

An Interview with
Alex Outlaw

at his home in
Oregon County, Missouri

01 April 1998

interviewed by Will Sarvis



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PREFACE

Alex Outlaw worked for the Ozark National Scenic Riverways for about twenty-three years, 1972-1995. In the following transcript he offers an unusual perspective of the Riverways, partly because the Park Service personnel tend to transfer every few years. Instead Mr. Outlaw retired from the Riverways and began restoring a cabin in the nearby village of Wilderness, in Oregon County. The interview took place in the restored living room of this historic structure.

The interview was recorded on Sony type I (normal bias) audio cassettes, using a Marantz PMD-222 manual recorder (set on automatic recording level) and a Shure VP64 omnidirectional microphone attached to a floor stand

The following transcript represents a faithful rendering of the entire oral history interview. Minor stylistic alterations -- none of factual consequence -- have been made as part of a general transcription policy. Any use of brackets [] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Parentheses () are used to indicate laughter or a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation. Quotation marks [“ ”] indicate speech depicting dialogue, or words highlighted for the usual special purposes (such as indicating irony). Double dashes [--] and ellipses [. . .] are also used as a stylistic method in an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editors, Will Sarvis and N. Renae Farris.

WS: I'm in Oregon County, Missouri, near Wilderness, in the home of Mr. Alex Outlaw, who worked for the Riverways for the last twenty years of your [U. S. National] Park Service career, I guess.

AO: Right. I started in '72.

WS: To get started, maybe you could just give me an outline of your Park Service career.

AO: Okay. After graduating from Virginia Tech, I worked as a seasonal in 1963. The year before that I worked in a plant pathology lab for the Park Service, when I was a senior in college; between my junior and senior year. Then, after graduating, I worked as a naturalist for Prince William Forest Park, near Triangle, Virginia. I worked there for two summers. Then I got married and got a job with the [U.S.] Army Corps of Engineers [doing] analytical photographic study. That was during the time of the Vietnam War, and they were doing a lot of flying over. So I worked on that for a couple of years. Then the opportunity came up after I took the civil service exam to get back on with Park Service. My dad had worked for Park Service in maintenance. My wife's folks [were] from Park Service. It was outdoors. And after having majored in forestry, I figured it was probably a good thing.

So I got into the Park Service and worked at George Washington Memorial Parkway in Virginia. I worked there at Great Falls as a beginning, first naturalist interpreter. I worked there for about two years, and got transferred down to Everglades National Park in 1970. I worked there as a naturalist for about one year, and then they went into what they call FOST, where you work as a combination ranger-interpreter. I worked as a supervisor in that position for another year. After that, in '72, I transferred to

Ozark National Scenic Riverways, and was there until I retired, about three years ago.

WS: So when you came, was Mr. Thompson the superintendent?

AO: No, Randy Pope had just done a complete overhaul of the staff at Ozark. Randy Pope had just come in. I think he'd been here maybe three, six months; something like that. Dave Thompson was there before Randy, I think.

WS: I think he was the third one. I don't have the chronology, exactly. And I don't know when the dates are. But, as you mentioned earlier, Ted Davenport came. And I think he was only there for six months or something.

AO: Yes. I can tell you a little history about Ted Davenport. Again, working at Prince William, Ted Davenport was my superintendent. I was there at his going away party to come to Ozark. It was ironic. I think it was in '64 or '62; something like that; before I graduated from high school -- I remember an article in the *Audubon* magazine. It was on Ozark Riverways, the proposal. I said to myself, "I'm going to work at Ozark Riverways one of these days. That is a neat place." And then I worked for Ted Davenport, and he was going to Ozark Riverways. We went into Washington. The chief ranger, Gene Daugherty, and I went in and got some slides out of the files of the Park Service, and went back and showed a slide program to Ted and his family and the people there at his going away party about the area he was going into.

And he moved to Ozark. He came into Van Buren. Again, being here for that length of time, you can talk to a lot of people. One of the people I talked to a lot was the cleaning lady, who had worked at the office there. Her name was Zelma ?Hebner?. She cleaned for the office. And, of course, she knew a lot of the stuff that was going on.

When the Park Service came in, it was quite a strain on everybody. Zelma tells me that when Ted came in, he looked around Van Buren and said, “There’s not a house here that a Park Service employee would live in.” That was sort of the initial stage it set. The town, and the Ozark people, and the Park Service, sort of, set the stage for the future conflicts.

So he built a house. It was out on [U.S. highway] 160. It’s still there. In fact, every superintendent who came in lived there, through Art Sullivan. Art Sullivan lived there. They all lived in this same house. It was the superintendent’s house.

[Tape meter, 050]

Then Art sold it to a non-superintendent. But that sort of set the state for the Riverways.

Ted was here for a year. Ted didn’t understand what a Riverways was. He politically moved here. (I don’t know how much of this has been taped, or whatever). But his wife, Cee, was Spud Bill’s sister (I believe). And Spud Bill was just under George Hartzog, as one of the operation chiefs. And George had just come in. George Hartzog had followed [Conrad L.] “Connie” Wirth. When I worked at Prince William, Connie Wirth was director, and I met him there. George, of course, was a very vivacious superintendent up at the [St. Louis] Arch.¹ He was very much interested in Ozark.

But, to get back to Ted Davenport. He just turned the public away from the Park Service. He came in with a very, very hard hand. Bill Bailey, at that time, was a political appointee, a management assistant, at the Riverways. He told me that Ted was being so arrogant and so nasty to the people in the Ozarks. He told them he was going to have no

¹ Formally known as the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial.

hunting in the Riverways and all these typical Park Service regulations were going to come down on the people. Bill Bailey went to George Hartzog and told him, “If you don’t get that S.O.B. out of here, he’s going to get killed.”

At that time, back in Washington, my last chief ranger, Gene Daugherty, he was working in personnel as a trainee. He was my chief ranger at Prince William. Gene knew the character. He was Davenport’s chief ranger there. And Gene knew his type of character, and he knew it wasn’t going to work out very well in a place like Ozark. So I guess personnel didn’t like him that well. He had a “little Napoleon” syndrome about him. Ted was the type, if you had a new campground, he’d stand in front of the ‘dozer, and walk in front of the ‘dozer, and this is the way campgrounds were built; i.e., Oak Ridge Campground at Prince William.

But anyway, Gene told me that they were going to get a good place for Ted Davenport until he retired. And it was Castillo de San Marcos in Florida. Ted went there. At times he called up Washington. He wanted a transfer, he wanted to get out. But he had made his mistake here at Ozark, and made a lot of enemies. And he was there until he retired. I don’t think he really understood the whole story of the thing. Because, again, he was pretty egocentric.

But getting back with George Hartzog, he’d make trips down here (I’m not sure if you’re familiar) when he was at that Arch, and interview people. He would talk to [Coleman] “Cokie” McSpadden, James Grassham, and Marlin McClintock. He’d talk to people at Birch Tree, Eminence, and all around Van Buren, and see how they felt about the Riverways. Leonard Hall was also one of the big advocates of the Riverways. It was

sort of funny. I found some transcripts that he had made when he came down here. He sort of took everybody and analyzed them, whether they were pro or con, and sort of wrote a little blurb about some of the wheelers and dealers of each one of the communities, and whether there was somebody we ought to work for. I think they'd started up a couple of citizen associations at Birch Tree and some of the other communities. Some of the people were going to be pushers of the Riverways, of this new concept.

Of course, like you mentioned, it *was* very controversial. It was a new type of management category that *no* Park Service employee or management person had ever even assumed the Park Service -- with their pristine, Bambi concept of creating areas and not allowing anything to happen -- would have it. So, there was a lot of controversy, both with Park Service employees, and with the outside.

[Tape meter, 100]

WS: I'm kind of surprised that Director Hartzog -- whom, everybody knows, had such a keen interest in the Riverways -- wasn't it his choice that Davenport would come in as the first superintendent?

AO: I think it was because of Spud Bill, who was right under. He probably owed Spud Bill a favor. People, back in those days, a lot of them got transferred because they screwed up some place, or they knew somebody. Check that out. Because I know when Ted Davenport died, in the newsletter -- and again, I *think* this is true; I'm not sure -- but in the newsletter the Park Service used to publish, it told about his wife and associated her with Spud Bill. I didn't know about it at the time. It was sort of very hush-hush. But we

could never figure out, why Ted? Because he didn't change any. I mean, he was that way. He was very arrogant. He was right across from Quantico Marine Reservation there at Prince William. He made them mad. He made employees mad. He did a lot of things. As I said earlier, his assistant superintendent had moved in there because Ted was having problems with the former assistant superintendent.

So Ted, when he moved here, didn't change his personality any. But why George Hartzog, who *loved* the area, why he thought that Ted would do it -- and George was a very smart individual, and very perceptive in things. I don't know. Maybe he owed him a favor or something, or maybe it was because of Spud Bill's sister. But I don't know.

George *loved* this area. He managed this area. He controlled it. Maybe that's why Ted would be here, because George ran the park. He would drive down here. He flew into St. Louis and would drive down to Ellington, and go through the ferry there at Owls Bend, and go over to a place called Seldom Seen. He came down here many, many Friday nights. Bill Bailey would meet him up there; [Richard Howard] "Dick" Ichord, [II], [Danny] Staples, the head honchos. They would make decisions. At least *I* felt they made decisions about the Riverways; about what was going to go on, who was going to do what, who would be hired, and the changes.

Randy Pope, he was a superintendent at Herbert Hoover. He had just come in. He was a landscape architect by training. He was just sort of a yes-person. In fact, I know of one occasion that he went up there thinking he would meet George at Seldom Seen, and they wouldn't even let him in the door. And he knew that Bill Bailey and Dick Ichord and George were making all the shots. He was just sort of a figurehead.

The superintendents before that were sort of funny too. Dave Thompson, he was probably the most liked of any of the superintendents by the local people. He was sort of a very nice person; very cordial, very friendly. I never met the individual, but hearing people talk about him. Very warm. But he liked progress. He liked a lot of changes. He burned a few cabins, one of which was controversial. It was outside the Riverways.

(Laughs)

WS: I heard about that! By accident, right?

AO: By accident. I ran across a tape, one time, in the files back there in the office. It was a tape someone had made at his going away party. It was one of the “Ballads of the Cabin that Dave Thompson Burned Down.” But I think he sort of met his Waterloo, because at that time a lot of historic preservation policies were coming in. He was tearing down a cabin. I think it was the ?Demoray? Cabin up at Cedar Grove. They ran into logs. Somebody saw it or reported to some local or something. That halted all the cabin destroying and house destroying along the Riverways.

[Tape meter, 150]

Then they started looking at the culture a little bit more. I guess that was one of the things that slowed him down a little bit.

Then, Milt Thompson. Milt was from Texas. The way I understood it was he had a couple of friends of senators in Texas. And Milt wanted to be superintendent. Milt was a historian, by education. For some reason, somebody twisted George Hartzog’s arm and got Milt assigned as superintendent. But George didn’t like him. So George was going to get rid of him. He said, “I’ll give him superintendent.” And it turned, I think, pretty

nasty. I think George ended up transferring him or removing him. Milt Thompson was never the same.

In fact, I did an operations evaluation up at the Jefferson Memorial Expansion Arch, and Milt was a historian up there, at that time. This is after. I don't know where he went after he left here. But it was probably a good ten, fifteen years after he left here. He was still talking about that. He had a briefcase with papers in it that said all those charges were not true. It just affected him mentally; a lifelong thing. I asked Donald Stevens to ask George Hartzog, when he interviewed him in McLean a couple of years ago, if that were true. And George didn't comment or didn't say anything about it. So I don't know. That's just what I heard. But I know Milt, in talking to him, he was pretty disturbed about something that went on down here between he and the Riverways and George Hartzog.

WS: So he followed Dave Thompson?

AO: I think. It's been a while since I've known the chronological order. I don't know whether Milt followed Dave or Randy followed Dave. The two Thompsons, I think, they were together. It was Davenport. And then Vernon Hennessey -- wasn't he chief ranger, and then he was acting, for a while?

WS: I guess he became the superintendent after Davenport was transferred.

AO: Yes, okay. He was acting. Then it went into the two Thompsons. And again, I don't know which one was which.

WS: Oh, okay. Then Mr. Pope.

AO: Then Randy Pope came in.

WS: And then Art Sullivan.

AO: Then Art Sullivan came in.

WS: Okay. So Superintendent Pope was here just prior to your arrival, and then how long did he last?

AO: He was here quite a while. I don't know. I don't keep dates in my mind; I sort of live one day at a time. I think he was here, maybe, ten years; ten, twelve. A pretty long time. He sort of came of his own.

Bill Bailey, he was a very nice person. I think he was an ag inspector, or something, for the state, before he got involved in the Riverways. Again, it was probably a reward. George rewarded people if they helped him fulfill his goals. So the management assistant position was a reward for Bill. But Bill was a very nice person. He'd do *anything* for you, and oftentimes if things got in a crunch or something like that and you couldn't do it through Park Service bureaucracy, he knew who to call, and you go things done. I mean, there were a number of cases where he helped me out quite a bit. He'd say, "Alex, I can help you do this." Because his heart was in the right place. All of their hearts were in the right place. They loved the resource, and they loved the people; especially if you look at the locals. They wanted to do the best they could for this new thing, *the* Riverways.

But Bill had heart problems; he later developed heart problems. Randy and Bill did not see eye to eye. Bill wasn't selected *by* Randy as part of his operating team.

[Tape meter, 200]

When I was there, Randy just didn't give Bill anything to do. So Bill would sleep over at

his desk. He was really bored to death. It wasn't one's fault or the other's fault. It was sort of because there wasn't any communication between the two. Bill later on retired. George Hartzog left, and budget things -- Randy sort of became superintendent and started managing as a superintendent. So he sort of came of his own, and developed into a very, very good superintendent.

WS: So Director Hartzog left during Pope's tenure as superintendent.

AO: I believe so. I'm trying to think. It's been a few years. Again, I didn't really keep track of directors, that much, except for George, because he was very dynamic. He'd have money set aside for different projects. He was very much a wheeler dealer on things that he liked, like the Alley Mill. At the time he left, he said, "You go ahead and restore Alley Mill. There's going to be money for you every year until it's completely restored." He would just go in and pull money out of the budget somehow, and sort of wheel and deal. I guess that's the way he did everything, hiring people on an airplane. If he liked them he'd hire them. So I guess it went back a little more straighter after George left.

WS: I would think the Riverways at that point would be just one of many national parks or monuments compared to Mr. Hartzog's *preference* for the Riverways.

AO: Yes, he liked the Riverways. He took special care. He gave us, probably, a lot more than he gave most parks. At Everglades, I know, he came in there a couple of times. We wined and dined him quite a bit. He'd go out on Fort Jeff in the wintertime, meeting other congressmen. But he had his favorite parks, and Ozark was one of them.

WS: Was there anybody that was similar to Bill Bailey in the sense of being a native, but then rising up through the ranks; and also just being so influential, apparently, by his

connections with Ichord and all?

AO: No. I know Don Pummell was a ranger at that time. He just retired recently. He was probably the longest. I don't think Don was hired by Bill. I remember Jim Bockman being in there.

The office, at that time, wasn't where the office is now. It was across the street where the Current *Local* is. Alan Turley had the building at that time. It was an auto parts place. We rented it from Alan Turley. My office was right next to the assistant chief ranger. He was looking over a CERT trying to pick names of who would be the ranger on the upper Jacks Fork. Hank Jones was name. He was sort of muttering under his breath. I said, "What's wrong, Hank?" He said, "Oh, I'm trying to select my ranger, but I think it's already been pre-selected by Bill." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Yeah, a buddy of his up there, Jim Bockman." Who was an *excellent* ranger, and probably one of the best rangers we ever had, because he was local. He was low key.

[Tape meter, 250]

But because he wasn't "Park Service," and didn't go through the regular steps and everything like that, Hank was pretty disgruntled, at that time. But I think after he came on, Hank found out, "This guy's all right."

Then there was Don Parker. I don't know if you knew Ivan Parker. Ivan very much had the same personality as George Hartzog. He went into the Arch after George. Very much a wheeler dealer. He came out of personnel, in Interior, for Park Service. George put him in up at the Arch. His brother retired from the army, Don Parker -- and another, excellent, excellent employee. A good friend. Ivan Parker's brother came in as a

ranger at Ozark. But Bill was probably the only one that was really appointed in the management team at headquarters; a local, as a reward for helping George out.

I heard two things. I heard one time that George really didn't like Bill Bailey that much. I wouldn't know if George was two-faced or not, but he could have been. I've heard he criticized him behind his back. I don't know. I sort of did my thing, and would just pick up little tidbits.

Ila Buchanan was the chief ranger's secretary, and she was my secretary for a while, because I came in there and didn't have anything but a desk. She had worked for Lands up at Eminence, when they first formulated. They had the lands office up there. The Lands people would come in. That's where they went in and bartered either a term estate, or scenic easement, or bought it outright; all the land. She used to tell me about some of the horror stories, that Lands people would come in and do some -- to them it was a game. "Who got the most tracts for the least amount of money?" It was a macho, tally thing. It wasn't always fair. I guess they were used to buying land for national parks at any cost, and they didn't really think about the people that they were buying it from. Certainly they didn't think about the legislation that was to perpetuate Ozark culture. And, to me, the people were the culture.

But, some of the horror stories. One of them was down here on the lower Current, Carl and Mae Shockley. The house is still there they lived in. But the Lands man came in there and put his feet up on the table and said, "We're going to take it from you." I guess that *really* ticked them off, because it's been in their family a long time. Bob Shockley was Carl Shockley's dad. He's who I hired as johnboat builder; nicest person in

the world, and Carl is too. I guess they told them that they would give them a certain price. I don't know if it went to court or not.

[Tape meter, 300]

At that time they would allocate so much money out of the budget to procure land. And at times they would run out. They would liquidate all the funds, and they'd have to wait a year before a new budget was reissued. So if they told somebody, "We'll give you \$50,000," or whatever, for a piece of property -- and the money wasn't in that budget -- they had to wait around for another budget run before money became available. Then those people had to stay in that house for another year. They couldn't process it. And, of course, that would make them mad. Your government wasn't paying up.

It was a lot on communications, and there wasn't any. I wouldn't say there was *any* communication between government and local people. They had set it off in a negative way. People who came in just weren't sympathetic to the locals. They didn't realize that they were as important as the river; and even probably more so. They were used to managing land and not cultural resources. Never the twain shall meet. I mean, it's even right up through Art Sullivan. They were like two little kids, and each one of them wanted power, and wanted to do their own thing, and thought they knew what was right. There was just no communication; no meeting of the minds. And they were answering to different people.

The local people loved the river. To me, that river is the energy, it's the soul, more or less, of the Ozarks. And it meant so much *to* them. And it still does mean *so* much to the locals. And when we came in -- a couple of years after I got here we built

that [headquarters] building, which says it all in itself. It's a closed building. It says, "Park Service doesn't want anything to do with the locals." It's a rock building. Solid rock, with no windows in it. And that just tells you how they wanted to communicate with the locals. They didn't want any communication. They were going to manage it. It was an ego thing. They knew how to manage the Riverways because they had managed parks in other areas, and they didn't want the locals to share in that management. They'd have these little public meetings, and they'd have these little master plan meetings and such -- it was just sort of a "going through the steps" type of thing.

To me, a lot of things could have been resolved, *all* the way down the line -- from Ted Davenport on down to the horses and the trapping and the motor boats -- if they had just had a meeting of the minds, and had communicated, and tried to understand each other. Everybody was trying to be understood. Old Steven ?Covey? said it right: "It's easier to understand than try to be understood." And they were just all talking, and nobody was listening.

[Tape meter, 354. End Side one, tape one of two.]

[Tape meter, 000. Begin side two, tape one of two.]

WS: By the time you came here, had all the land been acquired?

AO: No; I think there were some small properties. Carl Shockley and Mae, I don't think that property had been acquired. Again, there were a lot of special categories. I think some of the ones around Cedar Grove, like Round Spring Cavern. I remember going in there and seeing the old lodge. I think some of the final tracts were in litigation were going to go to court. It couldn't be settled outside.

You said you interviewed Leo Drey. I think one interesting thing (I don't know whether he brought it up or not), was everybody had a scenic easement. It was a *carte blanc*, just a blanket scenic easement that everybody got. I guess it's probably been about seven or eight years ago, White Oak Forest (around Round Spring) was a big tract of land there. It has some pretty big white oak trees. And that's what Leo Drey owned. It was part of one of his tracts on a scenic easement. And I think it was that area (it was somewhere along in there), he wanted to go in and log. I don't know whether it was storm damage or what. But he wanted to log. Art Sullivan was there at the time. He just assumed -- and everybody else did: Washington, and region, and everybody -- assumed he had a blanket scenic easement.

Well, I guess when the lawyers came in; when the appraisers and land people came in, they would give people scenic easements. And I guess most people didn't question the scenic easement. But I think when they gave Leo Drey the scenic easement, his lawyers looked at it, and they changed a couple of words. He played it for all it was worth with Art Sullivan, and sort of got right into the last day, the twelfth hour. And he pointed this out to Art Sullivan, that these couple of words had been changed in his scenic easement. It wasn't like other scenic easements, and he could go in and cut that timber.

(Laughs)

I know Leo Drey did that, probably, intentionally. He just did things like that. Leo is a neat person. You couldn't pull one over on Leo. He's very smart. He's a forester. For some reason, he's bound to be smart, for all the acreage he's got; what he has, and what he's done with it. He's an excellent manager. But I know he chuckled at

that. He wasn't going to show it to Art until it came right down and Art was going to act on it. Everybody sort of put their tail between their legs. Leo Drey went ahead and did his thing.

WS: So he did get to cut the timber.

AO: I believe he did go get to cut the timber. Yes, you couldn't pull one over on him.

But most of the tracts, I think, had been purchased by the time I got here. The land office had moved out of Eminence years before. Headquarters had consolidated at Van Buren, because everybody in Van Buren was more supportive than any other part of the Riverways, probably. Ellington and Van Buren. Didn't get any support out of [Eminence.] [Eminence] was very negative; people there were against the Riverways. Eminence -- they sort of hit a brick wall at Eminence. I think they got ticked off there because the lands people were there, and all the Park Service lands people just rubbed everybody the wrong way. Eminence; those people are different than the others. Every town has its own personality, and the people in it are different.

WS: So you got more support in Van Buren than in Eminence.

AO: More support in Van Buren. In fact, I think George Hartzog -- maybe Cokie and James and Marlin McClintock might have told you -- early on they had flown to Gatlinburg, and into Washington to support the Riverways. They flew into Gatlinburg because George said, "This is what the Riverways is going to look like." You know, economic boom. I think a lot of that comes from the timber boom. When the timber industry was cutting here right at the end of the [19th], early [20th] century, it was a big economic boom. Van Buren had a movie theater and bands. Everybody was very prosperous. The big high

school was built in Eminence.

[Tape meter, 050]

Everybody had a lot of money. It was a boom town. It was fifty years later. Those people remembered that boom town. Of course, after they cut the timber everything dropped. So this was sort of like the second economic boost to the area. This was going to be like a national park, and it was going to be like Gatlinburg. All of these people were going to come in and bring all their bucks with them. This is why Van Buren was very much supportive.

Eminence, on the other hand; they didn't want to buy this. They wanted to keep it more or less like it was. To them, that river was their river. It wasn't to be shared with other people. So you didn't get the support up there that the people in Van Buren gave. And another thing, George told everybody what they wanted to hear. Leonard Hall, a preservationist. He told me it *would* be pristine. You'd be able to hear the hoot owls. You'd be able to canoe down with seeing nobody for days and days.

Other people get the canoe concession. Wendy Smith got it at Owls Bend because they had a living farm and an Ozark village. This was the early '70s when you moved historic homes and other things. Because a big Ozark village and farm was going to be built there at Owls Bend. That was going to be *the* place, the center of the Riverways. It was going to be *the* place for canoe concessions and other things. That didn't turn out, and Wendy left there after the new highway went in. It never materialized.

WS: I'm surprised there would be resistance in Ellington. I wouldn't think they would care one way or the other.

AO: Ellington liked it. It was the hub of the Riverways. They liked it. In fact, they pushed for the Owls Bend. Every town had its own intensive use area. Van Buren had Big Spring, Eminence had Alley Spring, and Ellington really didn't have a place. They were supportive of it, because that might have been one of the reasons why the Owls Bend concept, developed area, was coming in. The only visitor center we had was built there *for* the Ellington people, because they thought, "Well, if we build a business center at Owls Bend, it'll bring people into Ellington." So Ellington *was* supportive, and Van Buren was supportive, and they were rewarded in that way.

WS: You mentioned this wild horse topic. I've begun to hear a little bit more about that. Maybe you'd like to tell me about that.

AO: (laughs) It's funny. I was an interpreter. I was head of cultural resources and natural resources, and did some publications and oral histories and such. I met a lot with people. A lot of these things -- these trials and tribulations of the Riverways -- I think they could have been solved if the people came in on the part of the government just recognized that the local people, their history, their thoughts, their patterns, their backgrounds, should be interpreted and understood. If people had just listened to the local people and said, "This is part of the Ozarks. This is part of the things that we have to interpret." It will change over time, and the rate of change (we hope) will keep it low and slow.

People used to ask me why we weren't *developing* the Riverways. I said, "It's going to change, all the time. But the rate of change, we should try to keep it behind where it's changing at fast rates, in the cities and other places." Because that's a transition that people need.

The horse issue and the motor boat issues and all those, to me, just stemmed out of, “Who’s going to own the spirit of the Riverways?” Or, “Who’s going to control the actions that go on? Who’s going to manage the river? Is it going to be the locals? Or is it going to be the ‘government.’?” It’s the government versus the locals. The horses are just a ploy, more or less, for power. “Who’s going to get control? Whose ego is going to be hurt? Whose ego is going to be boosted?”

If you look at the resource, the horse, it’s sort of a joke.

[Tape meter, 100]

I’ve known people that raised mules for logging, and raised pretty nice horses out here. And open range -- horses were the only thing of high value that they kept inside, fenced in. The rest -- the cattle, the hogs, and everything -- with open range, they let them out. The horses they put high value on; horses and mules. So up there around that area, the only thing I can think of, is that probably somebody had some horses that they didn’t really -- they moved away, or something; a tree had fallen across the fence, and the horse got out. Because if you go back and look at the lineage, blood, chromosomes, and look at it and see if it’s anything different from the local horse, it probably wouldn’t be. It’s not like Assateague [Island National Seashore off the coast of Virginia.] It’s not like some of the wild horse herds out West that you can differentiate them from local. So it’s just something that got loose.

If the local people put a value on it, the Park Service should also recognize that and say, “Okay. Take it for what it is. We can work with you.” And granted, the Park Service, fifty years, a hundred years down the road, maybe they would resolve it and you

wouldn't have any feral horses or wild horses or whatever.

But it got to be a contest on ego. I know Jim Smith. He worked for me as a miller. And I know Alan Akers. He worked for me as a miller at the Alley Mill. They're super, fine people, and they've got their heart in the right place, as well as Art Sullivan did too. But to me the government should have been more broad-minded. It's almost like a teacher going into a classroom and expecting to dictate to the student how to learn, and the teacher should understand what brain quadrants, or where the student is coming from, and teach from their viewpoint rather than *telling* the student the way they ought to think. And we came in and told the local people the way they ought to think. And it's wrong. I don't care what the issue could have been. It could have been over squirrel hunting. It could have been over ground hog hunting, or anything. We came in. Ted did, everybody did. It was an ego thing. It was the thing, "I won't look good in front of my boss, the regional director." "I won't look good in front of congressmen," or something like that, "or Washington, because I'm giving in to them." It's not really giving in to them. It's understanding them.

When you look at the enabling legislation, it says there, "To reflect the cultural resources. To manage the resource and the cultural resource, and to *interpret* it." And "interpretation," to me -- because I was chief of interpretation -- it's a funny word. And what that is, to me, it sort of is identifying the soul of an area. Children are good "perceptors." They can perceive things, because they see what's in front of them. As they get older, they can interpret. They can see the inner meaning, something that's beyond the physical. And to me, that's what the Park Service should have done. I guess

that's the ultimate, is to come in and interpret, so you tie things together and understand the soul, more or less, of the local people, of the natural resources, and of the visitor coming in and what they need. Government had all the time in the world. They still do have all the time in the world. It wouldn't hurt for them to listen.

I think everybody wanted the same thing. Everybody wants the river. They don't want the river to change. And everybody loves the river. I remember going to one public meeting. The locals would get up and holler at the Park Service, and the Park Service would come in; they would sort of [say or think], "Well, I don't care what they say. We know how to manage this place. Just let them voice off a little bit. Let them holler a little bit." And we wouldn't get anywhere. We'd walk out of there, and the Park Service would go back to another master plan team in Denver. We'd start over again.

[Tape meter, 150]

"Well, what how did Congress really want us to manage this area? What are our management objectives? What's our intent here?" And blah, blah, blah.

The next day I was down at the bank in Van Buren. It was a local fellow named Gary Norris. I ran into him. I said, "Gary? You remember that meeting last night? It was sort of a joke, wasn't it?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "You know, Gary, we all want the same thing, don't we?" He sort of rolled his eyes back. He said, "Yeah, I guess we do. It's that river, isn't it? We want it to be just like it is, and we want it to be pure and stay unpolluted for our kids, for the locals, and our kids, and everybody. Yeah, we all do." But finding the avenue swallows a little bit of pride. It takes away a little bit of that greed, and that ego.

And to me -- again, it's complicated; all these controversial issues are complicated -- but in a way, the solution is very simple, too. It's like taking that child in school who's a little bit different; maybe D Quadrant, as far as brain quadrant goes. He's going to drop out. And understanding what that kid needs, whether he needs hands on, whether he needs -- instead of giving him a hand *out* -- he needs something that he can manipulate. And that's what the local people around here needed. They needed a little bit of understanding. The river is their lifeblood. They were born on the river, they logged on the river, they floated ties down the river. That river is their soul. It still is. That's why I've been here for twenty-five years. To me, you won't find nicer people than here, although probably anywhere I go -- I worked with Mikasukis down in Florida, and they were just like the people up here. They're tied to the land. And when government comes in or people come in, and they don't understand that, you're going to have a conflict. I don't care what subject it is; be it trapping, wild horses, or whatever. And until *that's* resolved, then you'll see progress.

It hurts, because you're hurting the intent of Congress. By not working together, you're not perpetuating Ozark culture. You're not perpetuating, really, the resource. Because you're spending all your energy, really, dilly-dallying around on these little, trivial things and not getting down to managing the resource. One of these days you're going to wake up and see, "Boy, it's changed beyond the point of no return. And here we've been just dilly-dallying around with these little brush fires."

The river is it. You go down to the river and stand by the banks and watch it flow by, and say, "This is the real world." It's not that rock building that the Park Service lives

in, with their computers. I don't know; but they try to manage from the office. You can't do it.

WS: Very interesting perspective.

AO: (Chuckles) I think we have an uphill battle. Being in charge of cultural resources and interpretation -- you bring up something like cultural resources, or something; cultural landscapes, just in the last ten years that *I* lived here or worked here, they were just coming into being. I put a high importance on locals, I put a high importance on what they did here. What they did, the structures they built, the farms, the little villages, and everything reflected their way of living, their way of thinking. I put a high importance on buildings.

[Tape meter, 200]

Klepzig Mill probably would have been torn down. I know Art Sullivan said he wanted to bulldoze it. But we said, "Well, let's just leave it there for a while." And finally he got turned around. We restored it. We put old tin on it, because if we put new tin on it, the locals would burn it, probably. And tried to restore it the way *they* would restore it if a farmer came in and restored.

The same thing with Susie Nichols' place. They had already had that up for bid and sold. I called up the guy who had got it. I said, "We'd really like to keep that, because that's our only board and batten structure in the Riverways." He said, "Well, if you want it, that's fine. I've got a couple of doors. If you ever want the doors, you can come and get the doors." We restored it as a little place up near Cedar Grove, south of Salem. Susie was a real neat person. She rode a horse down to Cedar Grove and lived

there for quite a while. She was still living when I moved here. I never met her. But she stayed on.

To me, the people and the fabric they left behind was part of a major [resource.] It might not have been Congress's intent. They might not have thought through it at least the way I did. But I think by putting "interpretation" in there they meant that we should try to understand the children, understand the adults, and the people of the Ozarks. That's certainly the cultural landscapes, the communities.

We had a team. Mary Hughes and, I think, Don Stevens was down here; from region. At that time they were doing an inventory of the cultural landscapes throughout the Midwest Region. They came down here and looked at Wilderness and a number of little communities around the Riverways. One of them was up around Maggard's Store, up there around Akers. I said that had some fabric still there of a community. Another one was Carter's Store. At that time, I think the highway was coming through Carter's Store. I think the Park Service wanted to destroy it or move it or tear it out, or something like that. I had a historian write up a study on Carter's Store, and Art just didn't approve it. I ended up sending it to Washington to Ed Bear's office. He evaluated the feasibility of it as being a historic structure, and he said, "Yes, it is a historic structure." They went in and restored it. When I left, they were still in the process of restoring it. What's happened since then, I don't know.

A lot of stuff that I had was what I felt was sort of an uphill battle. At that time, superintendents sort of graded by how many miles of road they had under their wings, and how many buildings they could destroy, and these statistics. I don't know; I guess that's

where the grade derived from. To me, some of that was against the basic policies of the Park Service, as far as being sensitive to the area.

[Tape meter, 250]

WS: That's interesting you'd mention that, because I'm sort of getting the impression that, for instance, Art Sullivan was more ecologically oriented than he was recreation and people oriented. But that may be just a false first impression.

AO: I don't know; I'm trying to think about Art. Art was sort of a middle of the roader. He was pretty recreational. He pushed Akers. He wanted a big development at Akers. I had a lot of controversy there, because I didn't think we needed that complex at Akers. I thought that private enterprise could come in. Gene Maggard had a big campground. We didn't really have to go in and spend the millions of dollars building septic systems and everything. It was just too close to the river. So he was more recreational oriented. He wanted a new headquarters over at Watercress. The only way he could have gotten that was to tie it into a cultural center. But there again, that's another government complex that's sitting away from the local people.

But he sort of went with the flow. He helped me out a lot. He never got in my way, except for a few things on cultural resources. But as far as interpretation, he sort of gave me a full rein, and I could do what I wanted to do. Budgetary things, he sort of distributed among all the other divisions. I don't think he put one thing more important than the other. He balanced everything out as far as law enforcement, administration. Administration might have been too heavy. When I came in '72, there were a lot fewer people in headquarters, and we had a lot more activities going on out in the field. It

seemed like, over the years, as the budget increased, the headquarters' staff got bigger and bigger and bigger, and the grades kept going higher and higher -- and then when they started cutting back the budget, the people in the field started getting cut back. The operations got cut back, but the grades stayed up in headquarters, and the staff stayed up in headquarters. Before we had an administrative assistant. Now we have personnel officers and a lot of specialists. The specialists weren't there until the budget came up. Now the budget's gone down and the specialists are still there. I don't know.

Art did the best he could with his background. Here's a funny story -- I don't know whether I ought to be telling this stuff; but I'm retired, so I'll tell it. Art was superintendent up in the Dakotas, near an Indian reservation. It slips my mind what Indian reservation it was, but I think it was Crow or Sioux, or something.

[Tape meter, 300]

I think they were putting in a highway or something at Bighorn Canyon -- that's what it was; Bighorn Canyon. The people of the tribe came in, and they wore their ceremonial dress; the robes. He made some off hand comment, like, "Oh, I see you brought your squaws with you." And they turned around and walked out. I guess that was the end of any type of local communication between Art and the locals up there. Now this was told to me by a fellow -- he might still work for the archaeology center at Lincoln; Mark Lynott. I heard that was probably why he got sent to Ozark.

WS: Over one comment.

AO: Over a comment. It broke all communication between Park Service and that. A lot of these things aren't cut and dry. It could have been a series of things, or maybe it was time

for him to go, and blah blah blah, and this was just one of the things. The Park Service director thought, “Well, he’s done all he can do there, and we’ll just give him to Ozark.”

I asked him one time why he came to Ozark, and it wasn’t anything like that story.

(Laughs) It was that he called the director up, the director called him up and asked if he’d like to come to Ozark. So I don’t know. These are little stories that bop around, and how much truth they are, I don’t know. It makes life interesting, though.

[Tape meter, 334. End of side two, tape one of two.]

[Tape meter, 000. Begin side one, tape two of two.]

WS: With this wild horses thing, you had some national environmental groups involved with that, didn’t you? Didn’t the Sierra Club give an opinion on that?

AO: I’m not sure. I know they sent a request back. Again, I was doing my job, and I know the superintendent was very involved with that. I’m not sure. A number of people came in and said the horses were degrading the environment up around Two Rivers. There was a spring up there. They found out these endangered plants around the spring were being trampled. I’m not sure how much really hard evidence they had of that. I don’t know whether it was a lot or just a little, or maybe assumed, or what. The horses had to get water, and they certainly would track around springs or wet areas. Again, if wanted to find an endangered species, you could probably find them about anywhere in the Ozarks. So I don’t know how much of it they were really using with sincerity, or whether they were just trying to get something on the locals so they would win their battle.

The Park Service took pretty hard ground on it, that they were feral horses, and like feral dogs and cats, they should be removed from the Park Service ground. To me

they should have looked at it a little bit more from the horses' viewpoint. We used to raise horses. The hooves have to be trimmed, they're bad on worming, the fescue around here -- the mare will abort, because the fescue every so often puts forth an enzyme that will cause them to abort. People that raise horses don't feed their mares fescue, the last few quarters. And there's not much grass up there except broom sage and fescue, for the horses. If they had a state vet or somebody come in and say, "Health-wise, how are these horses doing?" They're holding their own, but, "What's the mortality rate? And is this the proper thing?" Or, "How big of a herd if we do have a herd?" I'm not sure they ever did this. They might have done it. But rather than trying to get it into a bureaucratic responsibility, put it on something that maybe both parties could find a common ground on.

As far as the Sierra Club and things, knowing them, they would probably go with the pristine, "We want everything out." The purist viewpoint. I don't know whether the Nature Conservancy got into it, or any of the other groups. I think they went over on Leo Drey's property, but he said he didn't care. I'm not sure.

WS: Wasn't an initial group captured and shipped out?

AO: I don't know. I know Randy Clark had gotten a permit to get some horses, and I don't know if he ever got any or not. The locals assumed they had gotten some. They found a horse trailer, tracks, and everything. I think maybe Randy did go up there, and might have taken some out. But I don't know. It got to be a deal where no one would actually say what the truth was. To me, that's just sort of a big joke. If the horses went out, they should have had enough guts to say, "Yes, some of them *did* go out." But everything was

pretty hush-hush. Whether law enforcement knew about it, whether Art Sullivan knew about it -- I don't know. Whether they did it without *Art* knowing -- that's *very* conceivable.

Art came on pretty hard, but he was a pretty sensitive person. When the Wild Horse League came down and had their big demonstration in front of the office, he went out and talked to them. They all booed him and everything else, and hollered at him. He walked back in the office. I know he made a comment. He said, "I didn't know I was really disliked that much." It really hit him hard. He's New England bred, and those people are sort of quiet. They're sort of reserved, non-emotional. The Ozark people here are a different type of people. They just don't understand somebody from -- well, they haven't seen that many people from New England, and that type of cultural background. So they read him a little bit different than he probably really was. He was always honest and pretty straightforward and a pretty sensitive person.

[Tape meter, 050]

But, because of where he was raised and just his background, he was a little different.

So you can't find any fault with him, nor can you find fault with the locals if they don't have the background and understanding. If their patterns don't hold that ability to understand, then they're just not going to. The locals get on something, they would take it for all it's worth. That's just the way they do around here. If there's a little story, they'll make it into something pretty big. It's typical group type of psychology. Anything on the government, it's because it's "they," and it's not personal, they'll take it and grind it into the ground.

Whether they took the horses out -- I honestly don't know. I mean, I couldn't tell you. I heard all the rumors that they did. There was a fellow over near east of Poplar Bluff, or north of Poplar Bluff, and somebody said they saw them in his field, or his corral. But I don't know. The whole thing to me -- it wasn't a joke -- but it was a lot of energy, and a lot of sweat, and a lot of turmoil over something that, if they had sat down and just had a meeting of the minds, it could have been resolved. But Washington made a stand, and the Park Service made a stand, and nobody was going to give.

It seems like everything we did we took a heavy stand on it, but we always got put back in our place. I mean, we lost. When you look at the score after thirty-some odd years, it hasn't worked out for the Park Service. Why we keep doing that same thing, keep our stubbing toe on the same old stump all the time, thinking that we can ignore the people, and thinking we can railroad them -- and we don't. We just get ourselves into a corner, and there always has to be congressmen and other people that answer to the public. Then they get involved with it and we end up making, probably, more concessions than we would have if we had just sat down at the table and explained the ecology and the whole ramification to the locals, and we understood where they were coming from also. And because we don't do that, we get beyond -- as I said, there's a point of no return. Then it ends up with what we've got right now, with animosity and no trust. It's hard to manage.

It's hard for the locals to live in an environment where they don't trust their neighbor. Again, like that building, there are Park Service people out there that don't trust the locals. They beef up law enforcement and try to catch somebody doing

something about something; get somebody doing something, so they try to catch their relatives or them doing it. It gets pretty bad.

WS: Did you have any problem like that down at the Everglades? Because that was private land that was acquired, wasn't it?

AO: It was private land. It was some time before I got down there. It was acquired during the Second World War. They used it as training for tanks and other things. They had a "hole in donut" where they had allowed hunting. When I was down there it was during the Cuban [Missile] Crisis. They actually had a missile site in the middle of the donut, in the middle of the Everglades. It was private property, and they had hunting in that section. So there was a little bit of controversy there.

I guess the main controversy I got involved with down there was over the Mikasuki Indians. We had an environmental education program. At that time George Hartzog had said, "You hire locals, if you can hire locals." So we hired probably ten or twelve local Mikasuki Indians as part of this environmental education program. People would come out of Miami on buses, and meet these Mikasukis. They'd be in period dress and everything.

[Tape meter, 100]

Along with that we had a Cherokee, Chick Crow, out of the Smokies. We had Ed Meadows; he was a black out of New York City. And a couple of other people on our interpretive team there, to work with the locals, or work with people out of Miami.

Mikasukis are very much like the Glades, they are a very quiet people. The Glades was always very quiet. Again, it's that understanding where people are coming from, to me, is

the power of interpretation.

They would take a group around. They wouldn't say a lot. They would let people understand the resource. If a great blue heron flew by, they'd say, "That's Wakatubi," which is Mikasuki for that bird. They wouldn't stand there like the regular Park Service ranger and give a lecture, which is all telling, and, "You understand what *I'm* saying," instead of where you're coming from.

But, I'll never forget, after the horse controversy, or big row out at Yosemite where the rangers got on horses went through the hippie deal, they reorganized Yosemite. I think the last person they moved out of Yosemite was a Claude McLean. He was assistant superintendent out there. He came into Everglades. He went up to Shark Valley, where we had the environmental education program, and he met the Mikasukis up there. Of course, he'd been to Yosemite where they have the walk and talk type of ranger. He went up there. He called me in his office after he got back. He said, "Alex, I went up there. Those Indians, they didn't say anything." I said, "Well, did you ask them any questions?" (Chuckles) He said, "Well, no. But I want you to get rid of all of them. They don't say anything." I said, "Well, you know, they reflect the Glades. You have to ask them questions, and then they'll talk with you. It's a two-way street." He just couldn't understand that one bit.

So he wanted me to go through all the CERTs and get rid of them, and get the white, Caucasian, WASP [White Anglo-Saxon Protestant] in there, in the Park Service uniform, and give the program. About that time, the superintendent called me in -- I guess it was a couple of months after that -- and he said, "Alex? Would you like to go to

Ozark Riverways?” (Laughs) I said, “*I sure would* like to go to Ozark Riverways, because I’m not sitting too well with your assistant superintendent.” That was Dick Stark, I think it was. He had just come in as superintendent; a very good superintendent. So I went to Ozark Riverways.

I think it was, like, six months after I got here, Robinson, who was chief of personnel down at Everglades, sent me a newspaper article. Two of the Mikasukis I’d hired -- *really* nice people; in fact, they came over to the area where I lived, one time. They came for lunch, which is very unusual for Indians. Two or three of them came there; I guess it was about four. Anyway, two of them came over. It was Virginia and Victor ?Osceollo?. Victor was in line to be chief of the tribe there. Virginia was a half-breed. She was very outgoing and very good with the public. Victor; he was typical, and quiet, and reserved. But, in his own way, he reflected the Glades and Mikasuki.

The article that he sent me was about the man who lived between two worlds. He couldn’t decide. And evidently the Park Service *had* released Victor, and he was looked down upon by his tribe because he worked for the Park Service; and also because he married a half-breed. And I guess especially since the Park Service got *rid* of him, he committed suicide.

That really hurt. That was bad.

[Tape meter, 150]

So again, the Park Service is sort of weird, sometimes.

WS: I get the idea that some in the Park Service have sort of a military attitude. This, just what you were saying, sort of, “We know what we’re going, and get out of the way.”

AO: The uniform. The uniform is designed after the Gestapo, or that type of thing; I guess the park police is designed after more than that. But anything with a uniform, they take away the individual. They want you to fit the pattern. They want you to think the thought, and walk the talk, and all that sort of stuff. It does. You walk in there with your green and gray. Some areas were a little bit more progressive, like Buffalo River², where the superintendent, Alec Gould, he didn't wear a uniform. Probably some of that should have been done here, where you don't push the policies. You soft-manage. You don't go at it in the military [fashion of], "I know the way to do it." Rules and regulations.

To me, the black books that went behind the administrative office, or you go in and look at the superintendent, you've got all these black manuals. To me those are guidelines. Very few of them are set in gold. The resource is set solid. It's the resource that should dictate how you should do it, and the people are part of the resource. In all your ability, you should be able to go in there and take care of that resource. It'll change, but keep it status quo. That should dictate it; not the guidelines and all that. The people in Washington, they understand, but they're not out there with their feet on the ground, and they're not in the real world. You want to get in the real world, just look at that river. Go up the banks and look at it. Feel it. That's where it's all at.

WS: Did you guys have much interaction with people in the Buffalo River or other national rivers?

AO: We did. I don't know whether they do now or not. We used to have meetings every six months. We'd have people come in from Saint Croix and Buffalo River. Of course,

² Presumably the Buffalo Wild and Scenic River in Arkansas.

Buffalo was acquiring property and easements. About the time we ended ours, they were just starting. They were paying big prices for their scenic easements, compared to what we paid. The people were probably getting a better value. I think they were getting 70% or 80% of the value of the property. I was probably down in the 20s or 30s, something like that.

But we compared management strategies, and they would come up here and look at what we were doing. We would go down there and look at what they were doing, and try to learn from each other. So there was a little bit of sharing. I don't know whether they do that now or not. I've been sort of out of communication with them. But they should have, especially with the Riverways, as controversial [as it is]. It's just got a lot of variety and a lot of its own little quirks.

We had farming in the Riverways, and that was a controversy at one time. We worked with the Conservation Department, and opened up tracts for wildlife management. We got criticized for that, for being the "world's longest farm," or something like that, by Bill Royce, down at Doniphan, and by a number of people that thought, "We shouldn't be farming the Riverways."

[Tape meter, 200]

WS: These were farms that had been established long before?

AO: They *had* been farms. So we went in and said, "Okay. If they go in and open up the land and keep that pristine landscape, then we will allow them to go in and farm it."

WS: Would that be under a scenic easement agreement?

AO: No, it was under a special use permit. They came in. They started out with row crops.

But you go into these flood plains and you start plowing it up, and the crabgrass and other stuff used to just take over. So they ended up having to use a herbicide, a pesticide, in order for them to plant the corn, at least the pre-emergent. That got to be a little problem, where we had to go to NEPA and other people to get it approved. They couldn't do it unless they had it, because the weeds would just take over. So a lot of the corn permits, corn fields, went down to hay permits, and they cut hay. I guess they still cut hay, and keep some of the natural fields open. But it started out, mainly, as a wildlife food plot type thing. I think we worked with a Myers out of the Conservation Department. He's in West Plains. He used to do quite a bit of that around Clearwater Lake and those places.

WS: This idea of having the farming allowed started while you there?

AO: Yes.

WS: Would that have been in the 1970s?

AO: Probably late '70s, yes.

WS: You mentioned this motorboat thing being a controversy. I don't know anything about that. Was that the limitation on horsepower?

AO: That was the limitation on size. They first started out, everybody ran props when I was here. With props, the river naturally limited itself. We had a hearing right after the advent, whether we should zone the river. It was decided at that time, because everybody ran props, there were certain times of the year you couldn't go over a shoal with a prop. You almost had to get out and pole the boat up. You could make a run at it and lift the motor up and hopefully get enough momentum to get up over the shoal, but if you didn't, you had to drift back down and give it another try. In the summertime, the further up the

river you got, the further you could go. So you just didn't see any motorboats up the river in the summertime. That was when the canoers were there. So it worked out pretty well. The bottom part of the river ran rather slow, and if you were in a canoe the wind would blow you around, so it's not the greatest canoeing place in the world. So you had motorboats down there that could run year around. So it worked out really neat until the jet units came in.

With the advent of the jet units -- jets could run in very shallow water, so they had the whole river open to them. Then they came in with horsepower [specifications], what size and what zones, and other things. That became quite a controversial thing. I don't know whether it still is or not. Probably six years ago or so, they got it down where certain times of the year certain sections of the river are open to certain horsepower.

[Tape meter, 250]

I think it's below Van Buren, there's no limit at all.

But there again, I think government could have sat down with the locals who use it. There are always a few wild cards, but once people had the information, I think the correct decision would have been made. When you start taking everything into consideration -- the resources -- and that you really wanted a quiet river; you didn't want it to be run over by a few people. Everybody really wanted the same thing. They want to go to the river and have a little peace and quiet. They want it safe. They want the kids to be able to float in tubes, or whatever. I think the regulation would have evolved in its own way. It might not have been the way the Park Service wanted it, or the way all the locals wanted it, but it would have evolved into something that everybody could have

lived without going to Congress and going to court, and spending all that energy and money.

WS: One place I came across your name was in Erika Brady's work, and she thanked you and acknowledged you for your help. I guess she did one article on the trapping. I don't know if you read that article.

AO: No, I don't remember that.

WS: So that's what little I know about that, that they [the Missouri Trappers Association] filed a lawsuit in 1988 (I believe). That was resolved, I guess, pretty recently.

AO: I remember something about trapping. The locals used to always be able to trap, because it was a traditional use. Anything that was done earlier, before it was a Riverways, could still be done. I don't know that much about trapping. It was the wild horses -- it wasn't really the trapping -- that was controversial. How that came about, I don't know. I don't know what the end result on trapping was. I would think they would go ahead and allow it.

WS: I guess they contested it, because in the enabling legislation it said "hunting and fishing" but not specifically "trapping."

AO: Oh yes, that's right. I do remember that. It wasn't specific. It got down to the nitpicking.
(Laughs)

WS: Yes. I think they even contacted Congressman Ichord to see what his intent was, and he said the intent was trapping and hunting were synonymous.

AO: Yes, I think it was. Living down in Grubb Hollow, I knew a lot of people -- Bill Lawyer, and Grubbs -- they'd all run traps along the river. You don't take out that many. Just

being the people they were. They got that many animals, because the weather and other things, the fur isn't any good when it's hot weather. So there is a very short period there that you *could* trap, and always in the wintertime you've got floods, and they'd wash the traps out. A lot of times it wasn't economical to trap. Then, with the price of pelts dropping down so low, there were probably not too many pelts, nor economically feasible to go out and spend the effort and money and time.

[Tape meter, 300]

I can remember, there was an old boy up there at Eminence who used to come down and pick up the pelts at the IGH store there at Big Spring Foods at Van Buren. But, I don't know.

I think since it was used, unless they can measure some big impact on the wildlife, it was probably another one of those government deals on "Who is going to have the power?" Is it locals? You've got to look long range, what effect is this going to be, on the environment. "Is this what I want to spend my money and energy on?" Because there are big bucks going into the management of the Riverways. You can sit there and dilly-dally around with all these little brush fires as long as you want to. But, you go in to a day's work, and you should be coming out with something benefiting the resource and the public, at the end of the day. Some of these controversial things were just not going anywhere. They were just an ego thing.

WS: That's the impression I got from her article, that the actual trappers were a small group, but they had quite a broad-based of support among the locals.

AO: Yes, they would. See, that's like anything. Anything -- this Wild Horse League, and

everything else; this westward expansion, People for the West -- all that is coming in against government because it's a "they" and it's not "we." It's a "we and they" situation. We're all citizens. We all want the same thing. But there's commonality. Once you understand that commonality, there's a point for communication and understanding. We all want to be understood. We all stand there and talk. And that's what we do a lot of. We stand there, and we want everybody to understand the way *we* think, and we expect them to think the way *we* think.

To me, the Park Service should have gone a little bit more, and tried to understand the way locals think. Because, again, it was their culture. It was their resource that we were coming in to manage. Instead of coming in and edict to them the way *we* think, and they've got to be the ones that should flex, and not us.

WS: It sounds like you could make the argument for the place of some more grassroots democracy.

AO: They tried that. They had a commission that had a representative from each county, and they had people that were appointed by the governor, and other people that would come in and, theoretically, listen to what we were doing, how we were managing the Riverways. But it got to be sort of a joke.

[Tape meter, 350]

They didn't really get involved that much.

WS: Like window dressing.

AO: Yes. I mean, they were there because it was a status symbol for them to be on the committee. It was a perk. It wasn't really anybody really interested in the management of

the river. To them it was something they could put on their -- I don't know -- next job resume or something, that they were on the Ozark Riverways Commission. During the enabling, I think, it was set aside after the advent of the Riverways, and was to stay active for ten years, or fifteen years, or something. At that time, they thought, the Riverways should be completely able to manage itself, and not need the assistance of this advisory board. Which, again, is sort of a joke, when you look at it. We really didn't go and sincerely look for them to help us out. We went there and just reported, and after we reported what we were doing, the meeting was gone. We asked them for their support, and different things.

[Tape meter, 372. End side one, tape two of two.]

[Tape meter, 000. Begin side two, tape two of two.]

WS: You mentioned this Wild Horse League. Who were the leaders in that?

AO: Alan Akers, he was. Then Jim Smith, he has the trail ride up at Eminence. He was very much involved with it. It was mainly people around Eminence that were involved with it. The Smiths go back, the Akers go way back. As I said earlier, it's just a game on power. To me, the horses are not hurting that much, other than the theory that they were hurting some plants around a spring, or doing some degradation. They're probably old horses that just got out of somebody's field (laughs), fifteen, sixteen, when somebody got tired of them, and a tree went across the fence, and off they go. We used to have them here, and they'd do the same thing, if you didn't go out after them.

WS: Speaking about his being concentrated in Eminence, I wonder if you sensed sort of a differentiation between the locals in the upper Current area like Shannon County

compared to Carter County.

AO: Carter County is a little bit more progressive, and that can be good and bad. You know, real estate agents. It's up on a high flood plain, which gives it sort of a different point of view than Eminence, which is near the confluence of the two rivers, sort of in a valley. From there, that would attract some people more so than a place like Eminence.

Yes, you had sort of an opportunistic -- Van Buren is not a farming community. It was sort of a wheeling, dealing; like old James Grassham, cigar smoking type, pat you on the back, community. And Eminence is a soul place. There are very neat people in Eminence -- not that people in Van Buren aren't. But I knew a lot of families there that people worked for me. It was like they were more attached to the river. Like Jim Smith, I was saying; he's married to Jane Ann, who is a Bales. Bales had the big Bales Boating Company, for years, on the river. Leonard Hall talks about him in *Stars Upstream*. So, in a way, they were tied in with the old river and the old ways. West Eminence was one of the major logging sites for this part of the country, before they dismantled and went up north to Minnesota and started cutting.

So their ties are much deeper. To me, they are much more grass roots. They're more sincere. I had sorghum makers, and I'd get them always around Eminence. We ran sorghum for a number of years. Mules, I'd get them out from around Eminence and in Ellington. We had a dedication of the Riverways and Tricia Nixon was here. I had to go out and get the entertainment. I always got a lot of the fluff jobs that no one else wanted to do. The first job that Randy Pope told me to do was decorate the office. Find the drapes. Well, you try to find good drapes that everybody would be happy with. I guess

he had tried or the secretaries had tried, or something. It was a big controversy then.

But Eminence, to me they're sort of the heart of the Riverways. You get up on the peneplain, going up toward Salem, it levels off. You get more into farming. Salem is more progressive than Eminence. Winona is sort of the one left over from logging. I remember one of the locals took me through Winona. I think one of the things they talk about was how many bars they had. I think they had five or six bars. They were along the main tram road that carried lumber; and, quite a lumbering and logging little town. It was called a "rough cob town." It was one of the roughest towns in this part of the country.

And you can sort of sense that every time you go to a public meeting. The people from the areas will show up and talk. Even if you didn't know what town you were in, you could sort of tell by the way the people got up, what they said. A lot of people didn't come there.

[Tape meter, 050]

A lot of the quiet people who were really sensitive about the river, they wouldn't show up at the public meetings. You only heard from those pretty far out on both ends. So the public meetings really weren't the true test or the true feelings of the people.

Those old people in the hollows, and those old people -- the wives and the families that lived back in there -- they put a high value on land and water. Like my neighbor over here, he's been here for years and years. His value was on water. He said, "Alex, I don't want anything to ever happen. If there's one thing we can say, we've got good water here. Lead mining going in, or anything that changes, you've got a water

table.” He was always afraid the water table would drop, or the water become polluted. Of course, we did all the fluorescein dye testing traces with Tom ?Halley?. He coordinated a lot of that. He was very interested in that.

You look at the dumping [prohibition] and other things that some of the locals didn’t like -- you couldn’t dump anymore, and all this. So if you told them it was for the water, if there was reasoning, if you went there and understood where the people were coming from and you could reason with it from *where* they were coming from and what they wanted, you were both working on the same team and working together. Again, everybody wants pure water and clean air, and a pure river and a quiet river, and to continue the use that they always had on it.

The locals out of Eminence, they wanted to keep the river the way they remembered it as a child. Basically we, as a Riverways management team, should also say, “We’re going to try as best we can. It’s going to change, and we’ll try to keep that rate of change as slow as possible. But we’re both going to have to work together and use both our energies in order to get to the end result.” And we never did that.

WS: Did you guys have much interaction with the Forest Service?

AO: Not too much. I worked with the wayside exhibits. I did some wayside exhibits down at Falling Spring and Turner’s Mill, for them, through Jim ?Rolls? at Winona. We used to have meetings with Forest Service. I don’t know if we still have that or not. We talk about some of the similarities that we had, especially since the Forest Service is on the south of us, down below Gooseneck. We used to have meetings, but not too much.

WS: They pretty much manage the entire portion of the Eleven Point in Missouri now, don’t

they? Through the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act?

AO: Yes. Of course, that was the original in with ours, but [Congressman Paul C. Jones, representing] Ripley County didn't want it to go anywhere below the Ripley County line. Jones sort of put his foot down on that. And the Eleven Point got kicked out of it. But the Irish Wilderness area was designated wilderness. So they manage it. And I guess a lot of it is still managed much like a typical riverway. They were doing away with a lot more buildings and houses. Once they got that designation, they looked at it a *lot* stricter than we did. We had a lot of scenic easements and term estates; twenty, thirty-year estates, and all this -- yet we were trying to save a lot of structures, and they were tearing down mills and tearing down things. They took it really literally that everything ought to go back to the pristine, to the way it originally was.

I remember a couple of those meetings. "Gee whiz, you're destroying something that should be saved." Some of the mills, some of the buildings; some of the school houses. They got some nice school houses and stuff along that riverways. Turner's Mill, they wiped it out. Some *nice*, big things, which would help educate the locals and people coming in; the locals' children. They could have done a lot on oral histories and everything.

[Tape meter, 100]

But they just came in and just put the old hard nose to it, and said, "Okay. If Congress wants this a scenic river, we're going to make it a scenic river and take everything back to the way it was in 1700," or whenever.

WS: That was one of the first -- and a few others, the first group of wild and scenic rivers,

weren't they?

AO: Yes. I think there were a couple up in Minnesota and a couple other ones that came in about the same time as the Eleven Point. They were included, I think, in Congress, as a group. A group of wild and scenic rivers. And maybe because we were a national river -- I guess the interpretation of ours is probably a little more liberal. We could have so many road crossings, and they were a little bit more strict on that. At least they interpreted it a lot stricter.

WS: And the Buffalo would be similar to the Ozark Riverways?

AO: They're a national river.

WS: And that's a little bit different?

AO: That's a little bit different. They are set aside more for research. They're a little bit different. They can put forth more strict rules and regulations on a national river. All of them are a little bit different category, which is confusing to some people. (Chuckles) Especially locals. You can imagine. "They can run such-and-such horsepower. They have a limit of five horsepower, ten horsepower on the whole Buffalo. Why can't that be done up here at Ozarks? Why do they run hundred horse at Ozark and ten horsepower at Buffalo?"

Again, it's a matter of education and interpretation. Education, to me, is the whole thing, the whole answer. I know it's much easier for rangers to come in and do law enforcement, and do the concrete-sequential (being that type of brain mode), than the abstract-random, and try to understand where people are coming from, and educate them from where they are. But I put a large emphasis, a lot of emphasis on educating and

doing it through perpetuating Ozark cultures, like sorghum demonstrations, and johnboat building, and other things. I felt that was a way to at least to say to them what they've been doing, and what they have done, was of high value. And put importance on them as people, and their activities. That's the same thing with trapping and other things. Again, if it's a value of theirs, then it's a value of the resource. If we're going to protect the resource, I'd look at it with broad, liberal interpretation. Their activities are part of the resource. But a lot of people didn't think of (laughing) it, and probably still don't. It makes their world go, I guess.

WS: I'm kind of amazed you didn't have a lot of conflict in your work within the organization, based on all else that you've told me; that you got this free rein, rather than butting heads.

AO: A lot of the resources I used were the public. We built a float one time. Our son went to the University of Missouri. I went up there and I saw their homecoming displays and such, with the floats and stuff they did. I said, "You know, that's something Van Buren ought to get. Those kids out of Van Buren probably never see a parade. They never see anything like here. They ought to broaden their base a little bit, and they'll have fun making it."

So I got my gooseneck trailer. A lot of resources were our *own* resources. I've got a gooseneck trailer that's twelve, fourteen feet. I took the rack off of it and took it in town. We made a huge float. We made it very automated with kid-power underneath the float. We kept it for two years, and ran it in Van Buren a couple of times. The high school kids and elementary school kids actually built it. We took a wire frame of a huge man. It was higher than the power lines. We had to dismantle part of the fishing pole so

it would go under power lines.

[Tape meter, 150]

So it was big thing. It had eagles with their wings flapping, and fish jumping out of the water, on this big float. It was a Riverways float. The kids built it. The high school kids came in and built it. We had a lot of our staff want to get involved with it, because it was a very positive, very fun thing. It wasn't like, you were saying -- all these controversial things, there were very few things that were actually *fun*.

We took it to Springfield. They wanted us to bring it over there. We took it in a Christmas parade over there and got first place for it. So it was pretty elaborate. We had fifteen or twenty kids under this trailer. Where you put the rack is a flat bed. So all the kids were hiding below this two-foot high rack, and then the float was built on top of it. The kids had to crawl under that and maneuver all these little pedals and movement things in order to make everything automated. It was really neat. I know I had a chief ranger one time, he said, "Alex. I'm always involved with the controversial things. You're nothing but apple pie and motherhood, everything you do."

The sorghum making, we planted that with a one row planter. I did a lot of it. We had mules that we had to shoe. We had a whole barn full of mules, because we used them to help us plant the sorghum and turn the sorghum mill. People would come in there from St. Louis, and older people in pickup trucks with wheelchairs on them and such, and bring back the old memories.

It worked fine if people had a vision and they knew what you wanted to do. But when you bring most Park Service [personnel], with a military background or law

enforcement, what's the easiest to do? The easiest is the law enforcement. The easiest is to go back on the policies. So, I was out there sort of doing my thing, they were doing their thing. They really didn't understand the world that I came from, or the world I was in. They didn't give me all that much money, but you don't need much money to do things. To me, the leaner you are, then you go out to the public and you work through the school systems.

We started a big environmental education program called Constructivism, about the last four or five years I was there. We went back to the National Park Foundation and got special funding for it. It was probably *way* before its time. I gave a presentation up at the National Interpreters conference up in Cleveland. Constructivism -- mainly, what it is, is let children construct their own education by finding out where they are coming from. And then you go through an exploration of something, like a cave. Then they come back, and through their own groups and peer learning, they can actually construct their own education. So they learn through doing, and because they realize the base that they started from, then they go through and evolve through an activity, and then they find out where they are left over. They've succeeded in learning. But it's them constructing their education. Of course, it's all within certain formal guidelines of broad bases.

Like, we were doing it with springs. We would take people to a sink hole and a spring and a cave, and they could tie in the interrelationship between those three things and construct their own knowledge. That went over really big. We had field trips that went all around. We expanded it to other people.

[Tape meter, 200]

We did do a couple. My wife and I did a few things for the Missouri Teachers Association along the same thing. But it's a lot different form of education than teacher-centered, teacher-oriented education. So that worked out pretty well.

But people in the office did not really understand all that. They were very supportive, because we were getting private funding from the National Park Foundation. We were keeping the public happy with field trips and everything else. But they were dealing with wild horse controversies and other things, and planning law enforcement; people and patrols. It's unfortunate that so much energy goes for balancing the budget. We had to get everything within 104 at the end of the year.

To me, I always thought, "Well, if you put that out towards the public a little bit and had somebody write a weekly column in the local paper, telling them what we were doing, and trying to go out and have coffee with them in the morning at the Float Stream [Restaurant, in Van Buren]; some of the locals. That would certainly help." It's true. All policies and big decisions are made at the coffee table at the local restaurant. Superintendents don't understand that. They think they ought to be in the conference room, or something like that.

WS: If you were to hazard sort of a measurement -- and of course, this may have changed during the whole time you were there -- between the personnel that were oriented as yourself (and maybe if you wanted to describe it as you said, "abstract-random"), and then the law enforcement types. How would that break down?

[Tape recorder momentarily off]

AO: Okay. The abstract-random and concrete-sequential, the way you perceive the world and

the way you like the outcome is actually just an approach. People that see it concrete see it one way, and they like it to go out sequential. They like everything to be in order. And so probably most of the people that work for the Riverways -- because it's a bureaucracy, and people promote like kinds. And again, it's a very A-B brain type career. Those people that can balance the budget, and those people that can please other people, their kind perpetuates their own kind. So most people in the management category are of that type. It's a park ranger. We used to call it "park ranger mentality." They come up in law enforcement with rules and regulations, and "these have to be abided by." And those are the people that usually get put in as superintendent. Randy was a landscape architect, so that's very concrete-sequential type of thinking; very A-B brain type; likes order of things, likes things to be very detailed and very thorough.

[Tape meter, 250]

Versus the C-D brain type, that would be like people-oriented, and be more creative and abstract; more art type. I'm very D quadrant.

My wife and I took a course in whole brain technology, by a doctor up at University of Missouri. The brain, they used to think, was in halves; left and right. Well now they're separated into four quadrants. So before you went up there you had to send in this computerized form of the way you perceived the world and your outcomes, and so forth and so on. They run it through a computer and they tell you which your dominant and co-dominant brain quadrant is in. We walked in there. Both of us are very D quadrant. She said, "I have two questions to ask you. First is, who does the checkbook? And why in the world are you working for the government?"

(Laughter)

I told her, “We both do the checkbook, and I don’t know. I’ve been wondering for the last twenty years why I worked for the government.” Because it’s sort of an uphill battle. Why people make easy work so hard, I don’t know. But that’s sort of the way government is.

Yes, they see the world in their own concrete way, and their own policies. And they want it to become very sequential. In their mind, there is a certain order, and the way that order ought to be. And it’s *their* order. There’s nothing wrong with it.

A lot of the locals are more abstract, in a way, but yet, they want their own order too. So a lot of them are concrete-sequential also. Some of them don’t have a broad based education that will broaden you out so you do have a more abstract or a more worldly view of things. There’s a reason why they’re here. The reason why they’re here is because they put a value on their daddy’s and their mother’s way of looking at life; their granddaddy’s and grandmother’s. And they like it. They don’t want to go out and be an engineer. They don’t want to go to the city. They don’t want to live in suburbia someplace. So they rejected all that. There is one generation gap for the last fifty years. It’s all the same generation, because they’re all putting the same values and the same thinking on the same things.

And then, of course, you bring in the Park Service and the way they’re trying to perpetuate the concrete-sequential as far as the way they think it’s the right way. They’ve been educated, and they know more. They’ve been through all these training sessions. We still send them off training to indoctrinate them and to get them narrower, narrower,

and narrower in view. And the locals are looking at it with a very [narrow] view. It's like both of them were mules with blinders on, and they're (laughing) both going down this path, and they'll never meet.

[Tape meter, 300]

They have conflicts. If they can't understand each other, and there's no meeting of perceptions, you can't communicate. And there's just no meeting of perceptions. They never sat down and communicated, and had a meeting of perceptions. You take it one step further, as far as if they were, then they could go into interpretation and understanding what's underlying it all and find the soul of it.

I wish them well. Again, the whole thing is that river. People say, "It's going to be here 200 years from now. Don't worry about it." But yet, you do, because you love it. I mean, everybody here loves that river. I love it very dearly or I wouldn't be here. You love the resources. Sometimes you can shake them, but they've got to learn that. You can't do it for them. You just have to do what you can do, what you think is of value, and maybe it'll rub off, maybe it won't. Constructivism is the way to go as far as education.

You take the locals, you understand where they're coming from and put them in an environment and let them understand the way things really are based on their own exposure. You can't *tell* them the way to think. You can't tell *government* people the way to think. (Laughs) It just gets into a big contest which nobody wins.

It hurts, because we're here to manage a resource. You think if we're managing a resource we should go forward. But instead we just stand there and sort of spin our wheels and nature takes its own course. And thank goodness the river is still there.

Someone one told me, or I always said, “It’s a good thing we started out with a resource. If we were somebody like General Mills or making automobiles, we would have to bring raw products and make something. But we *started* here with the river, with the resources and the wildlife and everything. We just have to manage it. It’s a good thing we didn’t have to *create* something. (Laughing) We’d still be wondering what we were going to create.”

But it’s all here. To me it’s very simple, very straightforward. Because it’s all right here. It’s in front of us, what we have, what is. If you can live in the present and see what’s around you. If you open your eyes up and listen to the wind, listen to the river, it talks to you. It tells you. “This is why you’re here.” If everybody could listen to that and hear the same thing, then there wouldn’t be any problem. But everybody talks, and nobody listens.

[Tape meter, 350. End side two, tape two of two. End of interview.]