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William S. Bahlman
May 27, 1971

Interview conducted by S. Herbert Evison
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WILLIAM S. BAHLMAN

An interview conducted by

S. Herbert Evison

May 27, 1971

for the

Oral History Project

National Park Service

U. S. Department of the Interior

Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

1971

[START OF INTERVIEW]

Herbert Evison: This is Thursday morning, May 27, 1971. I'm Herbert Evison and I am in the penthouse studio in the Interior Department Building in Washington, D. C. And with me is an associate of considerably more than 30 years. He is William S. Bahlman, whom I first became acquainted with when I went to Richmond in 1936, and whose career with the National Park Service extended from before that until 1969. Bill, let's get on the record some of the basic facts about you – when and where you were born, and your family, and so on.

William Bahlman: I was born February 23, 1905, in Washington, D. C. I'm one of those rare birds who was born in the District of Columbia. My mother's family was Ball and they're old-line Virginians for many, many years and generations. She married a young man she met in Washington named Leonard J. Bahlman. He was the son of an immigrant tailor, and he ran a cleaning and pressing establishment, and himself learned the trade of tailoring in his youth. I attended the Washington public schools and George Washington University. I did not graduate. I was interested in engineering and in my early career most of my jobs were in the field of engineering.

Herbert Evison: Now you were at George Washington when and for how many years?

William Bahlman: I attended for one year, 1924-25.

Herbert Evison: Well then, it was quite an interval between then and the time you swam into my ken or became involved with the National Park Service. What did you do during that time?

William Bahlman: My first job was an engineering draftsman with the C and P Telephone Company. And along about that time they were engaged in an inventory of outside plant equipment. I was on a survey team on that, and we traveled around. We were in Baltimore, Norfolk, Newport News and Hampton, Virginia. I stayed with that a couple of years and then went into the Richmond office of the Telephone Company as a draftsman again. From there I transferred to the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad on field surveying and engineering. And I got into land appraisal work there and at one time was on the construction of the Chesapeake and Hocking Railroad which ran from a valley crossing down to Portsmouth, Ohio. There was a new double-track railroad built in there and I was on cost accounting. I had charge of a section of that. When the Depression came in 1933 it also coincided with an act of Congress which repealed the Recapture Clause of the Transportation Act which made it unnecessary for the railroads to continue to keep the accurate, close and continuing current record of value of railroad property. And for that reason, many of us in land appraisal jobs

got kicked out at that time. You will remember one of our old friends who was with the Interstate Commerce Commission. They were engaged in the same work from the Government's side. Our reports were made to F.C.C. He was prevailed upon to come with the Park Service at Everglades, and he had charge of the appraisal work down there in the acquisition of the Everglades land. And for the life of me I can't call his name.

Herbert Evison: Well, I can't either, but I know that he devoted a great deal of time to it after he retired.

William Bahlman: Yes. He was a very fine gentleman, and I knew him quite well.

Herbert Evison: Wasn't that Albert Manley?

William Bahlman: Albert Manley – yes, that's his name. Good for you! Then I was out of work for a year. I was unmarried. I guess it was in June of '33 that we got let out by the railroad. So, I came home to Washington where my father and mother and two brothers were. I did odd jobs around that year – painted houses, any work I could find. Incidentally, I made \$1,200. That was in the height of the Depression so that wasn't a bad year at that. One of the jobs I had during that time was working for CWA. And I got with the District of Columbia on that. They made surveys of city streets. They had no record of the kinds of paving for instance, sidewalks, types of gutters, etc. It was sort of a physical inventory survey we made of city streets in Washington. It was interesting, and it was a good record to have.

Herbert Evison: Yes. I was going to say that you did produce useful results.

William Bahlman: Yes. Some of my friends had been with the Chesapeake and Ohio – Buck Lisle was a close friend of mine. And there were a few others nobody would know about because they didn't stay with the Park Service. C. K. Simmers – you will remember him. They told me about the Park Service setting up an office in Richmond. So, I got in touch with them, and Steamer Bursley interviewed me and prevailed on Weatherwax, who was the boss at that time, to take me on.

Herbert Evison: Now that would have been when? You say sometime in '34?

William Bahlman: November of '34.

Herbert Evison: Now he took you on in what capacity?

William Bahlman: I believe the title was Engineering Assistant. The salary was \$1,800 a year. I was qualified to run a transit to plot survey notes, by latitudes and departures. I was pretty well qualified in the field of engineering, you know, except for design. I was more of a survey type and a draftsman. I had done only engineering drafting, but I had a little talent apparently. And they put me on landscape architectural drafting because at that time

they were trying to get out plans for the seashore recreation areas. And you'll find my name on some of the plans that were drawn for the seashore areas. Incidentally, back in those days – for instance, Christmas of '34 – we didn't know whether we were going to have Christmas Day off or not. We would work until time to go home, get some rest and get back the next morning and go to work. We had about as much overtime in one year as we had regular time. Because you see, we worked weekends as well as evenings and our regular time only ran for 5 1/2 days. We were supposed to work half a day Saturday in those days. We were working all day Saturday and most of the day Sunday. I believe we would come in in the evening on Sundays. Those were really working days, but morale was high, and everybody was trying to do a job. They were inspired, you might say. Well, a lot of us had been out of work a year or so and you really couldn't give us enough work. That's about the truth of it.

Herbert Evison: You know, Bill, that was an extraordinarily interesting situation. Of course, you're perhaps the 30th or 40th person whom I have taped who started to work for the Park Service during that time. They all say how hard they worked and how darn much they enjoyed it.

William Bahlman: That's right.

Herbert Evison: Without an exception that's the reaction. Well, now, somewhere in this period of employment of yours in Richmond, a thing referred to as a Recreation Demonstration Area came into existence – a whole collection of them. And if I remember rightly you were recruited into that program pretty early. How about getting something about that on the record?

William Bahlman: Yes, that's right. Because of my background in land appraisal work and the fact that the Recreation Demonstration Area program was based on the acquisition of submarginal farmland, which was being acquired by the Resettlement Administration, they needed to have people with some knowledge of land values in the early part of that program. They made up appraisals actually and sent them into Raleigh, North Carolina, where the Resettlement Administration was, and recommended the acquisition of some of the lands, and so forth. Before long I got into the Recreation Demonstration Area at Swift Creek, Virginia, near Chesterfield Courthouse, and I was actually assigned there and worked out there. When I once got on that staff, I was assistant to Arthur Parmenter who was the Project Manager. And we went into a place that had absolutely nothing but farmhouses, and we had to start a park. And we started it from scratch. It was just farmland, farm woods and farm buildings. And we set up our office in an old log cabin there. And you talk about working under poor light conditions! We had gas lamps. And bugs in things overhead were always making sawdust come down on anything you were working on. It

would get in your hair. It was really something, but as I said, we had this “do or die” spirit and we loved what we were doing.

Herbert Evison: Well, now these were submarginal, or they often referred to them as marginal lands – lands just on the borderline of being economically farmable. What kind of prices did you have to pay for these on the average pretty poor lands?

William Bahlman: My recollection is that we paid as low as \$10 an acre for some of them and they might have run up to \$20 or \$30, but we didn’t pay very much for that land. I imagine some of it would be very high priced now.

Herbert Evison: Oh yes, I’m sure it would. Did you handle negotiations with the owners for the purchase?

William Bahlman: No, I didn’t do that because, you see, I very quickly got out of that and into an actual development program and an operating program. But in the beginning the reason for my selection was the land acquisition knowledge. But then we so soon got into the other. Well, I say “no”, but I did go around with an offer to sell to a few of the people who had in-holdings, you might say, and get them to agree to sell them.

Herbert Evison: I’m interested in what kind of houses came along with these lands.

William Bahlman: Well, none of them were good enough to keep. They were all torn down and destroyed later. They were just old farmhouses. Some of them were two-story, but they were all unpainted and in the last stages of decay. They were really nothing. They looked like a good, strong wind would blow them away.

Herbert Evison: No question in your mind that it was a very good idea to withdraw all those old lands from attempts at agriculture.

William Bahlman: Yes, that’s right, because the land really was no good. It had been overworked for years and years, and broom sage and second-growth pine and stuff like that was what the fields consisted of. And there was very little of it really being farmed. They couldn’t make any money on it. But I think that the RDA program was a tremendous success – all I have ever seen of it. Swift Creek there is now Pocahontas State Park, and it is a very fine area. Those trees out there which were then quite small, some of them, are now 40 years older and I’ll tell you that’s a big forest there now.

Herbert Evison: I think it would be interesting to get on the record, Bill, in connection with that particular RD area, something about its qualifications for becoming a Recreation Demonstration Area. Here you had a collection of old, worn-out, small farms, but they happened to be in an area that had certain other

qualifications. And I think it would be interesting to get on the record here what those qualifications were and why it made a good RDA.

William Bahlman: Well, I think you're right about that. I think that probably the reason there was an asset there that led to a real good park development was that there was one fine stream of water – Swift Creek. And then there was another smaller stream which entered into it at a point well within the park. And this other stream flowed through a section of the park quite a long ways. Both of these streams lent themselves to development of lakes by damming. And both of them were dammed and made very fine lakes. In fact, there was a Richmond man here not long ago. Because he lived near Chesterfield Courthouse, I told him that I had been involved in the development of that area back in the '30's. And he said, "Are those natural lakes?" So, they must have been pretty good lakes.

Herbert Evison: That's a pretty good tribute to the looks of the job that the Park Service produced out there.

William Bahlman: I want to add, too, that aside from the fact that the streams were there, the stream valleys and the banks had not been suitable for farming, so there were some large trees, heavy timber, down near the creeks. There were swampy conditions in the headwaters of this smaller creek. I remember O. B. Taylor used to love to go out there because there were so many little animals and fish up in there, in the swampy places. So, it had a lot of assets like that, natural history assets.

Herbert Evison: Well, I'm glad to get that additional information about the area. Do you remember who determined the acquisition boundaries for that area?

William Bahlman: I don't know for sure, but I would say that Steamer Bursley and Buck Lisle probably had a lot to do with it. You see, Buck was in charge of land acquisition at that time and Steamer Bursley was the District Officer. Later on, when I left Swift Creek I came in and was assistant to Steamer in the District Office, and that's how I got into administration. Before that I had been more or less in the engineering field and that kind of work.

Herbert Evison: One thing that I wonder about in determining those boundaries. Do you remember whether they really controlled the watersheds of those two streams?

William Bahlman: No, they didn't control the whole watershed. It would have been too much. I mean it went beyond them. The smaller stream they did pretty much control because it started right near the boundary, but then Swift Creek went on for miles beyond. They couldn't hope to do it, but it did flow through land that was not industrial. It was just open country, and it was clean water at that time.

- Herbert Evison: I wonder how it is now.
- William Bahlman: I wonder. I don't know.
- Herbert Evison: You mentioned a little bit ago your conversion, so to speak, from being a developer to being an administrator. And I would like to get on the record that change in direction.
- William Bahlman: Well, Steamer had seen me working at Swift Creek and I guess he liked what he saw. So, he wanted me to come in, to Richmond, and be his assistant in general administration with programs of development, land acquisition and all. I came in and I guess maybe I did all right at it because one thing then led to another. I always had a policy of never saying I can't do anything. If they wanted to give it to me, I'd take it.
- Herbert Evison: Do you remember when it was that you came into the Regional Office?
- William Bahlman: No. I should have brought my file with me.
- Herbert Evison: I tell you, I am interested. You may remember I went to Richmond with the title of Regional Officer starting on June 1, 1936. I have sort of a dim impression that at that time, I remember you were in an office separated from the Grace Securities Building at first where I established the Regional Office, but you came over about, I would think, in August 1936 and became a part of that group there in the Grace Securities Building. You referred to Steamer as District Officer, in charge of the Regional Office.
- William Bahlman: He was in charge of the District Office. There was a district. They had another District Office in Atlanta and one in Bronxville, New York.
- Herbert Evison: Yes. Well now I was under the impression that Earl Weatherwax was the man in charge of that office up until the time that I went down there.
- William Bahlman: Weatherwax was the Regional Officer, and he was in charge of everything from Maine to Florida. Steamer was his assistant at one time, but then he was a district officer. And you remember Mel Borgeson was the District Officer in Bronxville. John Neasmith was his assistant.
- Herbert Evison: Well, "Doc" Gadsby?
- William Bahlman: "Doc" Gadsby was the District Officer in Atlanta and Ira Lykes was his assistant down there. There was an office before in Springfield, Massachusetts and that had been combined with the Bronxville office.
- Herbert Evison: Well anyway, then you and your group came, which at that time I think was concerned almost totally with RDA's, was it not? In the middle of 1936?

- William Bahlman: Yes.
- Herbert Evison: You and your group came over physically into the Grace Securities Building.
- William Bahlman: We had one of our first reorganizations about that time. They closed up the other offices, Atlanta and Bronxville, and shipped all their records and the personnel they could use and would come, all came to Richmond. And we set up a combined office of CCC and ERA at that time and did all the fiscal, personnel work, and so forth, for everything from Maine to Florida right in Richmond. And this was put under me. Ira Lykes was my assistant.
- Herbert Evison: Yes. I was down there from June 1936 until the 1st of February 1940. And I know that you were there all that time, and for a long while afterwards. And let's get something of the history of the jobs that you carried on during that time.
- William Bahlman: Well, my job was Assistant Regional Director, either at the time you're speaking of, when that office was put together, or shortly afterwards.
- Herbert Evison: It was afterwards.
- William Bahlman: But the job was always the same. They changed the title at one time in the 40's to Administrative Officer and that's what it was when I left Richmond. But later on, when Mulvany was there it went back, I think, to Assistant Regional Director. It was always the same basic job and it was complete responsibility under the Regional Director for all of the management functions – the fiscal affairs and the personnel affairs and all that the headquarters office was engaged in, and for giving advice in those fields and trying to keep in touch with and give guidance to the people in the same kind of work in the parks.
- Herbert Evison: Now was Chief Clerk Stutz under your direction?
- William Bahlman: Stutz handled personnel under my direction in that consolidation.
- Herbert Evison: Looking back over those years, which I strongly suspect that you enjoyed, I can think of one very important event in your career at that time, and that was the commission of matrimony, which we might get on the record and the rest of your family history at this point.
- William Bahlman: On February 15, 1939, I was married to a charming southern girl born in Appomattox, Virginia. Her name was Mary Virginia Cheatham. Her family for many generations had lived in Virginia. Her mother was a Hunter. We had our first child, Mary Louise Bahlman, June 29, 1940. You want me to tell you about the others?

- Herbert Evison: Yes, now let's get the low-down on these children.
- William Bahlman: Well, Mary Lou is now married. She graduated from the University of Delaware and married a young man named Wright Boyce Poffenberger. She was a home economics major. They have two children, a boy and a girl.
- Herbert Evison: It's good you spelled Poffenberger.
- William Bahlman: If you remember, the Poffenberger Farm at Antietam is where the Red Cross had some of its beginnings. So Poffenberger is an old American name, but it is a little long and a little odd. The Boyces, his mother's family, are from Boyce, Virginia.
- Herbert Evison: These names are long-rooted, aren't they?
- William Bahlman: Yes, they are. Our second daughter was Elizabeth Hunter Bahlman and she's married to Thomas Winter Richardson. They have two children, a boy and a girl. Our third daughter is Anne Gray Bahlman who married Robert Paul Fielder. They have a daughter four months old. Recently Robert was in the Air Force four years, following graduation from the University of Maryland, and came out of the service as a captain. He did some very responsible work, and he was in Thailand for over a year. I should tell what the other two girls' husbands are doing. The Poffenberger gentleman is a graduate of the University of Delaware and is now comptroller of Blue Cross and Blue Shield here in Washington. And Thomas Richardson is a graduate of Western Maryland University and is a manager in the Hot Shoppes organization – one of their cafeterias. And Bob Fielder is also with Hot Shoppes in training for one of their management jobs.
- Herbert Evison: You said that your first daughter was a graduate of the University of Delaware, but I don't remember that you told where your other two daughters went. You made the statement a while ago that all three of your daughters are college graduates.
- William Bahlman: Well, that was very much of an oversight on my part. Betty, the second girl, is a graduate of the Medical College of Virginia in nursing with a baccalaureate degree. Anne is a graduate of George Washington University with a major in Biology.
- Herbert Evison: Now having gotten that family information on the record, let's go back to your National Park Service career. You were Assistant Regional Director in Region One until when, either under that title or, what was the other title?

William Bahlman: Administrative Officer. I held either one or the other of those titles in Richmond until 1950. It was just at the end of 1949 I think that the arrangements were made, and I may have come up here in December of '49. My family didn't move up until '50. They came up in the spring after the children were through school and we had sold our house in Richmond.

Herbert Evison: Into what job did you come?

William Bahlman: At that time Hugh Miller had been transferred to Santa Fe and Leland Ramsdell was made Personnel Officer. And I was made Assistant Personnel Officer taking Lee's old job.

Herbert Evison: Well now, you served in Richmond then under a whole flock of Regional Directors. I think it would be interesting to get on the record some impressions, or some ideas about these bosses that you had during those years. I don't propose that you say this man was the best and this man was the worst, but if there were certain characteristics of any of them that you remember and would like to put on the record, I'd be glad if you would.

William Bahlman: Do you want me to start with the Emergency programs and Weatherwax for instance?

Herbert Evison: Yes.

William Bahlman: Weatherwax was the first one. He was called Regional Officer and he was concerned only with the Emergency programs, which were CCC and then later ERA. PWA was handled out of Washington as I recall it. Weatherwax was a real "ball of fire." A lot of people may not have cared too much for him. I always admired Weatherwax a great deal because of his great drive. I think he was the man for the job at the time and he got a lot accomplished, and made people enjoy working. You replaced Weatherwax?

Herbert Evison: Yes, I followed Weatherwax in there as Regional Officer for the entire Louisiana to Maine area.

William Bahlman: When they set up in that reorganization that's when you came down. If I may be so bold as to give a little anecdote here, I remember very well bringing in your first paycheck when you were promoted to \$5,000 a year. And you leaned back, and you said, "Bill, I never thought I'd make it." Now that shows you how times have changed. That was a big salary in those days.

Herbert Evison: I can well remember.

William Bahlman: It wouldn't hurt to mention now something about salaries. As Assistant Regional Director I was making \$3,800 and I was really making a big salary. Most of the salaries ran around \$3,200 for professional jobs, so I

felt pretty good about my salary, and I felt well able to get married on \$3,800 a year.

Herbert Evison: So, you went ahead and did.

William Bahlman: My wife thought I was quite a catch, too, I think. Well as you say, you came in. And I think you were there until they made the switch to the regular Park Service reorganization and Carl Russell came in. Carl was a very fine gentleman, one I admired very much. He was followed by Minor Tillotson. "Tilly" was also fine. We enjoyed every man who ever came there. "Tilly" brought a lot of the western touches to us that we weren't used to. Then he was followed by Tom Allen. And Tom was a real good man for the time he was there. He got the field well organized. We needed to bring a lot of cohesiveness into it and get the old-time park people working with what they considered the newer ones. They came from the Emergency programs and Tom was strong on that. I think he welded the eastern part of the United States into a good Park Service team. He had a hard job. When he went to war in the Air Force (as captain I think, he probably came out as major) he was followed by O. G. Taylor for the interim period. In fact, there was a short period there when Tom's assistant, Fred Johnston, ran the office very well by himself before O. G. came on.

Herbert Evison: That's right.

William Bahlman: Then O. G. Taylor left when Tom came back.

Herbert Evison: Tom was still Regional Director when you left there.

William Bahlman: Yes, when I left.

Herbert Evison: But Elbert Cox had come in in the meantime as Associate Regional Director.

William Bahlman: Yes. And we had had under the Regional Office another big reorganization and change in the way things were done. You will remember the hassles and talks we had in those days over how the design work was to be done. It had been under the Regional Directors. During the latter years that I was in Richmond that was all changed, and the Design and Construction Offices were set up. They did the work independent of the Regional Director.

Herbert Evison: Well now, you came into the personnel field up here in Washington working with Lee Ramsdell. And I would be very interested in getting some of your impressions of your years as a personnel expert.

William Bahlman: My claim to fame in the personnel field – I don't know – I always liked personnel and I always liked people. I always was interested in their

careers and trying to help them to get ahead, you know. I made a study when I was in Richmond of the superintendencies in Region One. I put into this study all the factors that I thought involved work and knowledge on the part of the superintendent. And I built up a weighted scale to show how one job in one park related to the same kind of a job in another park and then the grades they were at. This was the first time I ever saw this done. I originated it because I wasn't a personnel man. I just originated it because I thought it was a practical way to approach a problem. We had not been able to get promotions for these fellows. Well, when I put this material into the hands of the people in Washington, they couldn't avoid it. They couldn't argue down these points. And it resulted in a number of very good promotions. And that is how they happened to want me to come to Washington. They thought I must have a little bit of personnel knowledge.

Herbert Evison: This you had done while you were in Richmond?

William Bahlman: Oh yes.

Herbert Evison: For the Region that you were a part of.

William Bahlman: For the Region. Later on, it became common practice to do this kind of thing here in Washington. I did it when I had never seen it done before and they didn't seem to have known about that kind of thing. But I had things like miles of roads and the number of sanitary systems, the number of structures, the number of people, the amount of the appropriation, and everything that went into making the job tough.

Herbert Evison: Tough in varying degrees for different areas.

William Bahlman: That's right.

Herbert Evison: Well now, if I remember rightly, when you came up here you went to work for Lee Ramsdell. And Lee was a man who had had quite a bit of experience in personnel management.

William Bahlman: He was a professional personnel man. He had been in that kind of work in Wisconsin, I think with the State.

Herbert Evison: Did you find that association a valuable one for broadening your own conception of what personnel management should be?

William Bahlman: Coming up here working with Ramsdell?

Herbert Evison: Yes.

William Bahlman: Yes, I think you have to get some respect and understanding for the problems of personnel when you work with people who are professionals in the field. You begin to learn about the limitations that are placed on

them. But I think that I was able during those years to bring some of the field attitudes to the job that they perhaps didn't understand as well. Before I came to Washington there had been no apparent way as far as the field was concerned that you could tell how they selected a superintendent. It always seemed that it was whoever was nearest at the time. Whether that was true or not, I don't know. I doubt that it was. I'm sure that we had good men that were selected, and they had good reasons, but they weren't documented. There was no way you could tell. We had no real stated policy on promotions. So, one of the things that I became interested in very soon was getting a promotion policy set up and a procedure set up which was not nearly as formal as it is now, but what they've got now is an outgrowth of that. That was important to the field because it let them see that there was a procedure and that it wasn't just a haphazard thing. And it was good for the morale and it was good for bringing people to the attention of the appointing authorities who might not have been brought to their attention otherwise.

Herbert Evison: Bill, during some of the period of the 50's there developed certain practices, I think largely initiated by Connie Wirth, for making many more transfers between areas, many lateral transfers within the System, and a policy which was honored in the branch very frequently, but in general to the effect that a man shouldn't continue to work in an area more than a certain length of time. I think three years was the figure rather flexibly applied. I would be interested in your appraisal of that transfer and promotion practice as it was carried on at that time.

William Bahlman: It was called a Lateral Transfer Policy. It was a part of the broad promotion policy. It was called a Promotion and Lateral Transfer Policy. The philosophy of it was that a man would stagnate if he stayed at the same job and the same grade in one place too long. It's hard to condemn it because I felt at the time like it had value. Really, in practice, though, a lot of times people found ways to avoid being transferred and to stay in the same place, and they had good reasons for it. I think after a long enough time of attempting to follow the policy it broke down pretty much because of these things. For instance, you're a ranger in a park. Your wife has got a job in the local school system, and she's got a pretty good paying job. Well, if you transfer a man like that there's the chance, or at least there was then (now teachers can get jobs) that the wife may not be able to find a teaching job where they relocate. You could ruin his whole family for him. One of the things that that policy was intended to do, I think, was to make it possible to get some of the deadwood out too. Of course, that's a desirable thing. It has to be done, but maybe that wasn't the right way to do it. I think the Lateral Transfer Policy had merit for younger people; and for people who didn't have the responsibilities that kept them from

moving, it was a fine thing. It gave them opportunities for experience in different places. And that was part of the idea.

Herbert Evison: You mentioned the fact that there was this sort of idea that if a guy stayed on one job for longer than three or four years, always at the same grade, he would stagnate. Well, that's a pretty broad generalization. And wouldn't you say as a matter of fact, that if a man showed tendencies to stagnate that he ought to be moved somewhere else, but that it was not too wise to just assume that after three years a man was going to start stagnating?

William Bahlman: I think that's a fair statement.

Herbert Evison: Because you and I both know that there have been men who have stayed in one position for years, many years, and who have constantly become more valuable in that position. I always think of Art Stupka down in Great Smokies and what a disaster it would have been if he'd been shifted around to half a dozen different areas.

William Bahlman: Well, Sam Weems, former Superintendent of Blue Ridge Parkway, was an example. He knew everybody and he had to have had a million neighbors down there. You had to have somebody who knew the people, so he stayed for a long time.

Herbert Evison: It's pretty hard really to make good, sound generalizations, and I would say about as hard to do it in the personnel management field as in any that I can think of.

William Bahlman: Well, that particular policy didn't really originate in Personnel.

Herbert Evison: Oh, I know. I'm sure it didn't.

William Bahlman: It originated in what was at that time considered Management Analysis.

Herbert Evison: But it was something that then Personnel Management had to swallow.

William Bahlman: Had to really work it in.

Herbert Evison: How long did you stay in Personnel?

William Bahlman: I think it was 1957 that they set up an office for Management Analysis and Property Management. I can't remember the title of the division exactly. But anyhow, its job was to try to improve the management of the Park Service, to have regular management appraisals of the operations in the field and to control the property of the Park Service (up until that time we had very poor inventories and couldn't keep track of our property) and to handle the mail and files systems, to get out an Administrative Manual which had been allowed to drop down to nothing so that everything was memos, memos, memos. You remember that.

Herbert Evison: Yes.

William Bahlman: So, we started that office in 1957 and I always felt pretty proud of what we accomplished there. The handbooks and manuals program I felt was a big success and we got many, many compliments from other agencies. And they came to look at our material to use it as a sample for their own, but I understand that it's pretty much ditched by now.

Herbert Evison: Yes, I remember having seen a press release in which George Hartzog announced that they were throwing out the whole system of handbooks. I think he made some comment to the effect that it limited the flexibility of operation, or something to that effect. Well, I'll have to admit that I felt that the Park Service was getting somewhat overloaded with handbooks. Practically everything that you did had some specific instruction about it.

William Bahlman: My attitude on the handbooks was this. If you're a division head in the Washington Office, responsible say for the natural history program, you had better get something down in black and white for the field to look at and refer to. And that was what we called our handbooks. It was the message from the top man in a particular field to his people in the field as to how their programs should be run and to keep this thing up to date. Without it where would they look? Where would you look if you didn't have a handbook?

Herbert Evison: Well, you certainly would have to have some kind of instructions.

William Bahlman: Yes, and if it's like it had gotten to be, with instructions in memo form under varying subjects and often filed improperly, you can't keep track of those things, and everybody knows it who knows anything about manuals or handbooks. And I think personally that it was a very serious error to do away with the manuals and handbooks. It will only be a matter of time until the handbooks and manuals come back because without them you're going to have chaos.

Herbert Evison: I'm not sure that we don't.

William Bahlman: It's all well enough to say, and I agree, that a man, if he's a manager or superintendent of a park, should have room in which to move and use a little initiative, and put something of himself into the job. But there are basic guidelines that we just can't ignore. They relate to law, and they relate to other controls that you can't avoid. They've got to be set down where a man can refer to them if he needs to.

Herbert Evison: There's another matter of Personnel Management having to do with appointments and transfers in the field. For a long while, I don't know just how long, there was a policy that a man who was an assistant superintendent in a national park might be promoted to a superintendency,

but not in that park. Now I understand that that policy is being abandoned, that they figure that a man who comes in as an assistant superintendent and gets to know the problems of a park, if the superintendency becomes vacant, that he's a good candidate for it. I wonder what your opinion is of those two kinds of policy.

William Bahlman: Well, I don't remember that that policy was ever written. I think that it was sort of a policy that everybody thought they were following anyhow. My own idea would be that I don't think you should have set policies strongly followed on things like that because every superintendency and the opportunity to fill it ought to stand on its own feet. And you ought to fill it with the best man available and you should keep the best man available in it. The only thing you're concerned with is having the right man in the job. I don't go for all these policies like that that really seem to limit top management too much.

Herbert Evison: I'm glad to get that comment on this tape because I think it is a product of both experience and thought.

William Bahlman: Yes, it is. Is there any more time on this tape?

Herbert Evison: Oh yes, quite a bit more.

William Bahlman: Well as I mentioned, I was in that job in Management Analysis until 1965, I guess. It's hard for me to remember exactly the date, but then I was offered the Assistant Regional Director for Administration job in the National Capital Region. And I found myself right back where I started so far as title goes.

Herbert Evison: Yes, but with more pay.

William Bahlman: With more pay. I really enjoyed my three years or so in the National Capital Region. By that time, I was regarded as a senior citizen. I had a lovely office, and everybody treated me with the respect they thought I was entitled to.

Herbert Evison: Well now, who was your chief during the time that you served in the National Capital Parks?

William Bahlman: Sutton Jett selected me for the job at National Capital Parks. I wasn't there too long before Sutton retired. It was a year or two that Sutton was there with Bob Horne as his associate. Then Nash Castro followed Sutton as Regional Director. Castro is a very fine manager and administrator. I was very much impressed with him. Then Castro left for his position with the State of New York a few months after I retired. Dickenson had been Nash's associate and followed him in the job.

Herbert Evison: Do you think of anything in that experience as Assistant Regional Director there that you'd be interested in getting on the record?

William Bahlman: Well, I can only say this. That whole setup in the National Capital Region is now National Capital Parks again, which I think is a good move. It should never have been a region in my opinion. And to have it under a superintendent, under Dickenson, I feel like that's the right kind of organizational setup for it. It ought to be under the Washington Office, under the Director as a superintendency. And I think Dickenson is a good man, too. But they have got the toughest job of most any operation probably. It's like operating in a goldfish bowl. You've heard that comment so many times, but it is. They never know from one day to the next what's going to happen. And they've got to be ready for all kinds of things, and the most unforeseen and horrible kinds of things like we've just gone through down there with the May Day demonstration. And, of course, it's getting worse and worse. But they do have some very capable people. They have some very highly qualified people. They can do most anything in National Capital Parks. They've got a tremendous staff, good people. At least they did have. Now I don't know who's there now because I've been away going on three years and a lot happens in that time.

Herbert Evison: I don't know whether this started before you left or not, but certainly in the last few years there's been increasing involvement with the National Capital Parks as a city park system in which a tremendous amount of effort is expended on recreational use of the parks.

William Bahlman: That started just about the time I left and it was an effort on the part of the Johnson Administration, and I suppose has been carried on by Nixon, of trying to involve the park systems and National Capital Parks, as a demonstration to the rest of the country, in programs that would keep inner-city youngsters off the streets, especially in the summer, and give them some worthwhile things to do and keep down crime and that sort of thing. And I think it's a good idea. It promotes a little culture, too. Some of these are cultural programs. All that is very good.

Herbert Evison: Well, of course, you were involved during those years with National Capital Parks in the business management so to speak, primarily.

William Bahlman: That's right.

Herbert Evison: Was budgeting and financial management, personnel, procurement and management analysis. We went out and made management appraisals of the various activities under that office periodically.

Herbert Evison: The phase that I mentioned there, budgeting, I think would be worthy of a little discussion by you. And I think so for this reason, that I don't know of any other unit of the National Park System which has to make up budgets to be met out of several appropriation acts. The appropriations for the District of Columbia and the appropriations for the National Park Service I know are two. I don't know whether there are any others, but I think there are.

William Bahlman: General Services Administration and the White House.

Herbert Evison: The White House. I think you ought to describe a little something of what that chore involved. For one thing, if you wanted money for a certain project, how did you arrive at a decision as to whether that should be in the D. C. budget, or in the National Park Service budget?

William Bahlman: Well, it was very confusing a lot of times, of course. But actually, it gave us a great deal of flexibility, too. Many times National Capital Parks was a means of pulling the whole Park Service out of the hole because they had these various appropriations available to them and they could shift certain kinds of expenditures legitimately from one appropriation to another. They'd say, "Well, we can just as well do that out of District of Columbia money as out of National Park Service money, so we'll do it out of D. C. money and then the Park Service can pick up this money over here and help bail it out of the red," in June say, when it was getting low. That would all be adjusted in time so that nobody suffered. Nothing was improper. It was just wise management of the money for the Service as a whole. Budget officers and finance officers have to do a great many things in order to keep the programs of the Service going and meet the demands of management. That involves a little shifting of things around sometimes. I remember many times, even when I was in Richmond, of shifting money from one pocket to another because I found out it was running too heavy in one place. That's perfectly legitimate.

Herbert Evison: Well, Bill, I have sort of run out of questions to ask you. You had 35 years with the Park Service. I'd like two things – first, if you'd think of it, any particular event, or events, during those 35 years that stand out in your memory especially as interesting, or unusual, or significant. That would be one thing. And then I think it would be nice to get in here some statement about your overall feeling about your 35 years with the Park Service.

William Bahlman: One of my experiences in the early days that I will never forget was when I had exceptions against me by the Comptroller General amounting to nearly \$100,000, and he was really hot on my trail. I had to come up here with all my papers and get with Mr. Jennings who was the Finance Officer at that time and his assistant, John Strawser. We went over to talk to the

people at the General Accounting Office. And we finally got out of that exception, but it wasn't without a lot of blood and sweat. The principal thing about it was that it was more money than they could possibly get out of me and I knew that, so I didn't know what they were going to do. But the exception was for this: We had an ERA project at Fort Jefferson, down in the Gulf of Mexico, or near it, 40 or 50 miles from Cuba. We had workers which we recruited in Key West – 30 or 40 men. They were cleaning up the place. We'd bring them out on Monday morning and take them back Friday evening. During the interim they were sleeping in the casemates of the old fort there which gave them shelter. Now the General Accounting Office made an exception on this because they said we were not charging them for quarters all this time and they'd been out there for a long time. Thirty or 40 men mount up pretty soon to a lot of money if you don't charge them for quarters. So, we based our argument on the fact that we had done nothing for them. They were sleeping in these casemates, and we had acquired some surplus Army cots and loaned them to the men. That was the extent of the quarters. We just asked GAO, "What value would you place on those quarters to people of this kind?" Finally, we got out of that, but that was a heck of an experience.

Herbert Evison: Well, I'm glad you recollected it. I think it's a very interesting experience. I can imagine that your heart must have jumped a little bit when you heard that you might be socked \$100,000, or whatever part of it you could raise.

William Bahlman: Well, I was the certifying officer for millions of dollars in all those programs in the Emergency days, and later. And I only really got stuck once and then I didn't have to pay it. And I'll tell you what that was. We took over the CCC accounts that were handled in Bronxville, and we brought them all together in the top floor of a loft on Franklin Street in Richmond, in July when the temperature in those quarters I bet was 120 degrees. It was just as hot as fire, and they didn't have any air conditioning in those days. We were under obligation to get those bills paid that were brought down from Bronxville and from Atlanta and other places. We just had a big hodgepodge and didn't know where anything was. You know, these were other people's files. Well, Mary Kane, God bless her, she was a real trooper in those days and always was, and some of the other girls, they worked like Trojans getting the stuff cleaned out and paying those bills. And I signed anything they'd bring me. We paid one bill to a hardware store in Pennsylvania twice. See they billed us and then they billed us again. And so, two vouchers were made up and we paid that bill twice. Well, we discovered very soon that we had paid it twice. So, I immediately sent off an order to that hardware store for some nuts and bolts, or something that we could use, so I'd owe them you see, to get even with them because in those days you had to have some kind of a little

trick or you might get stuck. And this was a way to keep from getting stuck. By the time that order got to them they had gone bankrupt and were out of business. So, it ended up we had paid them twice. I think the bill was \$100, or thereabouts. Tom Allen, unbeknowing to me, took up a collection around the office for my relief and they put the money on my desk. I appreciated that. It was a very fine thing to have a bunch of co-workers do. As I say, I got stuck for that, but I didn't get stuck. Tom was involved because I had spent several years answering G.A.O. exceptions.

Herbert Evison: Of course, you were working with an extraordinarily fine bunch of co-workers, if anybody were to ask you.

William Bahlman: Yes.

Herbert Evison: Looking back on that 35 years how do you size it up?

William Bahlman: Well, I size it up this way, Herb. I was talking to somebody the other day and I said that I thought I worked through the best years of the Park Service. I mean when we started out there were maybe 21 or 22 parks. And that's all there were in the regular Park System. Then these Emergency programs came along, and they did some exceptional work. It was work you could be proud of. And some of the best things we have today are still the things that were done at that time. We had some exceptional people who came in and were available to the Park Service. Steamer Bursley was a man I always thought a great deal of, and well yourself, Herb Evison.

Herbert Evison: Now Bill, we ran off the end of the tape right in the midst of that reply, so I'm going to repeat my question. I would like your overall thoughts, your feelings, about your 35 years.

William Bahlman: Well Herb, as I said, the other day somebody asked me something along the same line that you have asked. And I said, "Well it's my honest feeling that I worked during the best years of the Park Service." And I can explain that, so it doesn't sound quite like I'm condemning anything today because I'm not, but the job has changed. And I think the job satisfaction for the individual probably isn't as great today as it was then because we were small. There were 21 or 22 parks – I don't remember exactly. And then we had these Emergency programs which came and went, but the main thing from them was the developments which we were proud of, the people connected with them. The people themselves were so fine that we had in those Emergency programs – the ones who stuck, and many of them are still around, or had their careers and are retired. In the beginning the old-line Park Service people felt some jealousy towards the new ones, but we went through a period when that was all adjusted and we finally came to be one big, happy family. And it wasn't too big a family, so at one

time I felt like I knew just about everybody in the Park Service. Although I was in the eastern region, we knew and met and had enough contacts and meetings and all so that you got to know the people in the other regions, especially in your own particular field. Then when I came to Washington I traveled extensively. Every summer I thought that it was to my advantage to know the people in the parks, and I made it my business to go out and meet as many as I could, and I kept notes on them so that I knew people in the parks. Well, I still feel that I have friends most everywhere in the Park Service because Mary and I took an automobile trip this year. We left January 14th and got back in the first part of March. We went across Arkansas and visited some family there, my wife's family. The first Park Service place we stopped was Santa Fe. We went to the hotel there, the La Fonda. We had a little cocktail party there for our friends and invited them in. Then the next night they had us out and we went to dinner. You can just do that in the Park Service. You can go all around. You've always got friends. We did this all way across the country. We went as far as Las Vegas. We missed many of our friends as there was a meeting in Washington at that time and they were on attendance in here. I was very much pleased at some of the developments. When I first went to Lake Mead years ago, I thought that that barren stretch of land through there would never amount to anything and wondered if anyone would come out here and go swimming on that rough beach. The temperature when I was there the first time went so high it melted the safety razor right in the kit. The wax and all on the motor melted. I didn't have a very good impression of Lake Mead then. But this time I went down to get an up-to-date look at Chuck Rickey's accomplishments. I had seen it since that first visit and so I knew what to expect. It is lovely now. It is just beautiful. It's put to a great amount of use – boating and swimming and all. Chuck deserves a lot of credit for the things he did there that seemed a little bit out of order at the time. He dug irrigation trenches and canals all around there, you know, and made it possible to get water into the camp sites. And the lovely shrubs growing there lend shade and a feeling of separation from other people. And I think that's just great. They've got a wonderful place there now. I remember at the time they were planning Big Bend, Tom Vint was very much interested in trying to get some shade for campers down there along the river. And there was a great deal of argument as to whether it would be right or wrong to make irrigation trenches and plant cottonwood trees. I went down into that campground area and here are all these people using it and there are great big trees. And it's not out of order at all because a campground itself is not part of the natural scene. So, when you're in a campground you might just as well make it as nice as you can, certainly to protect you from the sun down there in that country. I was interested to see that these things had panned out so well when there had

been so much question in a lot of people's minds in the early days as to whether they were the right things to do.

Herbert Evison: Well, I take it on the whole that you would be hard put to think of another career that you would rather have had than the one you had with the Park Service.

William Bahlman: Well, I've always said that the best thing they ever did to me was when the C and O fired me because honestly it has been a wonderful career. I met a lot of nice people, and I had an opportunity to grow myself, and to use my abilities more than I might have in many, many jobs with the education that I had. I had no degree. At that time there was a big premium placed on a degree, I think more than there is now in some fields. Let's see, I was 29 when I started working for the Park Service. I was an Assistant Regional Director by the time I was about 32. Well, that seems pretty unheard of right now. I was really moving.

Herbert Evison: I'll say you were! Of course, I wouldn't argue any of that with you because my feeling about my years with the Park Service is very much yours. You certainly acquire, if you have any stuff yourself, some of the most wonderful friends that any people could ever have.

William Bahlman: Really too, it's an education because you rub shoulders with people in so many professions, and interesting professions. I'm much interested in the outdoors anyhow. All of my career I was talking with people who were talking about things that I loved. For example, Pinky discussing his archaeology at Fort Raleigh, or wherever he might be; those things are just fascinating to me.

Herbert Evison: You bet.

William Bahlman: I was always trying to learn as much as I could about all of them.

Herbert Evison: Well Bill, I certainly don't want to cut you off. And if there's anything else you want to say into that mike, this is your chance.

William Bahlman: Well, I only hope that I have said the kinds of things that you can use.

Herbert Evison: You have. And I am immensely obliged to you for being willing to come all the way in here from way out beyond the Beltway to do this taping with me. Thank you very much Bill.

William Bahlman: You're very, very welcome, Mr. Herb Evison.

Herbert Evison: Yours truly.

[END OF INTERVIEW]