

Oral History Interview

Narrator: Neil King

Interviewer: Camille Daw

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Camille Daw: Alrighty, so it looks like we are ready,

Neil King: Okay.

CD: So why don't you start by introducing yourself -- your name, your background -- with the National Park Service, and then Minidoka specifically?

NK: Okay. My name is Neil King. I was born in Southwestern Colorado and lived in the Four Corners area and after high school I went to the Navy. After the Navy I went to college at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado which is where I was born. And I graduated from there in 1970 with a double major uh fine arts and archaeology. Uh, I got my first job with the National Park Service as a seasonal interpreter at Mesa Verde in the summer of 1971. I worked, I spent a total of over five years there as an interpreter and volunteer and everything we did to get in the Park Service. I met my wife there. She was a seasonal, well, in those days, they hired the women and called them Park Aides and not Park Rangers.

CD: Oh, interesting!

NK: Yeah. We-we got issued official park service uniforms. They were given a list of going to JC Penny's and buying beige, beige pants and a white shirt. And they had little, quarter size, parks service badges made for them. I'd give anything if I would've stolen one. Anyways, I became a long-term seasonal supervisor. And that was the opening of Weatherill Mesa. Which was a new visitor's center, and tour buses and so that was quite an experience.

End Tape One

Start Tape Two

NK: So in 1974, or 1975, uh I went to my first uh permanent job at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. GS-5. And it was a brand-new start-up park. Adjacent to Gary, Indiana, on Lake Michigan. I lived in park housing. My wife, she didn't work for the park service. And I became - - that's where I got my law enforcement credentials. I went for three-month training, then it was in Washington D.C. Got my commission, and so I was the first commissioned ranger at Indiana Dunes. Um, Then, in 1978, I took a -- so by the time I left, so Indiana Dunes was exploding.

CD: Oh?

NK: When I went there there were seven on the staff and by the time I left there were sixty-seven I think. And so I had, I had become -- well I had -- actually as a GS-5, I was a park technician. Not a Park Ranger.

CD: Oh, Okay.

NK: And, and then, when I left there, I had, well, I was a GS-9 Park Ranger. And then I took the job as Chief Ranger at Craters of the Moon and uh, Chief Ranger meant that I was the only one.

CD: Oh, and that's a big park too.

NK: so well -- well yeah --

CD: Size-wise.

NK: Yeah, it was interesting. It was, uh the ranger division there didn't even have a vehicle. They had to borrow one from maintenance. Over the years I built up -- there was fee collection campground, and over the years I built a resource management program. Got a permit, park ranger position. And spent six years living in the park, and then, spent six years living in the park, and by then we had had our first son, and our daughter was born when we lived there. My son was born in Indiana Dunes. We moved out here when he was three weeks old.

CD: Oh wow. What a move.

NK: Yeah, yeah. And they lost our furniture for almost a month.

CD: Oh wow.

NK: Yeah, we thought it was gone.

CD: That would be scary, especially with a newborn.

NK: Then, I lived in Arco for six years, so I spent a total of twelve years at Craters. And it was -- I did a lot of poaching cases. Of mule deer. And it was, it was, in a lot of ways, one of the funnest park service jobs I had. Because it was before everything was so specialized.

CD: Yeah.

NK: So you got to do everything.

CD: Yeah, yeah.

NK: Yeah. Then it was, uh the last real field position. Because then in 1990, I became the unit manager at Hagerman Fossil Beds. And it was lateral position. GS-9. And there was absolutely zip at Hagerman. Park Service had an office in Twin Falls they had leased. So they had a superintendent over Hagerman and City of the Rocks. And so, I -- he hired me as the unit manager for Hagerman. When I was at Craters I had done, when they were looking at the legislation. At City of the Rocks, I had gone and done an assessment.

CD: Oh, Okay.

NK: Sort of thing. And so I- anyways, so we moved to Jerome and my wife worked for the school district there. And my office was in Hagerman, which was twenty-six miles. And that was a total total start-up. Working out of U.S. Fish and Wildlife office. It took a total of six months to get any kind of space of our own. And I had to borrow a vehicle. And then, so, did the general management plan there. Uh, the biggest controversy there, well it was the beginning of the “Sagebrush Rebellion” stuff.

CD: Okay

NK: Or the roots of a lot of things you still see carrying on -- the anti-Fed. And duck hunting was a big issue there. It was the law, as it was passed, prohibited.

CD: Oh, okay.

NK: And so, it was a whole story about how that was handled. But anyways, they- we worked out an agreement and Senator McClure got it passed next year. It basically came down to, if the duck hunters were going to hunt, which they should do there. I said, this will be on national news.

CD: Yeah.

NK: And then McClure won't be able to fix it. Because it was the very first national monument that allowed hunting. I mean, that I mean, that after was. Anyway, he that got settled out. And

the General Management Plan. But we really didn't have funding. And I, I had already learned that if you sat around and wait. I mean you do the paperwork and ask for money and all that. But if you just sat around and waited for that show up, it might be a while.

CD: Yes. Yes.

NK: You know, it took. Fossil Butte just got a new visitor center. So it went over there with a truck and trailer and hauled it. We cobbled together, rented a space in Hagerman. Cobbled together a little museum and had a Fossil Council. What would be like Friends of Minidoka. And they were -- Fossil Beds would not have been established if it wasn't for those people. And so we had a donation box and they got three to five thousand dollars a year and they would use that and leverage it and so, the trails and the overlooks we put in on the other side- the monument, to give some access, was done through leveraging all that. Putting it in over, over six years, we put in almost two hundred thousand dollars of infrastructure based off of --

CD: Yeah, that's a lot.

NK: We had some creative people. And so then, and then Minidoka comes along. And that, I mean my first. Literally, I hadn't heard any rumblings about that becoming a park.

CD: Oh really?

NK: I knew at Manzanar. And I, and I was vaguely aware of the whole -- the big picture story. And I knew that Minidoka was, had been a camp in Idaho, but I had never been there. I didn't really even know where it was. Like most people, I thought it was in the Minidoka county.

CD: Yeah, you keep driving past it.

NK: And I was, it was late -- over the holidays, the Christmas holidays. And I got a phone call from Dusty- Destry Jarvis. He was, I don't know, deputy secretary for parks and rec for Department of Interior. Some, high level. And he happened to be the brother of Jon Jarvis, who was, well he was superintendent of Craters after I left. So, and I've known him -- we were rangers together. So I had met his brother. So he called and said that Dan Sakura was bringing -- putting together a group of people to do an assessment. And would I represent the department. And of course. And so scrambled and tried to learn a little bit about it. The Jerome Historical Society were very helpful. They had a lot of, lot of information. And then I went out there. In cold, snow, blow. Just- I- it was right around the end of the year. And I, it just. You know, the thing that struck me so much was that there was so little left. You know, the entrance structures were obvious. I hadn't a clue about the Victory Garden.

CD: Yeah.

NK: I didn't know anything about that. Walked around and being an archaeologist, I could see cultural debris everywhere. Nails, tin cans, old foundations. Broken pieces of Pond's Cold Cream, which was a big deal.

CD: Wow.

NK: they ordered it through Sears or Montgomery Ward usually. And yeah, there's, in the dump site.

CD: Yeah.

NK: I don't know if you've ever been over there.

CD: I haven't, but I've seen pictures of it.

NK: Yeah, I mean

CD: Seems like it was just --

NK: I have to say, it has been. People have -- there's a lot of stuff has disappeared. It's all over. But anyway, and then Dan put together that group and I, I knew all of the county commissioners cause I had kept, I did regular briefings with all those county commissioners and during the Hagerman process. And so that was, that was the people, I was immediately most concerned how were they going to react. Because you just didn't know. They, and so Dan had, his whole family was there. And there's a terrific picture of his grandfather, father, uncles, all of them, and it was framed down at Hagerman -- I mean Jerome Historical Society.



CD: Oh wow.

NK: Now, and then it was, there were some politicians that were on the historical society there-involved in it. You know, and so And then when you did the presentation to one dad well he did a great job of gathering together a coalition of people. And I think that's documented of who participated in that.

CD: Yeah.

NK: And then, I suggested, well you know make sure they know that your family was there

CD: Yeah, Yeah.

NK: And he did a terrific job of course. And they supported it, and I made a pledge that it would be an open process. You know. That's when it began.

CD: Yeah

NK: The initial steps, after it was -- after the declaration was signed. Went up to Seattle, which was where our regional office was.

CD: Okay.

NK: And that -- it was still the Pacific Northwest Region. Or was it- had it been collapsed.

Anyway.

CD: Is it something else now?

NK: Well they, it used to be -- when I came here it was, it was it's own region. And then it got collapsed with the western region.

CD: What is it now? I see I see.

NK: Yeah, anyways, that's where the support was for here. And somehow, fortunately, met Anna. And the most significant early thing, I can remember at that initial trip up there was meeting with some ladies- and they were all women- that Anna had pulled together. They were the who's who of Seattle JA community. And there were just some really talented people there. Karen Yo-Yoshida with the JACL. And others and I -- I can see all their faces, just can't off the top of my head. And that's all documented.

CD: Yeah, yeah that's where- I mean where some of the community, some went to Seattle and where one of the pilgrimages go from, correct?

NK: That was the bulk, and so if you read John Tateshi's account, I mean it was obvious that it was the power center. Anyways, I came out of that meeting of -- pretty shook up, really. Because

we- we were challenged immediately. You know. Mako, she was, she was, very determined.

Well, they were all very focused. She just didn't, she was very very skeptical. And I hadn't quite got that yet.

I mean it didn't take me long, it was "no no, we're here to help." But then met other people like Yosh. Before Bainbridge became really a facet, several people from over there. Mike and anyway.

And they they helped me understand, you know they're you know, just not ready. Yosh Nakagawa was key. And so you know we have- for the planning process, you have this general format.

CD: Yeah and that's for the General Management Plan?

NK: Yeah, the General Management Plan. And so the key is to, you know, engage community and then begin to see some signs of contours of what you're dealing with. And then develop the alternative draft of various scenarios. Well engaging in the community here, first of all it's one I just explained. I quickly learned, well, also there's Portland. There's people in Alaska.

CD: I mean Twin Falls --

NK: Twin Falls

CD: Pocatello and Denver. They're all over. Yeah, that is a struggle.

NK: And so the scope of this thing really expanded and I don't know, in those days, the bean counters sorta had a formula of how many people you manage and how big your budget is and how many- "Okay it's seventy-four acres, how complicated can this be."

CD: Right?

NK: "You get this amount of money." And it just wasn't going to work. Because we had to, had to first do a lot of traveling and outreach. And make contacts in those communities, and that's that was largely the work of Anna and some of her contacts and folks I've mentioned.

And so it went to community halls and churches and potlucks and whatever. And so I- we realized that we had to kinda step back somehow. And so by then I had, we also the wing luke people were at that initial meeting. And they were very skeptical. And, but professional. So we developed a concept to have those communities do their own processing.

CD: Yeah. And what would that look like? Like just-

NK: Well, it looks like- we, so we de- I went to Jon Jarvis who was by then Regional Director, and convinced him to do a fifty thousand dollar contract with Wing Luke.

CD: Hmm, okay.

NK: And all it had -- I say all, it was a contract.

CD: Right.

NK: The main points were they had -- three -- I think, it was two or three deliverables.

CD: Okay.

NK: They had to hold community meetings, and I mean we certainly said, you know, “these are things we’re interested in and whatever.” But, and you know, that’s not all that unusual. Except in this case I just insisted that no government people could be there. And they made a lot of- but anyways, that’s what happened. But those meetings, the were, you know, had a little focus groups, it was the genesis of the pilgrimage really. And so once- once they sorta knew how -- or had some- some- it was, when I say they, I shouldn’t say that. There were various factions, had been able to kinda been able to say, “okay this is what we want out of it.” And there were certainly not, it was certainly not monolithic.

CD: I could imagine. I could imagine.

NK: And, but, and so having been involved in General Management Planning in Indiana Dunes and Craters and City of the Rocks. Kinda the format is that you develop these alternative

scenarios. But a lot of the times, a lot of that is pretty controlled. And I don't mean that in a bad way.

CD: Yeah.

NK: I mean there's things in there that you're gonna have to do cause the law says we have to. And so you've kinda, you kinda controlled. You helped direct the outcome, I guess. I think in my cases it was in a good way. The outcomes were good. But in this case, you just -- I just said we have to manage the process --

CD: Yeah, and not the outcome.

NK: -- and let go of the outcome. We don't have a clue and it isn't our place to really. And then after that you start seeing those contours. And then get back into the process, gauging directly with those. And so I don't- the number of meetings that were conducted on that were pretty incredible. The Nikkei Legacy Center in Portland was pretty critical. And it was very very different. All the communities were very different and unique, you know. So once we were able to get our footing and begin to put some shape to what those alternatives would be -- I think it came together. I mean there were some major contentious issues.

CD: And what were those?

NK: Well you had- just the people that were against the whole thing- not- and there were actually a couple of nikkei that I recalled that just- you know, but mainly it was people that you know, had some ax to grind. Whether --

CD: Was that like the local community or?

NK: Well yeah, there was- one of the toughest ones to deal with was a retired colonel on Bainbridge Island. So and, but, no there were, there was a couple in Hailey who were just -- only people in my career that I finally just refused to have anymore contact.

CD: Oh wow. Yeah, that's just --

NK: I just -- yeah, I'm done. But the Issei Memorial was a big deal and remains a big deal. Because it didn't -- the concept

CD: I've seen concept designs and it seems like it just-

NK: Well concept was was, yeah. The whole idea was that we were going to designate a site. Which we did, it's on over by the ditch. And that's where they wanted it, and there's nothing over there. There's no- there's no, I mean other than there's part of the camp. There's no structures there.

CD: Yeah, there's no [unclear] It's a great place for reflection too.

NK: Yeah, and they liked it. You've got a great view of the mountains, you've got the water feature, which was very important. And so they were gonna build it. And they were going to maintain it.

CD: Okay.

NK: In a partnership, I mean --

CD: Yeah. Kinda like- Was it, was that Friends of Minidoka? Or was it just- other community organizations or just the Nikkei community? Everyone.

NK: It was the -- mostly the Nisei that wanted to honor --

CD: Yeah.

NK: The Nisei Veterans Club in Seattle, they were very very active in it. And so I, there some pretty dirty laundry there and an egg on the Park Service over that deal. Because, I was scrambling when it had, I decided it was, you know really my time to leave. Because I thought it was in good shape and I just --

CD: And around what time was that? What year?



NK: Uh, that was uh- it was in, well I retired in 2008.

CD: Okay, okay.

NK: So I had drafted a Cooperative Agreement. I mean they all had different names depending on who's money was going to get -- anyways legal document with this group and then, that would allow them to raise funds as a partner of the Park Service. And I mean, these are done a lot.

CD: yeah.

NK: And I mean same time of agreement you have with the Friends of Minidoka. And so I had that drafted. And in the first review in the contractor's office in Seattle, and I retire. And then they had a series of interim- temporary interim. I won't get on my Park soapbox about how the Park Service really sucks at succession. Well, I told you a year ago I was leaving.

CD: Yeah, yeah. Well, I know that, you know, for me, looking through different documents I see the name of one superintendent, and then another and another and another I'm like wait- this is a lot.

NK: Yeah, uh-uh. And then, oh gosh, the one, the first permanent one after me, not Judy Geniac

CD: Is it Wendy?

NK: yeah. Okay. She killed it. After these guys had, on good faith. They had raised money, within their community. I didn't tell them. I mean, I told them, we have to get this signed before you can legally do this. But I mean, what I am I going to, I'm not going to do that.

CD: Yeah, yeah, it's, you're in a bad position.

NK: And then it just all died a slow death. And I was, I was very very upset because I thought I took the position you should have had to done an amendment to the GMP to take that, cause it was key. It wasn't like- -

CD: Yeah, it was in the GMP.

NK: Well we're going to put a kiosk here but we're -- we don't need it or whatever. And so there remains hard feelings.

CD: Well and I can imagine like after so many years of building up that community and that trust. To have it --

NK: Well and they never really owned up to-you know, it -- a lot of finger pointing and the document in at Hagerman files disappeared.

CD: Oh.

NK: Yeah, I know that because -

CD: The draft cooperative?

NK: I knew, I did, the staff at Hagerman, I had worked with for twenty-something years. And the administrative offices are still there. And it was missing.

CD: That's

NK: And you know it's one of those perfect storm things. The contracting officer in Seattle, she retired. And, but I did find a copy of it that I had. And so I sent that to I don't know, I sent it to someone. Oh, I think I sent it to Emily when she was in charge of Friends. And Alan, her father, he was very very deeply hurt over that.

CD: Yeah, I could imagine that it could be --

NK: Well, well those people-

CD: And it's you know, so many

NK: Well they had put their heart and credibility on the line. It was a question of honor. So anyway, but -- other controversies that we were dealing with --

CD: If you know any.

NK: Family gathering. They, yeah the *Issei* thing, I, Anna's probably the best person that would know. You know, she knows the details of all that stuff. But. and then, I guess while I'm -- I don't like to -- this isn't gossip. But I think it's important for some of these things, for people to know. You know, Wendy also totally pissed off Bainbridge community.

CD: Yeah, yeah so I was going to ask if you had been superintendent when Bainbridge became a sister unit.

NK: oh yeah, oh yeah. No, I was- as soon as I went over there and met those folks and learned about it- Dr. Stephanie Toothman from Seattle, she was -- she was totally in it. Dr. Fred York, an anthropologist. And no, we spent a lot of time over there and I worked with -- well Dan Sakura and the Nature, or the Conservation Fund.

CD: Conservation Fund?

NK: All those guys too. And I- you know that was another, that was a tricky play. Cause they wanted to do something, and I don't know if you've ever been there, but it is beautiful. And it was sorta like City of the Rocks. You know, they wanted federal money but they didn't want federal control. And after working with them and -- it was just like -- that's how it should work. And by making it a unit of Miniodka, which fits the story --

CD: Yeah, yeah, because originally that's where they were removed from.

NKK Yeah, yeah.

CD: Yeah, it does fit.

NK: Yeah, but they, you know, Frank Kitamoto. He was very very- and that you know- okay controversies within the park service. I call them the Green Bloods if it's not waterfalls and animals with big eyelashes, you know they -- I had superintendents say to me, "Well, we already have one, in California. Why do we need another one?" Well, and I said, "Well I don't know, should we get rid of- which civil war battlefield should we get rid of because we have a bunch." But you know, and so. But there were that same sort of feeling all over the fossils. It's just a, just a bunch of, but anyway. And why that matters is because it's always a fight for money. I mean that's that's what it's really about. There's x dollars and who gets it? But, also the other things really. I, you know, even before anything was going you would go out there on, there were very few days you'd go out to Minidoka and someone wasn't there. And I just found that, wow.

CD: Yeah, yeah.

NK: How did they even find this place?

CD: Right.

NK: And, you know, working within with the John Hermann Family. That was very very interesting. And critical piece.

CD: Was, was land acquisition- and that might not be the proper term- was that written into the GMP, or was that something that just happened to unfold?

NK: We put it- we put it- it wasn't authorized. So it is written as, it made the best case to why it should be and from the Park Service Standpoint, the firehouse. But also you know, just giving a little bit more elbow room. But also, I recognized immediately that the Farm-in-a-Day, we could get a lot of local friends. Because of the farming community.

CD: Well and especially with his story of being a two-time veteran.

NK: Yeah, yeah. You know you don't have to sell that one. And I had a lot of respect, well for his whole family. But John was supportive of doing something and he recognized right away that whatever was going to impact his life. He was, he was very upset that the incarcerated had lost property. That's what really really bugged him. But he, he didn't buy the whole- I mean he wasn't a fanatic about it. He said, "Well, I just think, lots of people had to do things they didn't want." And, but he kept, and I wish I knew where it was. He had one of those original maps. And they're signed by hundreds of people that, he'd see people out there and he'd go talk to them. And he'd, they'd sign the barracks their families were in.

CD: That would be special.

NK: Yeah, and it's all folded and it, you know I, I think if John would have lived, we would have ended up with it. But I think his daughter-in-law snatched it. But it, I'm pretty confident that somebody still got it.

CD: Yeah, I hope.

NK: Yeah, because John was pretty proud of it. Yeah, you'd go in and, yeah I drink a lot of coffee with John. Very, very weak coffee.

CD: Well yeah, because I think if I remember also looking through some of the records. How do I say, He wasn't a proponent of the CAFO farm, issue that was going on. But he was- was against it. Or his family did.

NK: Well his family, well John did, I don't know if he was active in that. Maybe, I, Their operation was very hardscrabble. Him and his son, who were the farmers, they actually worked at the Sugar Factory.

CD: OH, okay.

NK: Yeah, and he just, he didn't- he just didn't want to see any, he didn't want to see change. Period, I think. Basically, those are my words. I just, and any, any big, you know the gradual

commercialization that you were seeing. John was a very talented guy, you know. He was very aware. And so the acquisition of that was, I don't know, very unusual. Because it was- Rick Wagner was a Park Service land guy who was just extraordinary, extraordinary work. I mean, you know he drank a lot of that weak coffee too. And he gained a lot of John's confidence. And so to John's credit, he hired an attorney. Don Chisolm, from Burley. And he is a quintessential old country lawyer. "Aw schucks." But doesn't, that's a trick, you know. So basically Rick Wagner and Dan Sakura brought in the Conservation Fund and Mark Elsebree. Who is also one of the most top professional people I ever worked with. And so they were, they were scheming on the legislation. But then John died and the GMP was not done. So, we didn't have a legitimate way to approach it other than just stand-alone legislation. Which is pretty hard to.

CD: It's pretty tricky. Especially in Idaho.

NK; Well yeah. And, Larry Craig was nah, he was milk toast. He would never really commit. Crapo got on board. Representative Simpson, he got on board. Nah I had, I knew all of the staff and field staff because I kept in close contact with them working on City of Rocks and Hagerman. And so they didn't really object to the acquisition. And played the veteran's card big time and then John died and so she couldn't stay there. His wife, she was- was- she could care for herself, but you know.

CD: Well and it's so far out there and hard to maintain.



NK: Well yeah, and you know, by herself and so the Conservation Fund stepped in. And Mark and I went to Burley to meet with Don and- Mark and Rick, I don't know. Half a dozen times. And then the Conservation Fund did a formal appraisal and uh, and they accepted a deal and that allowed her to move into town. And - [cough] Pardon me. And that also bought us some credibility. And there's a neighbor there. I mean, you had the two- the Dimonds they are just, they did so much. And they continue to. And- the other guy, Waters- he hates us.

CD: Oh really?

NK: Yeah, well, when we bought the Herman farm, we made, we made the agreement and it really helped sweeten all the deal that the farm ground- that's under production would remain so. Because it's actually better than what else would happen to it. Plus that's what it --

CD: It tells a story.

NK: Yeah, so. And so we put that out for lease and Waters didn't get it. He owns the place that- if you go past where the mess hall is.

CD: Oh, okay.

NK: Straight up the road. That's his place right up there.

CD: Oh, so the gate --

NK: Yeah, if you turn at the end and go past the mess hall down at the road. Yeah, that place right up there-

CD: Okay.

NK: And then him and, so Dean got the lease. Him and Dean have been at war over water. They've been in court.

CD: Woah.

NK: [Laughs] But h, I think working with the -- so the acquisition it was, you know, the Conservation Fund had to get legislation passed. But, you know, with Dan Sakura up there in Washington.

CD: Yeah.

NK: And so, it got passed and that was just a really really big deal. And,

CD: Well and was it a pretty similar scenario with the Robison too? I'm not sure if you were --

NK: That was a absentee.

CD: Okay

NK: The people that were living there were just renting it. And so Rick Wagner, the land guy, he-he was the one that made the initial contact. They lived in Arizona I think.

CD: Oh okay.

NK: And they just went over and I don't recall. But, you know I thought it would be. I would like to have seen the Park Service have it so somebody doesn't build --

CD: And well it's closer,

NK: Build a mansion there.

CD: [Laughs] Well and it's closer to the honor roll and the guard tower.

NK: Yeah.

CD: And entrance. And it's good to not have visitors stray onto someone's home.

NK: Well, and to me its what I call a sense of place. And to know what it was, even though, it doesn't look like that now. But to me, that's also part of the story, and look what it became- and

these people farmed it. And so that was a huge, huge thing for that to get done. Oh and, so over by the warehouse that was the irrigation district. What are they called -- their actual headquarters is in Shoshone.

CD: Um, yeah.

NK: Anyway they had an operation there. And the warehouse that's now there, they were using that. And they had big gas tanks all over the place and spray and tractors and- and so here again worked with Crapo and Simpson's staff and they slid in some funding and we bought them out and moved them.

CD: Yeah.

NK: The reason that passed was cause they wanted it to happen. They got a brand new facility out of it.

CD: Yeah, yeah versus a-

NK: And they don't have to

CD: old warehouse

NK: Yeah, so it was. But that was also important because it was an industrial operation there. Which was, which was little tricky getting the clearance. Cause you gotta do the -- whatever they call those levels of inspection. Environmental. And there was some contamination.

CD: Oh I could imagine. I could imagine.

NK: So, and I- I don't know, really I don't think most of that stuff could even happen today in the political world. Just wouldn't- wouldn't happen. And then we're working with the highway district there. Those guys had all legitimate concerns and so, you know, I would just go to their board meetings. Instead of- I would get on their agenda and-

CD: So, were you also superintendent when they- when the park acquired the barrack and the mess hall, or was that after?

NK: No, no. One of the last things I was involved in was working through Dr. Sims. I hired that student to do that inventory of find all the buildings. Have you seen that report?

CD: I think-

NK: We went through BSU student.

CD: I think I've seen parts of it. Yeah.

NK: Anyway he, he's the one -- he's the one that found the mess hall. We didn't even know it existed.

CD: Because before they had- well I'm not sure it's the same barrack, but they had the one at IFARM that people would visit.

NK: Oh yeah, uh uh.

CD: Is that the same one? Do you know?

NK: No no no. That's theirs.

CD: Oh, okay.

NK: Is it not there anymore?

CD: I'm not sure. I couldn't tell you. I wasn't there-

NK: Well I wouldn't be surprised, those, of course I don't know. Those volunteer organizations burn out after a time. And that was a big- no they used to have IFARM days. And we, we ended up sending staff there to help them with the interpretation. No, I don't, I'm not sure where that barrack that's there now even came from. But I think it was also identified --

CD: Okay, I'll have to look at that.

NK: In that survey. Yeah, I don't know, I got Stephanie Toothman to give BSU a little bit of money and Bob hired and supervised it.

CD: Yeah, yeah and he was instrumental in a lot of this.

NK: Oh yeah, well I've

CD: I learn something new every day just by going through his collection.

NK: Oh he, he was just terrific, terrific. He was a gentleman. And just a joy to work with. Well, that was another controversy during GMP. Terminology.

CD: yeah, yeah.

NK: Well because it was the Minidoka Internment National Monument. And like -- I didn't know that some people didn't like that word.

CD: Yeah, and some don't.

NK: Quickly. And some did. And so the Park Service, under the General Management Plan process can hire subject matter experts.

CD: Okay.

NK: When I say hire, we give them, we pay for their expense and sometime some stipend. And so we, it's a contract. We got Bob and Tetsu Kashima from Washington. And, so those guys, when we had our roundtable, our GMP Team, they were there. And brought the, you know, the academic part of it. And Tetsu knew a lot of people in Seattle Area. And Bob of course knew everyone down here. And so that whole terminology thing was a big piece and those guys kinda took that on and worked up what you see in the GMP. Which, we read it now and it's already out of date. But that's- you know, language. But they were critical. And also it, just their vast knowledge of the general subject. And Bob's deep knowledge of individuals. So as the GMP began to kinda wrap down and take shape, through -- did an archaeological excavation early. And Anna was not working for the -- she was one of the field leaders.

CD: Oh okay.

NK: And brought Emily Momohara in, had been good friends forever. Through Anna, some volunteers showed up and Emily was one, and her dad, Allen. And over the course of that, I don't know- week.

CD: Oh wow, yeah.



NK: And I was there everyday helping them, digging. I'm an archaeologist. And then this, that's when they began to get a sense of the garden. And I just thought that was fascinating.

CD: Did you get a sense that they knew it was there before?

NK: Anna, Anna, yeah. Had done her homework and. No, I don't think anyone had a sense of how significant it really was. Anna, and she knew of the honor roll. And so when they began to find- when the V walkway, and then they found the actual post holes. And uh. Anyways, over the course of that week, I got to know Emily and Allen. And so that's when I suggested that we, we very much needed a Friends group. And I had been involved with several of those. So I got them some copies of some things. They quickly got in contact with the, some Manzanar people.

CD: Okay.

NK: And Anna had worked with- out there and knew a lot of those people. And so that- the establishment of that was really key and important. Like all of those, it's a real struggle to get it up and running. And once it got up and going, you begin to see some conflict between the Pilgrimage and the Friends group. And some of it was just people

CD: Because before the, so did the pilgrimages become the, I mean obviously some people made individual trips, but before the Friends of Minidoka Group?

NK: I think, I think the first one was before the group. Because you had to, you've got, it takes almost a year to get the 501.

CD: Yeah. Yeah.

NK: Through the IRS. And --

CD: Yeah and the first one ---

NK: I don't remember the exact sequence there. But what, what happened is they just kinda showed up. And so Gloria- I forget her last name. Anyway, she was one of the big contacts. And I worked with her and I said, "You know you have to have a permit, next, next year. And we'll work with you to do that." And also there has to be some sort of liability involved.

CD: Yeah.

NK: And that's how the Friends. So they -- the minute -- the pilgrimage just basically applied as an arm of the Friend's group. And I don't think there was any real issues with that, but what happened then was the Friend's group got up and going and having to file taxes and all of that. And the Pilgrimage started selling things. And- In Idaho. And it was actually legally the Friends of Minidoka. Cause there was no formal organization for the Pilgrimage. And so that turned into some issues. And my understanding, in Seattle it got pretty ugly.

CD: Oh wow.

NK: And I don't know- I kinda didn't want to know. That- I, you know it got to the point where I had no choice but to issue a memo to -- a letter to the Friends group. And said, you know, this has got to be resolved.

CD: Just get along.

NK: Well I don't care about getting along, but you gotta comply by the rules and if you're going to sell things, you gotta pay taxes. And, like I say, I don't know who or why the, the details of that, but it turned into a -- and you know, all they really, what they should have done is filed their own- formed their own organization. And there was a lot of effort to try to do that out of, and so I don't even know what they're doing now. And so, because when I retired, I stayed engaged here and there. And then when Wendy came on, she just flat told me that I wasn't welcome. After meeting.

CD: Wow. That --

NK: She said, more or less, "appreciate what you did but-" and, and she was a control freak. Her staff wouldn't talk to reasonable people without her approval. So anyways.

CD: Well that makes it tough to do your job.

NK: I don't know if that needs to be in the transcript, but. I'm just saying. So- I just

CD: Well and really-

NK: So I didn't have anything to do with it for another four years. And then the CAFO thing was really. You know, wary. I kept in contact with, you know, Janet Keegan and Jim Amuzano. And some Friends people and they kept bugging me, so I went back on the board. And I did that, I don't know, I think I did that for five years. And what- what I really tried to focus on was helping them develop some long-term, some long term plans.

CD: Long-term plans.

NK: I brought in a facilitator, a Park Service facilitator and we did a planning session and produced a document. And then, and I was, I was adamant at that point that the CAFO wasn't going to happen. Well I shouldn't say adamant.

CD: Certain.

NK: I strongly believed. With cause that it just wasn't going to happen. And they just- the Board wanted to go a different direction and I- okay. And so I didn't quit because of that, but it was just that- there's so many needs and I just don't see raising fifty thousand dollars to, to pay an attorney when I just don't think this is going to happen. I mean once McFadden sold that permit, it just, you know, I just, you were looking at something like fifteen million dollars. And in those

days-in that money. And he didn't have that kind of money. And the people who bought it, they absolutely didn't. They were bottom feeders. And that hole. I mean they own several dairies-

NK: Not the kind of dairies you would wanna take somebody on a tour of. It's just like eh that's not going to happen. And then the guard tower.

CD: Yeah!

NK: You know, that was really a great, great project. Casey Klein, engineer here. Just such a creative person. He put together that coalition of, you know, to do all that. And then made it happen.

CD: Yeah.

NK: Yeah and the students. Yeah, so I took my pickup and camper and camped out there that week. It was spring break. And there, Dean Dimond, he came over and helped. And so that was a great project. And I think, I think it really just sets the whole tone when you go there.

CD: It does.

NK: Oh I know this is just

CD: Well and off the highway, there's an intern, I think last year. Or year before, and she made a miniature one. But the big one, I remember my first day driving up and just "Oh wow."

NK: Yeah.

CD: It was a lot.

NK: Well, funny story. They got it all done and everyone was leaving. And Dean asked Casey, "Well how come there's no ladder?" "Well we don't want people climbing up." Okay. Everyone leaves and Deans' kids are-

CD: They figured out a way.

NK: They already climbed up.

CD: That's funny.

NK: You know, I don't know how much. Detail to fill in.

CD: You know, I was going to say for me, that wraps everything up. Do you have anything else you want to add.

NK: Oh you know, it might come to me later, but just- and another thing, I just. I think to me it was- it made a difference because I was at the end. I wasn't going to -- I wasn't looking for a checkbox to go somewhere else. So I'm, I'm glad to see that Wade is committed to staying there for a while. And I enjoy working with him.

CD: Yeah, yeah. He's awesome.

NK: So I'm glad to see it's come around full circle. Yeah.

CD: Awesome, well thank you.