicate to the visitors and answered what sometimes turned out to be very intelligent, perceptive, involved questions. And like I mentioned earlier, you can only say, "I don't know, I'm sorry," so often, and you feel like you ought to quit. That just isn't what you're there for. You better know something about something.

Gale Belinky: I also had the feeling that, when the time came for me to expect to be transferred, very possibly the fact that I was female stood in the way of my getting the type of opportunity that I would have had if I had been a man. And there were all kinds of excuses made about, "Well, nobody's being transferred right now," but I knew of people that were, and so forth. So, you can't help but feel some of this. I was told right out finally that, yes, any superintendent choosing personnel is going to try to avoid the problems of having a woman he has to house and contend with. He's going to pick a man for the job. It just works out easier all around. And so, the fact that you're female does stand in the way of your getting the kind of transfer that you'd like to have. Well, I don't think it should, and I would hope that in the future the very well-qualified gals in the Park Service will have a chance to do the jobs that they really want to do, and it won't be held against them in any way that they are female.

Herbert Evison: A very good disquisition. When you went into that you sounded as though you had some other things that you'd like to express opinions about.

Gale Belinky: I have lots of opinions, you know! You can't work in an organization that long and not have opinions about a lot of things. I never was transferred and so I never had to go through the situation of accepting a job somewhere else that might have turned out in my own eyes to be inferior to the place that I had been. But I know a lot of people in the Park Service face this and would find themselves just kind of shoved willy-nilly here and there, whether this was what they wanted or not. And most of them

after a while just kind of got resigned to the whole thing and figured, "Oh, well, what can I do about it. This isn't where I want to be, but in two years I'll go somewhere else and so I can just put up with it in the meantime." But I always felt this is a very poor way to get the best efforts out of people.

Gale Belinky: If you can't put people where they're going to be happy, how can you expect really first-rate efforts from them at the work that they're assigned to do, and why should you expect that it's perfectly all right with everybody just to be sent anywhere? People do have preferences as to how they live and where they live and what they can spend their time on. Definitely! I wonder if a very sensitive questionnaire wouldn't unveil some of this. Of course, then you have to be willing to act on the information that you get. There are, for example, people who feel extremes of climate, very, very much, cold and heat, and so forth. Their physiology is simply such that they feel it. Well, how can you expect them to be happy if you send them, say, to Alaska where it's cold all the time or something like this. Like I say, I never faced it personally.

Gale Belinky: There were other national parks I would love to have had the chance to work in. I might mention some of those that might be of interest. At one point I was led to believe I had a fairly good chance to go to Cape Cod and I would have loved to work at Cape Cod, most any of the seashore parks frankly. That's the type of life I'm interested in and those are areas where my diamondback terrapins live, and I would have enjoyed working in those areas. I love the Smokies. I think I would have enjoyed working there.

Gale Belinky: There was a time when I very much would have relished a chance to work at Harpers Ferry in the interpretive media end of things. I like to write. I like to do exhibits. I did some work with audiovisual programs at Everglades on a rather small scale. And I really would have liked the opportunity to pursue these things in more depth. The facilities weren't located at Harpers Ferry at the time I left the Park Service. That has come since then. "Publications" was still deep in the heart of Washington, D.C., and the museum lab was in Springfield, Virginia and the AV programs were at Harpers Ferry.

Gale Belinky: I think I would have enjoyed a chance to work with that. But I wasn't about to take a city job, because I cannot tolerate cities, no matter what the job. And so, even though I was given an opportunity to work with the Publications Branch in Washington and the job would have been great fun and I would have loved the job, but not the setting. I just couldn't face that setting for whatever period of time that I would have been there. So those are some of my thoughts on that subject anyway. I might mention, sort of

in conclusion, that as far as job titles go, the proudest thing I've ever been was a park naturalist. And you can call them now anything you want to, park technician or interpretive specialist, or whatever it is they're currently calling people who do essentially what I did. As far as I'm concerned it will never have the same ring to it and the same savor to it as being a "park naturalist." That was really something.

Herbert Evison: I think that's a wonderful windup, Gale. Shall we call it a day?

Gale Belinky: Okay.

Herbert Evison: Well, as has happened to me 20 times or more, in this case again we finish up only to realize we haven't finished. So here we are back again on the tape. And I feel very chagrined that I didn't myself bring up the question of what you have been doing since you left Everglades to commit matrimony and go to a rather unusual kind of a job up in Connecticut. Let's get that on the record.

Gale Belinky: Well, the job in Connecticut wasn't that unusual, I guess. It was a job as a naturalist for a small nature center in the town of New Canaan. I was there only ten months in all, I think, and then we went to Wyoming. New Canaan itself was perfectly beautiful. It's a lovely, lovely town and we enjoyed living there. It exists on a financially much higher scale than we could afford. If it hadn't been for the job there, we couldn't really have set foot in town, you know, but it was a lovely setting and a lovely place to be for a period of time. And we met some very lovely people that we consider permanent friends.

Gale Belinky: The job itself was not terribly exciting. It paid fairly well. However, the real substance of the job, there wasn't as much to it as I would have liked at that point. I had hoped to use my interest in interpretive media and there was almost no opportunity for this. Basically, high-level baby-sitting is what it amounted to and this is just not me. When I was considering the job, it had been portrayed as being somewhat different than it turned out to be. So, it wasn't a totally satisfying experience.

Gale Belinky: But anyway, after a year there my husband decided that he really should go and complete his Ph.D. in clinical psychology. So, this is how we ended up at the University of Wyoming. They were willing to take Charles as a graduate student. So, we moved to Laramie.

Gale Belinky: I'm an Easterner by inclination and when I say that, it certainly doesn't mean the cities of the East, but the countryside of the East is so much more pleasing to me than the countryside of the West. So, I can't say that I went to Wyoming with any feeling that this was really going to be a whole new world. We, of course, owned this place up in the Adirondacks that we

loved dearly, and I really couldn't see myself getting too far away from this on a permanent basis. But anyway, by the time we're completely out of Wyoming it will be two and a half years, I guess, that we've been associated with Wyoming. My husband is completing his Ph. D. and then he's coming back here and he's going to be working in a psychiatric hospital in Syracuse. So, we're going to be living here in Lyons Falls and this is just the loveliest thing that's happened to me in two and a half years now, because I love this place dearly. We have 160 acres of woods with a pond and stream and a swamp full of wood turtles. It's all ours and it's in an area which so far is not very much built up and developed, and so forth. There aren't many other people right around here, so we really relish the idea of being here. It's the nicest setting I can imagine. Since I don't like city settings this is about ideal as far as I'm concerned. There are actually two other things that we've gotten into. One is the slide business that we have started.

Herbert Evison: Oh, yes. My gosh! I'm getting awfully forgetful.

Gale Belinky: We are "Educational Images." And we have mostly nature subjects available in these slide sets made up of 20 slides and then a script that goes along with them which we offer for sale to schools, nature centers and whoever else wants to buy them. We'll sell to anyone, but most of our business is with schools. The business is going along quite nicely. There seems to be a real market for this kind of thing. We've got 65 different sets now on various topics, most of which we have done all the photography and the writing on ourselves. We're quite proud of it and quite happy with it and intend to pursue this on into the future, too.

Herbert Evison: I should think you would be proud and happy over that. Of course, you have such a good feel for the natural community, the ecology of what's all around us. And I know from reading some of your text how well you bring that in and the relationship of human beings to their environment. I think it's a very fortunate thing for the schools that you decided that you'd do that sort of thing.

Gale Belinky: Well, I don't know, but anyway we've gotten a pretty good response to the whole idea and we're encouraged, and we are keeping up with this.

Herbert Evison: Who does the work for you, I mean of making the slides, and so on, from your originals?

Gale Belinky: We have them duplicated at a place in Elmira which is "World in Color."

Herbert Evison: Oh, yes, I've had a good bit of dealing with them.

Gale Belinky: I sent all of the park slides from Everglades to them for duping when I was down there and so we've just continued with them and they've given us pretty good service on this.

Herbert Evison: My impression of them is that they're really quite a cooperative outfit. They're interested in their customers.

Gale Belinky: Sometimes I have the feeling it's probably just one man doing all of this in his basement. I don't think it's a big business, but they've been good to deal with and they've done good work. They've always stood behind their work, and I've had no complaints with them at all.

Herbert Evison: I'm interested in your having hooked up with that particular firm because as I say I had quite a good deal of communication with them back in the days when I was Chief of Information. And I knew something about the work that they did and had always heard good things about them.

Gale Belinky: They've been very satisfactory.

Herbert Evison: How many different slide sets did you say you have?

Gale Belinky: Sixty-five.

Herbert Evison: Do you have some more in prospect?

Gale Belinky: We have some more that we are thinking about. We'd like to do fairly soon one or more sets on fires, both on the idea of forest fire and the use of fire as a tool such as the control-burning program at Everglades, – this type of thing. And then Charles wants to do a set on metallic ores. In spite of the fact that my father was the geologist, when it comes to the geology aspect of things, Charles does that. I don't. And so that's the set he wants to do. We want also to do a number of sets on Colonial America, getting away from the natural history field just a little. There is evidently a real interest in this because we mentioned it in one of our earlier catalogs and we've had just loads of letters asking about these sets. It seems like this is a good time to do it because come 1976 we're going to be celebrating our 200 years, and so forth, and so on, and lots of schools are going to want sets of slides on Colonial America. So that will be one of our next big projects.

Herbert Evison: How many secretaries do you employ?

Gale Belinky: At the moment there's me, but I do not like to type and do all of this kind of thing. And so, after we get firmly established here, we are somewhere going to find somebody to play secretary for us.

Herbert Evison: I can see that that would be some drudgery.

Gale Belinky: There's a lot of office work connected with it that we're doing ourselves now that it would be nice to be able to afford to pay someone else to do.

Herbert Evison: Either of you an expert bookkeeper?

Gale Belinky: No. I manage to keep current with how much has come in and how much has gone out and that's about the extent of my abilities with that. I'm sure we could easily keep a full-time secretary busy because, in addition, of course, to the slide business, it seems that we both turn out writing projects of one kind or another from time to time. And there's all that to be typed and revised, retyped and revised, and you know how this goes. So, we can provide that for a secretary, too. I've got one manuscript on turtles that's seeking a publisher at the moment. I guess it's about three-quarters done. This is about diamondback terrapins and in order to really finish it I've got to spend some time, preferably during the summer, down on the Gulf Coast and get some information from along the Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi area about the diamondbacks there. Other than that, it's pretty well completed.

Gale Belinky: And then I'm taking copious notes on what things happen in the Adirondacks. I've got thoughts on doing something on that, too, and my visions of it are probably a little grandiose for what most publishers would be willing to take on. I see it like, not necessarily the size format, but the treatment format of some of the Sierra Club books, using lots of color pictures and this kind of thing. So, I don't know what sort of luck we'll have with that. To me the main thing is to concoct the thing. Then I worry about whether someone wants to pay to publish it. It isn't because I feel there's necessarily a market for something that I go out and set it up. I do it because of something inside me that says this is worth doing. So that's the point of departure on that. That's kind of what we've done since we left Everglades. We plan to live up here for the future. And as long as Charles can find work in his field in this area that is satisfying for him, I see no reason why we would particularly want to leave. And frankly, having just gotten here after two years in Wyoming I can't get enough of the trees, because where we were in Wyoming there were no trees.

Herbert Evison: Well Gale, we seem really to have come to an end this time.

Gale Belinky: I think it's time to have a cup of coffee.

Herbert Evison: A very pious idea.

[END OF INTERVIEW]