

**National Park Service (NPS) History Collection**

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NPS Oral History Collection (HFCA 1817)



**Cornelius Heine**  
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## START OF TAPE

Nancy Russell: This is Nancy Russell, the archivist for the National Park Service History Collection. Today's date is January 7, 2020, and I am here with Cornelius Heine to talk about some of his experiences with National Park Service. Is it okay if I call you Con? Thank you.

Nancy Russell: Con, I know you did an interview in 1975 with Herb Evison, which is already in our collection, so I was going to skip over some of that early — the family history, and the background of some of the career that's already in the interview, but I wanted to just check with you first, and see if there was anything you wanted to add from that initial interview, or from that transcript, anything you thought you needed to add of that early time period.

Con Heine: Well, thank you, Nancy. I thought I might touch upon a couple of special events that I was involved in before '71. One of them was the dedication of Padre Island National Seashore by Ladybird Johnson. It was very interesting, because I was sent down there by the director to take care of that.

Con Heine: When you go down to do one of these events in a national park, you work closely with the superintendent. Of course, he knows you've been sent there by the director to do this, so you get great cooperation, but you have to be careful that you're not overseeing and telling the superintendent every move to make. When you do one of these events, they're like a show. For example, I got in a Jeep with the superintendent, and we drove the whole length of Padre Island, so that — because I was searching for a special boulder to put the plaque on. We found a huge boulder, brought it back to the site of the dedication, and had it affixed, and had it prepared, of course, beforehand, the bronze plaque, and they had it all prepared on the boulder that Ladybird could unveil. There's a lot of showmanship to it.

Con Heine: The other two events I wanted to mention, before '71 — You asked me if I was involved in the [Reverend] Martin Luther King [Jr.] speech at the Lincoln Memorial and the March on Washington. Yes, I was surely involved in it, in a very deep way. Most of the territory that the March on Washington took place on was on National Park Service property. There was great concern about security at the time, so I had to attend meetings with the attorney general, Ramsey Clark, to plan our security measures, and they needed the Park Service expertise and support. Sutton Jett laid out a plan where certain officials would be responsible for different sections of the march. He wanted to take the responsibility for the overall march, and I was given the prime spot, the Lincoln Memorial, where the speech took place.

- Con Heine: On the morning of the speech of Martin Luther King [Jr.], the morning of the march, I was down at the memorial very early, and I had responsibility for the security and integrity of the memorial, and indirectly, the security of Martin Luther King [Jr.]. I had a team of memorial guards, park rangers, and access to the U.S. Park Police. If you ever notice any of the national pictures of the Martin Luther King speech, the youngest ranger on my staff is always standing right behind Martin Luther King. I was 10 feet higher, because I wanted an overview of the background, so I was deeply involved. At the time, I didn't realize the great significance that that speech would come about, but the march was beautifully covered. There [were] no problems. Speech was given, and I carried out my day's work there.
- Con Heine: It was very interesting. There was a lot of confusion inside the Memorial Hall after the speech took place, and a huge contingent of New York City policemen came up. The captain come up to me, and he said, "Do you need any help at all clearing out some of the crowd, so there can be a little more order?" I said, "Yes, that'd be helpful," and he took care of that for me.
- Nancy Russell: Wonderful. Now, what was your position at the time?
- Con Heine: At that time, I was Assistant Regional Director of National Capital Parks.
- Nancy Russell: Okay, and so while you're there, obviously you're very focused on the security and making everything happen, did you really have a chance to even take in what he was saying? Was that something that you were able to experience, or were you, by necessity, just having to focus on all those other details?
- Con Heine: Well, I listened to him, but to be truthful, I didn't grasp the significance of the speech at that time. There was so much to be done on the security. For example, I was deeply involved with the FBI and the whole thing. This is an original letter from J. Edgar Hoover.
- Nancy Russell: This is a letter from Hoover, thanking you for your assistance to the Bureau during the March on Washington. That's fabulous. It says, "Your cooperation greatly aided our agents in carrying out their official responsibilities," and that they are most appreciative of your help that you so willingly extended. That's wonderful, September 6, 1963.
- Con Heine: I'm very proud of that.
- Nancy Russell: I should think so.

- Con Heine: Also, on a number of other major protests in Washington, big protests, I also worked with the FBI. The other event that occurred [before 1971] was the one that I did the most elaborate planning of any event. [Director] George Hartzog [sent me] to St. Louis for the dedication of the Arch. I was out there two weeks and made elaborate plans. I wanted to have a huge parade before the dedication at the arch and the underground museum. I visited with masonic groups, Knights of Columbus groups, educational groups, community groups, and I had plans for a major parade, equestrian units, and all of these different community units.
- Con Heine: The parade was going [through] downtown St. Louis and [ending] at the arch. The day before, superintendent said, "Let's go up to the top of the arch, and we'll walk around, and I'll show you. You can be on the top of the arch." He opened a platform, and I went up on the top of the arch. It's not all that wide. Now, when I think of it, we're standing up there. It's probably — I forget whether it's [30]-some feet wide, but if there was any wind, we could've been blown off.
- Nancy Russell: You were literally — You weren't in the observation area. You were on top of the arch.
- Con Heine: I was on top [center] of the [roof] of the arch. We walked around.
- Nancy Russell: Wow.
- Con Heine: But I say, as I look back on it now, there's nothing on the sides of it, whatsoever.
- Nancy Russell: You didn't have anything to tie you on?
- Con Heine: It's good it was not a windy day.
- Nancy Russell: Wow.
- Con Heine: Anyway, the morning of the — After working two weeks to plan it, a deluge of rain came. The entire parade was, and all the people gathered was ready, wiped out, but we took the whole ceremony down into the basement of the arch, which was later developed as a museum. Hubert Humphrey was Vice President. He was the speaker. The ceremony went on as planned, but it's one of the only events that I had put so much time in that didn't come out just how you planned it.
- Nancy Russell: You can't control the weather. That was two weeks in planning this one event, and you obviously had to travel for that. Were you frequently doing those kinds of events away from home, where you needed to be gone for periods of time for planning?

- Con Heine: Every now and then, not as frequent as you might think, but every now and then one of them would come up.
- Nancy Russell: Okay.
- Con Heine: Because what the director — After George Hartzog came on as director, if he wanted me to go to one of these places, I'd just go out to the park [and stay as long as necessary to make an execute the dedication or event].
- Nancy Russell: Right. Well, certainly, you were involved in a lot of events in National Capital Region, as well. That was one of the things that struck me from your earlier interview that you did with Herb Evison, was talking about how you and Sutton Jett, who at the time was the National Capital Region Special Events Coordinator, the two of you worked six to seven hundred special events a year in the National Capital Region, doing multiple events each week. That just seems like such a high level of expectation. Can you just talk a little bit about that, how you coped with that workload on a professional and personal level?
- Con Heine: Well, I guess we were just hard workers. Mr. Jett was a marvelous person, wonderful man, a great friend of mine. We worked together. They called on him first to take care of all of these events when Ed Kelly was the superintendent. As it got too much for him, Mr. Kelly said, well, you'd better get Con in there to help you, so the two of us worked together, and we just did it, and it was fun. I'd like to mention two special events that I carried on for 10 years.
- Nancy Russell: Oh, wow.
- Con Heine: One was the annual fireworks display in the nation's capital.
- Nancy Russell: The Fourth of July fireworks?
- Con Heine: I had charge of the fireworks display and the memorial on the monument grounds. I contracted with a fireworks man. Reviewed the bids, gave the contract. At the night of the fireworks, I'd shine the flashlight to give him word to start the fireworks. I supervised the seating of five or six thousand guests. I had gotten requests from congressmen for seating in the front row. That went on for 10 years. Sometimes I would take Catherine and the children, and they would get front row seats for the fireworks. It was an all-day thing, again up early in the morning, late at night.

- Con Heine: The other thing was that I had charge of the lighting of the national Christmas tree by the president. There's a picture in here [referring to Heine's photo album]. First one was President Eisenhower in 1952. Now this involved setting the stage on the Ellipse, testing the lighting of the tree, communicating with the White House of when the President would come.
- Con Heine: I remember the very first one, 1952. The president's entourage came, and Jim Reilly was the [Secret Service] agent in charge. He was protecting the president, and I had everything set up. The president would light the tree and have a little talk, and the ceremony would go on. Sometimes, just before the lighting, the White House communications people would contact me by telephone on the timing. One time, in later years, one of the White House assistants said, "We want to change the time." I said, "You can't change the time. The national TV people have this to go on at a certain time."
- Con Heine: Now, also, this did not only include the lighting of the tree. For several, 10 years, we had what we called the Pageant of Peace. We set up all kinds of exhibits on the Ellipse, brought in reindeer from the North Pole with Santa Claus, had a live nativity scene, all kinds of things. Well, I supervised the building of all those, so it was a major, major event.
- Nancy Russell: You know, I'm often struck by our careers in the National Park Service and the paths that they take, but so listening to you talk, as a historian, and then you're in this position where you're also a contracting officer, a PR person, almost a general in the sense of deploying all of these resources to make —
- Con Heine: [Yes, it involved] hundreds of men.
- Nancy Russell: Yeah, yeah, exactly. Did it every strike you that — all those paths that your career took?
- Con Heine: Later, I think, in recent years thinking about it. For example, you meet so many interesting people. For example, Robert Young, the famous actor, he was called in by President Eisenhower to give him advice on speaking and so forth. Before he came over to light the tree one of the times, Robert Young came over and met with me, and we talked on the stage, discussed the [lighting and the President's speech].
- Nancy Russell: Wonderful, so it really did open up a whole lot of —
- Con Heine: Different avenues.

Nancy Russell: Yeah, unexpected avenues. That's amazing. You talked about Sutton Jett just being such a good friend, and he's obviously someone that's well-documented in the NPS History Collection, but do you have any personal recollections or stories you want to share that maybe give some insight into who he was?

Con Heine: Well, of course, he was a historian. When I joined, the start of my career, I think I mentioned to you and to Herb, I was an assistant interpreter at the Lincoln Museum. That's where the historical unit had its headquarters. That's where Sutton Jett was, as a historian. Colonel Truett was in charge of the memorials, and I was, as an interpreter, giving 10 or 12 speeches a day on Lincoln's assassination. He was a dedicated historian, and he would write different things. He wrote different things, and so on, and then he would ask me to do things for him.

Con Heine: For example, as I told Herb [Evison in the 1971 interview], I prepared the first audiovisual in any museum in Washington on the [Lincoln] assassination. First of all, I got instructions and help from Sutton, and we put that into the museum. He just was an all-around good person. Of course, outside of work, we became very, very friendly, used to go to each other's houses and so forth. He and Rudy Bauss, who was my museum assistant, we had a regular museum program going in the Park Service, and we'd get together, so it was a very close relationship. I was kind of sad when I had to leave but was glad to get the opportunity to go into the National Park Service Headquarters Office. That first 15 years was a busy, eventful career.

Nancy Russell: Would you say that he was a mentor to you?

Con Heine: Yes, absolutely, absolutely.

Nancy Russell: Wonderful. When you were working for the National Capital Region as the Public Information Officer, which I think was from about '58 to '65, what were your relationships with the media? How did you work with them?

Con Heine: Well, I had no person under me designated as information officer. I would have assistants that could talk, but a lot of times, I was the main vocal contact with the press, answering questions on problems, controversies, what have you. In a sense, the chief information officer was part of the assistant regional director. In fact, the assistant regional director for conservation, which I was, was really the operations director for the whole park system there, because the only other divisions were the engineering and the horticultural and so on, so the operations of the park system fell under the conservation and use [program].

Nancy Russell: For the National Capital Region?

Con Heine: Yes, National Capital [Parks].

Nancy Russell: Yep, wonderful. At that time, though, there was a national communication out of the WASO office, a national officer of information?

Con Heine: Oh, yes. Well, I would be in touch with them.

Nancy Russell: Yes, mmhmm (affirmative).

Con Heine: In close cooperation with them.

Nancy Russell: Do you know who was there at that time? Who was the chief information officer?

Con Heine: I can't quite remember right now, but I could tell you this. I can tell you the information officer [who] was the first one [for] the entire system of the [National] Park Service.

Nancy Russell: Okay.

Con Heine: When the National Park Service was created [in 1916], it consisted of four people: Director Mather; Horace Albright, his assistant; [Arthur E. Demaray]; and Information Officer Isabelle Story, who came from my hometown, Streater, Illinois —

Nancy Russell: Did she?

Con Heine: I never knew that until when I left to go to college, after the war, my pastor, Father Cosgrove, said, "Well, I know a lady, girl, here from Streater. She was involved in the [National Park] Service." Involved? She was the first information director.

Nancy Russell: Mmhmm (affirmative), yeah, I really wish we'd had an oral history with her in the collection, but unfortunately, we don't. Did you cross paths with her?

Con Heine: No, that's the amazing thing. While I'm talking about all these things we just covered, she was there for a time as the information officer. I didn't know that. I didn't know she was from Streater.

Nancy Russell: Interesting. You mentioned that, in addition to special events, you were doing a lot of speech writing.

- Con Heine: Oh, all kinds of speech writing. In fact, I have it here somewhere. Oh, you know, there's something very unusual. I joined the National Park Service in 1949, and I was still getting my master's degree at Catholic University. I told you, one night, Raymond Gregg came in and said, "We need a speaker at the Sylvan Theater." I'd only been working about a month, so I went that night to give a speech on the nation's capital, illustrated the speech, put it together in about a day or two. A thousand people attended those [lectures on the Washington Monument and Grounds]. Here's the speech I gave in 1949.
- Nancy Russell: Your very first one.
- Con Heine: Which I'm going to give you.
- Nancy Russell: Oh, wonderful. I can make you a copy, too.
- Con Heine: After I gave that speech, and our interpretive unit was then in the Lincoln Museum. In addition to those kind of things, we went out and gave tours. I gave tours of the Capitol grounds, the city of Washington, Lafayette Square, C&O Canal, all over the city of Washington. Back in those early days, a young congressman from Idaho, Orval Hansen, would go on the tours with me. We became very close friends. Now this was back in 1950.
- Nancy Russell: Was he going on the tours just to learn more about the history of the city?
- Con Heine: [Yes].
- Nancy Russell: He was just interested.
- Con Heine: [Yes]. 1979, my last year, I worked [with] him and [for] the Secretary of the Interior. He asked the Secretary to [appoint] me a special assistant to [plan a special conference on the protection of the character and beauty of the Nation's Capital and] do the final report.
- Nancy Russell: Okay, that's how it came full circle.
- Con Heine: [Yes], just like that.
- Nancy Russell: Wow.
- Con Heine: Also, and here I [have] a special picture to show you, not long after I gave this first speech [in 1949], about a year later, the American Pilgrimage of Churchmen came to the nation's capital. That was the beginning of the President's Prayer Breakfast. They asked me to speak to the first meeting. I've got the picture there to show you.

Nancy Russell: Were you doing a historical talk to them?

Con Heine: Hmm?

Nancy Russell: A historical talk about Washington, is that what you were doing for the group?

Con Heine: [It was about] spiritual faith [and its importance in the history of the Nation].

Nancy Russell: Okay.

Con Heine: [It was] on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

Nancy Russell: Wow, what a career.

Con Heine: Let me see if I can't get this to show you. You can go through this after the interview.

Nancy Russell: Okay, wonderful.

Con Heine: I wonder if — Here it is, 1950 or '51. They had a huge crowd.

Nancy Russell: Amazing.

Con Heine: That was the beginning of the President's Prayer Breakfast that they have every year. [Looking at a different picture.] Here's when President Eisenhower visited the Lincoln [Museum]. There I am. Congressman Schwengel, who later had me to come up [to Capitol Hill] and head the [U.S.] Capitol Historical Society. Here's Colonel Truett and his wife; Stanley McClure, one of our [historians] who later became one of my assistants; and George Kozlowski.

Nancy Russell: Wonderful. Did you have any role, in the time you were at National Capital, with the presidential inaugurations?

Con Heine: Oh, I certainly did. I had to supervise the stand across from the White House, the stands, looking across at the reviewing stand. Then, National Capital Parks, we had our own VIP stand, a huge one, next to the Treasury Building, where the Inaugural makes its turn to go up to Pennsylvania Avenue. I was very active in that time, and had to go down early in the morning, make sure that everything was ready, the stands [at Lafayette Park], and our VIP stand.

- Con Heine: I can remember, on the Kennedy Inauguration, I [was] up very early. There was three or four feet of snow. I had to drive all the way down, get down through the streets from northwest Washington. The plows from the Army were clearing Pennsylvania Avenue, and the Inauguration went on as planned. As the Inaugurations continued, I developed a special talk that I gave on Inaugurations.
- Nancy Russell: Oh, wonderful.
- Con Heine: I was asked to give [my Inauguration talk] as part of the festivities of the Inaugurations. I gave it a couple of times. I [will] give you that today to put in the archives.
- Nancy Russell: Wonderful. You were there for Kennedy's inauguration.
- Con Heine: All of them.
- Nancy Russell: Which ones, when you say all of them?
- Con Heine: Well, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the next couple that followed Kennedy.
- Nancy Russell: LBJ.
- Con Heine: [Yes].
- Nancy Russell: Okay, and —
- Con Heine: Then after that, after LBJ, I was in the Washington Office. I wasn't involved then.
- Nancy Russell: Okay, so again, it just still strikes me that you were not just a firsthand witness to so many of these iconic historical —
- Con Heine: You felt like you were a part of it.
- Nancy Russell: Exactly. As a historian, yourself, you were living those events. Did it strike you at the time?
- Con Heine: Not really, but it did later on, I think.
- Nancy Russell: Yeah, wonderful. I think somebody's coming. Let me [recording paused briefly]. As a historian, do you have any thoughts to share about how the National Park Service was or maybe wasn't impacted by or adapting to a lot of those social changes the country was experiencing in the 1960s?

- Con Heine: Well, I thought about that, as you had mentioned it. The National Park Service and the Interior Department [were] the main forerunners in the Government for improved relationships between African Americans and white Americans and different races, and for somehow, people in the National Park Service then, and the Interior Department, sensed that [this] was very important. This was back in the early days when relations needed improvements.
- Con Heine: For somehow, the [Park Service] directors — I don't know why they [decided] on me, [and] they thought that I would be a good person to go to speak to some of the African American groups. Then they were referred to as Blacks. There was a man in Washington by the name of George Wallace, who had a travel club for African Americans, and he would take them all around the country to special places. Back then, it was difficult for them to have entrance to certain hotels, and he would take them all around, and he would have meetings, in Washington, of his group.
- Con Heine: Well, the director of the Park Service called on me to go and talk to them and speak to them. I had several meetings with them. Then, as the special events director in the National Capital Parks, I had [charge of] all the meetings and protests of any kind of group. When a number of the civil rights groups had their very earliest [meetings], their representatives would come to me to [secure] the permit. I had wonderful conversations with A. Philip Randolph, who was the leading Black civil rights leader, at the time. He would come in. We'd have nice conversations, and then he would get a permit for wherever he was going to meet. The Interior Department and the National Park Service were at the forefront for improvement of relationships of the races, which was a wonderful contribution. When the DAR refused Marian Anderson to sing in Constitution Hall, the Secretary of the Interior immediately offered her the Lincoln Memorial. This was in the earlier days.
- Nancy Russell: Mhmm (affirmative), yep, so was that something that you think was — Was it also being reflected in hiring at that time? Were we starting to get more African Americans and others actually hired into the Service?
- Con Heine: We were starting to. I think that started a little bit after the days that I've talked to you [about], when I was meeting with these groups.
- Nancy Russell: Okay, that is —
- Con Heine: Of course, all through my career in National Capital Parks, many of the people working for me, my [close] associates, my key helpers were [African] Americans, and they did fantastic jobs. There's an area that I haven't even covered here.

- Con Heine: We had [to] set up these major events, thousands of chairs, platforms, stages, involved hundreds of men, but I had a key squad. I had a key unit of about six men, with a head [foreman]. We were so well-known in Washington for doing this, that whenever a department of government moved to wherever they were going to move, out of Washington, they'd call on me to supervise [the arrangements for] the dedication: Kennedy Stadium, Atomic Energy Commission, Bureau of Standards, CIA, all of these dedications. They'd call on my group, and we would go there and set the stage for the dedication. For example, [we] had a spade used by President William Howard Taft, and we'd take this memorial spade for the digging of the cornerstone[s].
- Nancy Russell: Wonderful.
- Con Heine: That's just a side issue, one of the things.
- Nancy Russell: Mmhmm (affirmative), right. Yeah, you were involved in so many things in Washington, Park Service and beyond, really, and even beyond Washington, in some ways. For example, I believe when Harpers Ferry Center — rather Harpers Ferry National Monument became Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, you had some involvement in that. Can you talk about that?
- Con Heine: Yes, it was a congressional delegation. The director arranged for two cars of the B&O railroad to [transport] the congressional delegation. I had dressed in my ranger uniform. I was in one car, and Bill Everhart was in the other car. On the route up to Harpers Ferry, when we stopped at the different railroad stations, he and I would give talks on the history of the [C&O] Canal and various [features of] Harpers Ferry.
- Con Heine: [At] Harpers Ferry, we led the delegations around [the area]. One of the most insightful speeches was given by J. Walter Coleman, superintendent at Gettysburg, who was a graduate of Catholic University. At the site of the John Brown area, he gave a wonderful, insightful, historic speech. After [that], the congressmen went all [around the area] at Harpers Ferry, and they went back to Congress and established the historic site, so I had a part in that.
- Nancy Russell: Wonderful. Now, we talked a little bit about the speech writing that you did. Are there speeches that you prepared, that either you gave or that you did for officials, that really jump out at you, that you want to talk about?
- Con Heine: Well, I gave so many speeches. Of course, there's one. Being at the Lincoln Museum and talking on Lincoln so often and delving into his career, I became a fairly competent expert on the life of Lincoln. At one time, to the Lincoln group, I gave a talk at the Lincoln Museum.

Con Heine: Congressmen were there, and Sutton Jett was there. I have a photograph of it in there [referring to Heine's photo album]. I think it was 1963. I believe it was. Congressman Fred Schwengel was at the speech, and apparently, he was so taken by the speech that he sent it to the Valley Forge Foundation in 1963, and they had a national contest for the public address system of the year. They awarded it to me with their gold medal foundation award for the best public address of that year.

Nancy Russell: Wow.

Con Heine: That was a fairly significant recognition. Then I became active in the National Platform Association, which is the national organization of [professional] public speakers. I gave talks before them, and I have recognition from them. Then, different speeches that I would write — I think the ones I was more serious about [were] the ones I gave about L'Enfant and the planning of Washington, the integrity and beauty of the nation's capital, the reports that I did for Secretary Andrus. [I wrote many speeches for NPS directors, Secretaries of the Interior, members of Congress, and Speakers of the House].

Nancy Russell: Mhmm (affirmative), great. At what point — Refresh my memory. What year did you go from National Capital Region to the Washington Office?

Con Heine: 1965.

Nancy Russell: 1965, so you weren't in the Washington Office when they did the 1964 reorganization? You would've been in National Capital Region?

Con Heine: When did they do that reorganize, '64?

Nancy Russell: '64, yeah.

Con Heine: Well, no, I would've still been at National Capital Parks.

Nancy Russell: Okay, so that reorganization, I think, is when Director Hartzog was looking at things from this perspective of historical parks and natural parks and recreational parks. Is that anything that you have any knowledge of or sense of what — Did that make any impacts in the field?

Con Heine: Well, National Capital Parks had its own inner reorganization around 1958, where we organized the regional directors, but in the one you're referring to, 1964, of course I was not involved in the Washington Office at that time. I think, as you say, the director was thinking about balancing the recreational use. There was a big national movement for more recreational activities, as well as looking at National Capital Parks.

Con Heine: I think there was a feeling that they wanted to bring it more into the family of the National Park Service.

Con Heine: Some of them, what they did not realize [was] that the National Capital Parks, if you read this report here, was much older than the National Park Service. When the [Federal] government was created [in 1789], and it moved to Washington, and the first president came to the White House [in 1800], there was a superintendent of public buildings and grounds, go way back to 1791, and he reported to the President. He had charge of all public grounds in Washington and all public buildings, and myriads of public departments of the government came [from] and were born out of that one office. The National Capital Parks was part of the grounds unit.

Con Heine: When President Roosevelt came in, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, he separated that, and the public buildings part became General Services. The grounds department became National Capital Parks. Still today, the Park Service has charge and care of the grounds of the White House, the budget of the domestic staff, the ushers, and so on. All this emanates from the original legislation back in the 1790s.

Nancy Russell: That's something I think you cover a lot in that early administrative history of the National Capital Parks that you wrote.

Con Heine: Yes, I have a copy of that, too.

Nancy Russell: I'm just curious what the reaction was to that when you wrote it, because it really does run counter to the traditional story of the birth of the Park Service.

Con Heine: Well, that's very important to me. The birth of the National Park Service, to me, is one of the greatest, most significant things in our history.

Nancy Russell: But you know there's always that 1872 Yellowstone, the beginning of it all kind of thing, but in your research, and what you're talking about with the National Capital Parks, you've got it essentially back to 1791. I was just curious, because it seems to me that's a piece of that story that's not well-known today.

Con Heine: No, it isn't.

Nancy Russell: I was just curious if there was a reaction to that when you wrote that.

- Con Heine: I don't think they fully grasped it at that time. For example, in this line here of the research [Heine is referring to his written notes prepared for the interview], in the earliest days, I did my own original research at the Library of Congress on what we're talking about, the establishment of the federal government, the move to Washington, and I found out certain things and researched some things that probably not anybody else knows about, which [I] came to use.
- Con Heine: For example, when I was in the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, the District of Columbia wanted to tax the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, put a heavy tax on it. We had a congressional hearing before the Ways and Means Committee, and because of my research and my testimony, which is in the record, congressional record, the District of Columbia's effort to tax was wiped out, primarily because of two things that I presented to the Congress, which are in the congressional record still.
- Con Heine: When George Washington became President in 1798, he issued a presidential proclamation on the nation's capital, and he said this area, the nation's capital, would be for the people, under the ownership of the people of the United States forever, meaning no local interests would predominate. When John Adams became president, he reissued the same proclamation, that this area shall be preserved and owned by the people of the United States forever. I have copies of the proclamations.
- Con Heine: District officials today don't even know about that. They're struggling for home rule, but throughout the history of Washington, until recent years, everybody accepted the predominance of the national interest. You can't have a national capital if it's not controlled by the national government, and so back in the days, even at Lincoln's time, to take care of the streets and the sewage and the local problems, they had a city mayor, but they only dealt with very carefully subscribed local areas. Now, this part of history is pretty much lost on everybody today.
- Nancy Russell: Yeah, and I think that earlier history of the Park Service is lost on most Park Service employees, as well.
- Con Heine: Well, that's a shame. If I had one interest, I think the significance of the original campground meeting, in which Cornelius Hedges said there should be no portion of this owned by private ownership; it should be set aside forever as a national park, that was an idea that was fantastic. I couldn't understand why, in different years, when I was still in my last few years [in] the Park Service, certain areas [and] interests seemed to not place an emphasis on that, and more or less indicate that might have been one of many things had happened there, many ideas. It wasn't. It was the crystallization of the [National] Park Service concept, taken back to Congress and resulted in Yellowstone.

- Nancy Russell: Mmhmm (affirmative), yep.
- Con Heine: I wish — I think there should be a — I'm getting a little too old to do it, but there should be an emphasis on a talk on the National Park Concept. There's a little bit of that in here, but not much. I edited the whole thing, but that's a very important aspect.
- Nancy Russell: Yep, you said two things that you would emphasize. What was the second one, besides the campfire?
- Con Heine: Well, the concept itself.
- Nancy Russell: Okay, okay, yep.
- Con Heine: Taking it to what it means today, the fact that from that concept, 100 nations today have national park systems, as a result of that [unique] idea.
- Nancy Russell: Mmhmm (affirmative), yep, that is pretty great. Well, sort of switching gears a little bit, back to 1965, when you became the WASO Chief of Information, how did that come about? Is that a job you applied for, or because of your experience, you were just tapped for it?
- Con Heine: Well, I think what happened is George Hartzog, when he became director, appointed by Secretary Udall, invariably he'd probably heard about all the things that Con Heine was doing in Washington, so when he arrived to Washington, he told Sutton Jett one of the first people he wanted to talk to was me. I think he wanted to bring me into the Washington Office with him, so he appointed me the director of information. That's when I left National Capital Parks, 1965.
- Con Heine: I was in there, and the first year it was a busy year in the information office. One of the most interesting experiences [was] we had the park superintendents' conference in Great Smoky Mountains, about three or four days. Each morning, I would meet with Director Hartzog and one other person, and we'd plan the day's events. For each day, I brought down at least two people with me from the Washington Office, and we would do a complete newspaper, out every morning, for all the superintendents. That was a busy period.
- Con Heine: Then, in 1966, why 1966 came along. It was the 50th anniversary of the National Park Service, so I was intimately involved with that, Mission 66, and I had the information office. We prepared kits, kits that could be sent to the major national parks, with tips on different things for them to do in the year. I prepared different articles [and] prepared a special talk on national parks, which was given/sent to all the offices. I made speeches all around, like this one here.

- Con Heine: I gave a special speech with illustrated slides, which I presented to the national Washington Office up in the seventh floor of the Interior [building]. Then we sent copies of that speech with slides to different national parks.
- Con Heine: Then came the 50th anniversary banquet, and I had charge of setting up the banquet in the Shoreham Hotel, attended by Director Hartzog, Horace Albright, Conrad Wirth, [and] many congressmen. I coordinated the invitations, the [casting and] establishment of a special medal honoring the anniversary, and I have a picture of that in there [referring to Heine's photo album], the banquet. That was the climax of the year.
- Nancy Russell: We just recently had the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service in 2016, with its associated campaign —
- Con Heine: That was the 50th, yeah.
- Nancy Russell: But we just, in 2016, we just had the 100th, and there were — Parks had their own individual things, but we had some national events, some sponsorships and those types of things, and a lot of press coverage of the 100th anniversary. Was the 50th anniversary similar, in that it was a really big event for the public, or was it more an internal National Park Service celebration?
- Con Heine: I think it was something very similar.
- Nancy Russell: In terms of engaging the public?
- Con Heine: Yeah.
- Nancy Russell: Yeah? Okay. It's 1966. You were Director Hartzog's special assistant. Were you the chief of information for a year, and then you became the special assistant?
- Con Heine: Yes, a little over a year.
- Nancy Russell: Okay, and he just decided he needed somebody to work on special projects, and that's why he brought you into those types of events?
- Con Heine: I imagine.
- Nancy Russell: Or is it just the timing of everything, with the 50th anniversary coming? You couldn't very well be the chief information officer and manage all these other massive projects.

Con Heine: I think so, and then that's when he would start sending me out to other events, like the dedication of Redwoods National Park.

Nancy Russell: When you were going to those events, like at Redwoods, were you part of the organizational team, or were you representing the director at the event?

Con Heine: Well, I was organizing the event.

Nancy Russell: Okay, so you were doing all the —

Con Heine: Representing him at the Redwoods National Park, the dedication by President Nixon. Then I did event at the boyhood home of Johnson, the ranch of President Johnson, and the Statue of Liberty and the Immigration Museum. That was '86. Then there was an interesting one I did with Secretary Udall. There was one year that the Congress passed the most national park pieces of legislation. It was around 1964. He wanted to honor the major committees of Congress, so he asked me to pick out a site where we'd do this. We picked out Dumbarton Oaks Park in Georgetown. He brought the associate director from Alaska down, and salmon from Alaska. This Fish and Wildlife director dug a huge pit and baked the salmon. I met, that afternoon at a picnic table, with Secretary Udall, and we went over all the plans, how he was going to meet the congressmen and so forth. That was a very interesting affair, some of the key, major players in Congress, Congressman Mike Kirwan was the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and other committee members, and that was an interesting time.

Nancy Russell: Now, I think you also worked with Secretary Udall to help with Ladybird Johnson's campaign for beautifying America. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Con Heine: Yes, I did. That was one of my great experiences. I, unfortunately, with the different little copies of speeches that I have for you, I lost my copy of that paper that I wrote, but how that happened was one day, on a Friday, Bob Horne, acting director of the National Capital Parks, called me in the office, and he said he just got a call from the Secretary of the Interior, Secretary Udall. He was going to make a flying trip with Ladybird Johnson somewhere to the West Coast, and he wanted a report on what she could take up as the First Lady's special program for the whole time of her time in the White House. He wanted that on his desk Monday morning.

- Con Heine: Bob Horne looked at me, and he said, “Well,” he says, “Con, can you fix that up?” So I went home that day, that weekend, and wrote out a special report, which I called The Beautification Program, and I wrote out what it would consist of, how it would be carried out, and what could be expected of the results, seven pages. Monday morning, I [gave] it to Bob, and he personally took it over to the secretary. On the plane trip out, Secretary Udall showed this to Ladybird Johnson. She immediately accepted it as her program for beautification, which took on national aspects and became popular nationwide. It was the concept that I had prepared for her.
- Nancy Russell: That’s fabulous. Were there other projects that you were called on to work with Secretary Udall?
- Con Heine: Of course, that was —
- Nancy Russell: That was a major one.
- Con Heine: That was a major one. Well, I told you about the Dumbarton Oaks picnic that we had for the Congress. Of course, at that time, Justice Douglas was taking walks on the C&O Canal towpath, because he was trying to, as you say, bring up [interest] and support to rule out a parkway that was considered maybe to be built along the route of the towpath up to Cumberland, and so he was taking these towpath walks. Secretary Udall said, “We’ve got to go along with him,” and so I had to get one of my chief naturalists, at the time, Drew Chick, and he went on the hikes. Then I went along with Mrs. Udall on hikes on the towpath.
- Con Heine: Of course, in the earlier days of my Park Service career, I was steeped in the C&O Canal. My weekends I was lecturer on the C&O Barge. I put in all of the historic markers on the canal and, with my museum expert, I installed and designed and put in the museum at Great Falls, [MD]. One of the talks in here [referring to Heine’s notebook of speeches] is an extensive history of C&O Canal.
- Nancy Russell: Wonderful. Do you have any of these thoughts to share on Secretary Udall, what you thought of him as Secretary of the Interior, your experiences of knowing him?
- Con Heine: As I look back on it, he was really a true conservationist. He came into the government, and in it [is] very interesting, I had given so many public speeches [so] you have a sense from whether somebody could give a decent talk or not. A lot of congressmen are not especially good speakers, as interesting as it may be. The first event that he ever attended, just a week or so after being appointed the Secretary of the Interior, was the dedication of the Harry Thompson Boat Center on the Potomac River.

- Con Heine: I had to be there, of course, and Secretary Udall came. He had his little one-year-old child with him, holding him. He gave me his child to hold while he gave the talk.
- Con Heine: He was not, at that time, a very adept speaker, but as he continued as Secretary of the Interior, he became better and better with practice, as a very good speaker. That was my first meeting with him, holding his little baby as he gave that talk. I think he was truly interested in preserving, conserving cultural and wildlife [features] and so on, and he became mesmerized with Horace Albright, and he would enjoy bringing Horace Albright in, and Horace Albright, that's where the [couple who] gave that talk here in Leisure World [MD], [were surprised] when they said, "You knew Horace Albright?" I didn't only know him. He was my mentor, in a sense.
- Con Heine: My later years in the Park Service, we became very deep, close friends. How that occurred was that, after Director Hartzog came on, we would have conferences of the different park leaders, out in Grand Teton. Oftentimes I think my first meeting with Horace Albright was at one of these conferences at the Grand Tetons. Somehow, he took a liking to me. When we'd [meet] on these occasions, [we] would take hikes. We wouldn't go to the top of the Grand Tetons, because he was up in years, but we went up fairly high, and there was a special boulder. We would sit by that boulder, and he would reminisce to me [about] the earliest days of the National Park Service. He went through the whole story of how he got John D. Rockefeller, Jr., interested in preserving the lands that later became Grand Teton National Park.
- Con Heine: He explained how the land was [secretly] bought by [his] people. They didn't know it was Rockefeller buying it, all these little intricacies that he explained to me, and how close he was to giving advice to John D. Rockefeller, Jr. We became so close that whenever he came to Washington for a trip, [I would usually see him]. When he left the National Park Service, he had a distinguished career in business, 20-Mule Team Borax, another business in New York, and he had a close association with all of the people in the National Geographic Society.
- Con Heine: Whenever he came to Washington for their meetings, Dr. Grosvenor would give him a limousine and a driver, and he would come out and see me in our little home we had out on Buford Road [in Kensington, MD], and we would visit. We would correspond by letters. That experience I had of hearing these things from the second in command, the man [who] was Stephen Mather's right arm, who during Stephen Mather's time with his suffering from his medical problems and [in fact], Horace Albright [served as acting director for the first several months and] carried on the National Park Service.

- Nancy Russell: What is always so surprising to me, when I think about it, and I like to point this out to my interns when they come in, is when Horace became assistant director for the National Park Service, he was only 26. They start thinking. Now, here's my interns. What are you doing? Horace was — and for much of that acting as director, as you say, because Mather was not in a position to do that. That's one of the reasons he had so much time, after he left the Park Service, is because he was —
- Con Heine: He was young then.
- Nancy Russell: Such a young man. It's just mind-boggling to me to think, at 26, 27, 28, 30, he's doing the things that he was doing. It's amazing.
- Con Heine: It is.
- Nancy Russell: What an opportunity for you to not only —
- Con Heine: Oh, I —
- Nancy Russell: Have him as a friend, but —
- Con Heine: I absorbed his idea, his talks, and his insights into things, how they had to work, how they had to work to get a National Park Service, to have it established.
- Nancy Russell: Mhmm (affirmative), so have you read the books that he put out about the birth of the National Park Service and those things? Do they track with what you talked about, sitting next to the boulder?
- Con Heine: Well, I have the book on Mather's life. What other book are you talking about?
- Nancy Russell: Albright is — There were two books that were published. One was published posthumously with his daughter, Marian, *The Birth of the National Park Service*, and then the other one he did with Robert Cahn, which was based on — I forget the title of that one, but Cahn did a whole series of oral history interviews with —
- Con Heine: I think I remember reading that one.
- Nancy Russell: Mhmm (affirmative), yeah, which we're fortunate we have Cahn's research and interviews in the NPS History Collection, so we have that, as well as Albright's papers. We have about 40 linear feet of his papers and photographs and things like that.

Nancy Russell: A lot of that postdates his time as director for the National Park Service, but he lived for so long afterwards, and maintained that passionate interest in the Service that — and, of course, was invited to all of those key events that you're talking about.

Con Heine: Yes.

Nancy Russell: A lot of that material is documented in the records that we have, as well.

Con Heine: What a fabulous period. What an outstanding person he was.

Nancy Russell: Just amazing. Well, another person that is highly thought of, that you worked with, of course, was George Hartzog, and so I'm curious to know what working with him was like, what you thought of him, as a person and as a director.

Con Heine: Well, as I look back, I've got a couple of pictures here with George in this thing here [referring to Heine's photo album]. I think he was a fine man, a deeply wonderful character. He was very enthusiastic, and a true, dedicated Park Service man. Now he was in Interior, I think, in his early career. I believe he worked at Land Management Office, and I used to carpool into the Lincoln Museum with another lawyer that used to work with George in the Interior Department, Fred Fishman. Fred worked very closely with George. They were lawyers together.

Con Heine: Then I think George was in the Concessions Department of the National Park Service. Then it was an interesting story how he was selected to be director. I may have learned of that before it happened, because I was called upon, by the assistant secretary at that time, to accompany one of his assistants, Dick Rodgers, to make an inspection trip of Olympia National Park. We went out there, and met with the mayor of Billings, Montana, first, and then went to the Olympic National Park, went through the rain forest, some beautiful areas, and looked into some of the things that we were looking into.

Con Heine: Of course, we would have some nights to be together and stay in hotels. One night, he said, "I'm going to tell you who's going to be the next director of the National Park Service." At that time, Conrad Wirth was still director. He said that it's going to be George Hartzog. Well, I didn't know George Hartzog at the time. He said that when Secretary Udall went out to visit the Arch in St. Louis, George was the director there, and he was so impressed by his energy, his enthusiasm, his public relations skills, that when he came back to Washington, he said, "He's going to be our next director." I had a great admiration for George. It wasn't until my later years, I think, that I recognized what good, great contributions that he did make.

Nancy Russell: How long did you work for him?

Con Heine: Well, I guess I would say eight or nine years.

Nancy Russell: Okay.

Con Heine: Yeah.

Nancy Russell: What are some of the — I mean, we've talked about the 50th anniversary, but some of the other — Well, okay, I'll just get to a story that I'd like to hear, which one of the things that we know that Director Hartzog tasked you with was this study into the feasibility of developing a National Park Service Archives, which is now what we call the National Park Service History Collection. Could you tell me a little bit about how that came to be and what it involved?

Con Heine: Well, at the time, I think I was a staff assistant to him. He called me in one time, and he said he had this idea that we should have, all of the most wonderful records that we have on the Service, that we should really have a [National Park Service] archives, because many organizations, the last thing they think of is setting up their records and everything, so he asked me to prepare a report. I did, and I think you may have had copies of that. He actually wanted me to go there and be the archivist, at one point, but for some reason, I didn't want to do that. He had me make the report, and I think it's fabulous that we had it established, and that it's an important part of our [Service] today.

Nancy Russell: One of the things that I talk about, when I do my tours of the collection, of course, we talk about how the collection was established by Hartzog, but the understanding that I had, as I got here almost four years ago and started looking at what is the history of the collection and how did it come to be, and of course, I came across your study, was the sense that Hartzog's approach to this was twofold. One was he felt like we weren't necessarily doing a very good job of capturing our own history. The second one was, he felt, as managers, we really needed to understand what had happened before, in order to make good management decisions now and into the future. Does that track with what you think, or am I sending some ranger lore out there?

Con Heine: I think you have it perfectly.

- Nancy Russell: Yeah. In order to — I know one of the things you had to do, in terms of getting the idea for the archives off the ground, was to have these conversations with the National Archives and Records Administration, NARA, because the records that the Park Service generate are also federal records. How did you guys come to some kind of understanding about what would be —
- Con Heine: Well, I guess I must have had a meeting with the Archivist, but you see, going back to my first days in the Service, I was in the [National] Archives all the time, looking into the 1790s, the establishment of the national government in Washington, to the L'Enfant papers, back and forth, so I was friends with the archivists, [especially] with Oliver Holmes. He was an archivist before the time that we started the archives program. It was important [that] I had [an understanding of archival principals]. I'd been using and studying original papers [and collections. It is vital for agencies to have archival programs.]
- Nancy Russell: Mmhmm (affirmative), now you said George Hartzog thought you might be interested in that position as the archivist, but you said you weren't. Do you remember why you weren't interested?
- Con Heine: Well, I can't remember too well on that, except that for some reason I did not want to undertake it. Again, of course, that would have blew me out of my cubicle of Washington, D.C., and everything, and it worked out that, as time went on, someone else was found for that post.
- Nancy Russell: Yep, well, and it would've been a very different position, not that you wouldn't have had connections and conversations with donors and things like that, but, I mean, in the role that you'd been playing, you had been very much on that national stage, so I think it would've been a very different shift in your career.
- Con Heine: Yes, yes.
- Nancy Russell: Yeah, well, I know in 1966, you received the Department of the Interior's Meritorious Service Award. Can you tell me what that was for?
- Con Heine: Well, I think it was just for general good work and achievements, and probably, again, I imagine that all my activities in the special events area, probably as a focus. Some of the higher officials knew of me, including the Secretary of the Interior, and so I think that probably contributed to it. For some reason, during those years at Interior, I always seemed to have some contacts with the Secretary of the Interior.

- Con Heine: For example, I was president of the Interior Department Recreation Association. That was the association of all the employees in the Interior, so you'll see me meeting in here [referring to Heine's photo album] with Rogers Morton. Every year, we would have an Interior all-day event at Fort Hunt, Virginia. Mounted police, demonstrations, picnics. Well, I had to preside over that.
- Nancy Russell: How on earth did you have time? Well, we talked about the 50th anniversary, and your involvement in getting the 50th anniversary celebrations moving forward in 1966, but I think you were also part of the National Park Centennial Commission.
- Con Heine: Yes, well, I edited the report. I was a staff assistant, but my main principal role — The director picked me to go out and do all the logistical planning for the [Centennial]. Now, I did have another man, who went with me, a young fellow by the name of Mealy, but I was the one that had to meet [and] plan all the room numbers, the handling of the luggage. All of the minute logistics.
- Nancy Russell: This was the conference held at Grand Teton after the celebration at Yellowstone?
- Con Heine: [It was at Yellowstone].
- Nancy Russell: It's all sort of the same thing, but it was at Teton?
- Con Heine: [It was] the 100th anniversary of Yellowstone [and the Commission met there as well as at Grand Teton].
- Nancy Russell: Yes.
- Con Heine: Second World Conference.
- Nancy Russell: Yes, Second World Conference, mmhmm (affirmative).
- Con Heine: I did all the logistical planning. [There were] 80 nations, and I went out to Yellowstone. I [was there] was about a week in the planning of it, and it all went through very successfully. There was a million amount of detail to it.
- Nancy Russell: I can imagine.
- Con Heine: Then we came back to Washington. I wrote an article again on the National Park Concept, and then edited the final report.
- Nancy Russell: I would say significantly involved in it.

- Con Heine: Yeah.
- Nancy Russell: Certainly, it's hard to describe the level of detail, saying "coordinating [the logistics for a conference of] 80 nations." It's one sentence, but the depth of the logistics is mind-boggling.
- Con Heine: Goes into detail.
- Nancy Russell: Yeah, mind-boggling. What were some of the — I mean, you wrote the report, were some of the big takeaways from that conference at the time?
- Con Heine: Well, you'll see there's the many results of the different meetings that they had. I think they were again toying with the idea of conservation and use, which of course is very well-[balanced] in the concept of a national park, and in the enabling act of the National Park Service, preserve the wildlife and the scenery, so it will be unimpaired for the pleasure and use of people. They can work together, but they have to strike a balance. That [came in from] there. Then a little bit again about more the stress of recreational use, but luckily, I think, most of these park systems, at least in what they put out, still adhere to the [unique] idea of the national park.
- Nancy Russell: Mmhmm (affirmative), the preservation and balancing that.
- Con Heine: Preservation and use.
- Nancy Russell: Mmhmm (affirmative), balancing that.
- Con Heine: I've got an article here, right in there, [referring to Heine's notebook of speeches] "Preservation and Use," that I gave at the University of Michigan State.
- Nancy Russell: When the National Park Service started to expand and develop these different kinds of parks, park units, like National Preserves, and where they have a lot of different types of uses, like at Big Cypress, where you have hunting, you have off-road vehicle use, you have some of those other things, so they developed this other category that does have these, whether it's a national seashore, or historic, I mean, a national preserve, those types of things, do you think that complicates that mission, or is it sort of a necessary direction to move, in order to seek that balance and provide those resources for people to use and enjoy?
- Con Heine: Well, I think it complements, but you'll find in this report that was made on the 100th anniversary, one of the meetings, one of the suggestions that they had in there was that the National Park Service transfer or give away certain areas that didn't meet the most pristine and finest examples of nature and history and culture.

- Con Heine: I don't think anything's been followed on that, but it talked about certain areas that might not, such as going into more urban areas, which is different. At the time that I was still there, that was something new, and I have a speech in here [referring to Heine's notebook of speeches] for Director Hartzog on urban parks.
- Nancy Russell: You know, it's interesting, because that urban park and that recreational use kind of thing has been this category, cultural/natural/recreational kind of thing, but lately it seems, and I don't know if you've followed this in the media, there is this blending, because there was the idea that the national park, that actual designation of a national park having that highest level of natural resources, pristine, those types of areas that we think of as the big national parks, were getting some of those other areas, getting new designations.
- Nancy Russell: For example, the arch was recently re-designated as the Gateway Arch National Park. For me, when I heard that, I'm like, that's not the same thing as Yellowstone. It's an urban park, but to have that — They're doing some of those changes in the names, so that it's getting national park status, whereas it's really a different type of park. I don't know if it's a political — I think, in some of these cases, like some of the friends groups and things are pushing for that designation, because they see that as that highest designation within the National Park Service. Just, do you have any thoughts about how those designations are changing, and what that might mean to the overall designation of a national park?
- Con Heine: Well, in a way, I hope that they don't go too far in that direction. One thing I did not cover in our discussion here, in '73-'74, after Director Ronald Walker came in, I was made chief of the three major programs, National Historic Landmarks, American Building Survey, and the Engineering Survey, all three of them, so I had charge of the national landmark designation, and that was very important. Many, many areas have been designated as national historic landmarks. We had meetings on them. I had to get an advisory committee to advise us, and then we would give them the reports [made by our staff historians]. Now these places all have a plaque that they can put up, designated National Historic Landmark. It gives them an importance, but they're not, of course, a national park.
- Nancy Russell: No, and although there are NHLs within National Park Service sites, there's also NHLs that are not managed by the NPS. It's interesting because, so you, in 1974, you take on that role with the NHLs and HABS/HAER. Of course, it was then in '66, when the National Historic Preservation Act came out, and of course we had the Wilderness Act and those things in the '60s.

- Nancy Russell: When the National Historic Preservation Act came out in 1966, there was that push to evaluate the historic resources within the national parks. When you came on in '74, were you involved in any of that, or had that pretty much already gone through?
- Con Heine: Well, that had gone through, [but I was very much interested in all aspects and I worked closely with Ronald F. Lee for a long time. He was a prime architect for much of this legislation and a great talent for the National Park Service. I wrote speeches for him, e.g., "History on the Land"].
- Nancy Russell: Okay, okay.
- Con Heine: In other words, they had their Land Conservation Bill and everything.
- Nancy Russell: Mhmm (affirmative), yep, but in terms of what your office was having to do, were you still doing — Were they still working on this assessment of all the cultural sites within national parks to be designated? I think a lot of them went through automatically on the National Register.
- Con Heine: Well, they were not as high a level.
- Nancy Russell: Correct. NHL was much higher.
- Con Heine: A national landmark was a step higher.
- Nancy Russell: Yep, yeah, and so how long were you in that office?
- Con Heine: About two years, I think, two to maybe not more than three.
- Nancy Russell: Okay, and then what did you do?
- Con Heine: Well, then I was staff assistant again to the director. Then, of course, by that time, we're approaching '79, and that's when Orval Hansen asked Secretary Andrus if he would take me on as special assistant to do this, oversee this seminar, this conference.
- Nancy Russell: Right, so one big event we skipped in there, from '74 to '79, is of course the Bicentennial.
- Con Heine: I was involved in that, too.
- Nancy Russell: Oh, I'm imagining. Can you talk a little bit about your role in that?

- Con Heine: It never quite gained, I think, the national promise that it should have, but I was engaged in writing articles. I met with the National Chamber of Commerce, with their public relations director, who was Jim Watt, who later became Assistant Secretary of the Interior. I met with him on plans for the Bicentennial. I've got some different articles on it, and I attended different events. I went up to Boston to attend one of the events there in Faneuil Hall, and the former senator [John Warner] who married Elizabeth Taylor, he was state senate, he was [later] Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and because of his work on the Bicentennial, he was able to be elected to the Senate.
- Nancy Russell: You were special assistant to the director then, during the Bicentennial?
- Con Heine: That's my recollection.
- Nancy Russell: Which director, Walker?
- Con Heine: No, that would be Director Hartzog.
- Nancy Russell: Oh, still Hartzog in '76. Yeah, just an amazing span of time, and an amazing span of your career, so when did you actually retire from the National Park Service?
- Con Heine: 1979, but by that time, I was, personnel-wise, officially disconnected for the last months of that year, the last half of that year, as assistant to the Secretary [of the Interior].
- Nancy Russell: Okay, and that was to work on the report.
- Con Heine: Yes.
- Nancy Russell: Just for the tape, could you tell us what that report is?
- Con Heine: Well, this report was the work, the result, of the conference that Secretary Andrus called in Dumbarton Oaks Park. This was the result of the discussions that were held at that time. They covered all these areas, but mainly the purpose was to survey the nation's heritage, as represented by the national capital and to preserve the beauty and design of Washington that had been beginning to slowly deteriorate in the '70s, '60s and '70s. Unfortunately, the results of that conference never came to light, because it coincided as he left office and a new administration came in.
- Nancy Russell: So, it got stuck in the political neverland.
- Con Heine: This is a shame really.

Nancy Russell: Mmhmm (affirmative).

Con Heine: I have an interesting speech in here [referring to Heine's notebook of speeches] that I'd like you to see, that I gave to the Columbia Historical Society, on the design and protection of the design for the national capital. It coincides and fits into this very well. This speech was given much earlier than this.

Nancy Russell: Can you tell me a little bit about the 1916 Society?

Con Heine: Not a lot, except that I was involved in starting it, and the idea was to get outside donors to come in with important donations to carry on certain works of the National Park Service that we couldn't ordinarily take care of on the regular budget stream. It started out slowly, and it wasn't long — I don't think I was involved in it more than a matter of several months, and then it evolved, and they brought in the idea of a larger National Park Foundation and designated a certain person to be in charge of that.

Nancy Russell: So, it sort of got subsumed into the National Park Foundation.

Con Heine: Yes.

Nancy Russell: Yeah, okay. Another person that I wanted to ask you a little bit about is actually Herb Evison. We have those oral histories that Herb did in the '60s and '70s in the archives. We have a lot of his papers in the archives, and so on some level I feel — I call him Herb, because I feel like I know him, but of course, I never knew him. Is there anything that you can share with us about Herb and what he was like?

Con Heine: Well, I didn't know him in his earlier days in the Park Service, but then I did begin to hear of him, that he was one of the people in the Service, and I don't know just what his role was in the Washington Office, but he was a person interested in collecting information/stories about former/current employees, to build up, fit into an archival program. He was very effusive and sort of country boy style, and well-known, and so I just fit into a natural conversation with him.

Nancy Russell: I think he also, after your time as chief information officer for the Park Service, he had that role for a little while, as well.

Con Heine: Yes, he was chief information some period. [I believe Herb came after me].

Nancy Russell: I think the person who was chief of information most immediately before you — Let me see. I have that somewhere.

Con Heine: Hadley?

Nancy Russell: Hadley, yes. He was directly before, so had you interacted with him when you were in National Capital Region?

Con Heine: No, I did not have, but I knew him, and for our meetings out in different parks and so forth, but I didn't know him well, but a very fine fellow. I met with him after he became director of information.

Nancy Russell: Okay, great. It's a little after noon. Did you want to stop for lunch?

Con Heine: I think it'd be a good idea.

Nancy Russell: Yeah, I think so, too.

END OF PART 1

START OF PART 2

Nancy Russell: This is Nancy Russell, and this is part two of the interview with Con Heine. Con, I wanted to take us back a little bit in time for you to tell us the story about how you actually started with the National Park Service.

Con Heine: How I started?

Nancy Russell: Mmhmm (affirmative).

Con Heine: Well, I was looking. I was attending Catholic University of America, working on my AB degree. I think I was in my junior year. And I was looking for a summer job in Washington, rather than go back to Streater for the summer.

Con Heine: So, I was walking downtown in Washington and I walked over towards 17th Street and I was in front of the Department of Interior building. And I walked in and the first turn to my right, the first corridor was the headquarters of the National Capital Parks. So, I walked in and met the personnel director. His name was Lauren Davis from Indianapolis.

Con Heine: And I said I was looking for a summer job. And he said, "I think most of them are all filled up." But he said, "Come to think of it, Colonel Truitt over at the Lincoln Museum might have something left for the summer."

- Con Heine: So, he sent me over there, and I met Randle Truitt who later became one of my great best friends. And he said, "Well, I could use one more person here to give speeches on the assassination of Lincoln." So, he hired me for the summer and I never left the National Park Service from that time forward. And [soon was working] full time.
- Con Heine: I gave 8 or 10 speeches a day on the assassination of Lincoln, and I started to do research on the history of Washington. Made many studies in the National Archives [and] Library of Congress. And we had an interpretive program comprised of both naturalists and historians. And, of course, I was on the historian side, and we gave special tours all around Washington.
- Con Heine: C&O Canal, Lafayette Square, the City of Washington, the Capitol of the United States, Capitol Grounds. And these tours were very, very popular. All kind of tours, historic sites and natural areas. And we had a complete summer brochure, or rather a book, on the tours. And the people of Washington loved those tours. And that's where I began to meet some of the people that I developed pretty much lifelong friendships with. One of them in particular in my mind is Orval Hanson, who was the congressmen from the state of Idaho, [and Mark Hatfield of Oregon].
- Con Heine: Orval was a mountain climber, and just a wonderful person. And very interested in the nation's history and the Capitol.
- Nancy Russell: Wonderful. What year was it that you walked in off the street and got a job?
- Con Heine: 1949.
- Nancy Russell: 1949. So, was there a difference between hiring at that point under the Truman administration?
- Con Heine: Yes, it was still the Truman administration, but the president had given some kind of order that you no longer needed political patronage. So, I was never asked about any questions about politics.
- Nancy Russell: You didn't have to know somebody like a senator to get a job?
- Con Heine: No.
- Nancy Russell: Okay.
- Con Heine: I just walked in on my own.

- Nancy Russell: Okay. And there wasn't even a civil service exam or anything? You just got a summer job?
- Con Heine: Well, I got the summer job, but after that I took [several] civil service examinations for the jobs to follow.
- Nancy Russell: To get permanent?
- Con Heine: [Yes.]
- Nancy Russell: Right. Going back a little bit to some of your work in the National Capital Parks, can you talk a little bit about, I think it wasn't long after you started, that MacArthur's farewell to Washington event. Can you talk about that?
- Con Heine: Well, General MacArthur had been fired by President Truman, so he came back to Washington. And about two days before he made his famous farewell speech to the Congress, he had a farewell speech to the Washington community on the Washington Monument grounds. And I was given responsibility to get the stage built, and have the chairs out, and have everything ready for his speech. So, he came there in his famous trench coat with Mrs. Eisenhower with him and gave a moving speech on the grounds on the monument.
- Con Heine: So, I was involved in a special event, you might say, after being on the job only a couple of months.
- Nancy Russell: And that was the beginning of it all then, really?
- Con Heine: [You might say so].
- Nancy Russell: Guess you shouldn't have done such a good job. I think one of the things you also were involved in, because obviously you were touring around a lot of important visitors, U.S. senators and congressmen and things. But also, foreign dignitaries. Can you mention a few of those?
- Con Heine: Well, I remember I have photographs of meeting the president of Tunisia, the Prince Phillip of Belgium, and there were other dignitaries also involved. And I was usually called upon to take them on special tours of the monuments, particularly the Lincoln Memorial. So that went on for quite a while.

- Con Heine: And also, later we developed an association with the Environmental Protection Agency. They had special diplomats from Russia, all types of countries over in Europe. They would have two or three diplomats at a time that would come over for a month's stay and to learn about Washington and the United States.
- Con Heine: I was picked out to give them a tour of the monuments. And then on one occasion, a delegation of four Russians came over, and I was chosen, picked out to be their guide for their two-day trip to New York and Philadelphia. And I arranged to have Governor Kerry's penthouse table at the [Twin Towers] in New York. What's the name of the skyscrapers, that was just—?
- Nancy Russell: The Chrysler building? The World Trade Center?
- Con Heine: The one that was bombed by the terrorists. The Twin Towers.
- Nancy Russell: World Trade Center.
- Con Heine: [At the Twin Towers] Governor Kerry had a special table, and I was able to arrange for the four Russians to take them to dinner up there. And so, I had to guide them around both New York and Philadelphia.
- Nancy Russell: Now, New York wasn't your stomping ground like D.C.
- Nancy Russell: So, were you actually having to give them history of sights in New York, or were you just more escorting them?
- Con Heine: To tell them something about it. I didn't take them on a walking tour, no.
- Nancy Russell: Okay. And Queen Elizabeth, after her coronation, did she come?
- Con Heine: Yes. When she first visited the United States, one of the places she went was Fort Hunt, Virginia. And we had a ceremony out there and she was there, and I met her. And what a beautiful person she was. And at that time, I had a photographer that was in my office. His name was Abbie Rowe, and he was also the White House photographer. And he took all the pictures. I don't have one of those. Those [in Heine's photo album on the table] are mostly all his, Abbie Rowe.
- Con Heine: And it was a very nice ceremony and think of the long tenure now that she has had at the queen of Great Britain.
- Nancy Russell: Yes, longest serving. She's exceeded Victoria now.

- Nancy Russell: I just made a note about that because we have photos, Rowe's photos in the collection.
- Con Heine: You do?
- Nancy Russell: And so, I will look those out and see if we can find one for you. So, you say he was in your office?
- Con Heine: Yes, he had his own dark room and everything, but I was his supervisor.
- Nancy Russell: Oh, you were his supervisor?
- Con Heine: He reported to me. Each day he would come to our office to look and say hi and so forth. Then he'd go to the White House.
- Nancy Russell: So, was this at the time that you were the associate regional director that you were his supervisor?
- Con Heine: Yes.
- Nancy Russell: Yeah. So, what was he like?
- Con Heine: He was a wonderful person. He had a very serious handicap. He was born with one leg shorter than the other, and he wore a big, huge stone brace for underneath his foot. He sometimes used it to push other photographers out of the way when he wanted to get a good picture of the president.
- Nancy Russell: His built-in club. "Get out of the way. Get out of the way!" Yeah, we have —
- Con Heine: Also, when I moved over to the National Capital Parks' office in the Interior building in about '56 or '57, that's the office he would come in each morning, give us photographs he had taken the day before. Then he would go out on his assignment.
- Nancy Russell: So, Abbie is one of the people that we considered NPS imminent photograph. And he we have his photographs in the NPS archives as well.
- Con Heine: Oh, that's wonderful. That's all his [photographs] taken right there [in Heine's photo album].
- Nancy Russell: I was wondering who the photographer for those were.
- Con Heine: Yes, he took every one of those.

- Nancy Russell: So, I will look that out because I know we have pictures from him with Queen Elizabeth, so I will check those for you as well.
- Nancy Russell: So, Watergate Barge, can we talk about that for a little bit? What was the Watergate Barge and how were you involved in that?
- Con Heine: Well, the Watergate Barge had been built by our carpenters and so forth. It was stationed right at the foot of the Watergate. And the Watergate was once envisioned in the early planning of Washington to be the gateway to Washington for vessels coming up the Potomac. And so, the barge was used primarily by the three different service bands: The United States Marine Band, the United States Army Band, the United States Navy Band. And they would have alternating concerts every week, at least one or two. And being a special event, one of my early duties was to go and attend every one of these when they were there and meet with the director of the band. Make sure he had what he needed and so forth.
- Con Heine: And I continued doing that until the time they started to have different shows that would take place there. And one of the first people to use it to bring Hollywood musical shows of different types was a young man by the name of Irvin Feld, F-E-L-D, from Hagerstown, Maryland.
- Con Heine: And he started to sponsor shows and later developed the ability to build and bring in some more important stars. And so, our National Capital Parks, Ed Kelly, gave him a contract, concession contract to use the Carter Barron Amphitheatre, which had been left over from one of the bicentennials. And he brought in the main big shows from Hollywood, Danny Kaye, you name it, they came. Peter, Paul, and Mary. Top actors.
- Con Heine: Well, another one of my jobs was, along with Sutton Jett, there was to attend those shows at the Carter Barron Amphitheater. And to check the lighting, if there was any problem, or what have you. And Feld became so successful that he started going over to Europe, bringing over European acts and he finally bought Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus. His son, Kenneth Feld, inherited that and went on to stage mammoth shows in the big hotel in Las Vegas, including the shows with tigers and so forth.
- Con Heine: And it all stemmed from his starting [on a small scale] on the Watergate Barge.
- Nancy Russell: Which was Park Service.

- Con Heine: Then I also had to be at the barge when paramount movies asked me for permission to use the barge for one of the famous movies that Sophia Loren and Cary Grant made in their early association that was called “Houseboat.”
- Nancy Russell: And you’re a big Sophia Loren fan.
- Con Heine: Yes.
- Nancy Russell: But you didn’t get to meet her, then?
- Con Heine: No, I didn’t get to meet her. So, what happened since, in retirement in my old age. My daughters saw where she was appearing here in Rockville for a festival of her films. And we went to it and we were able to meet her personally and have our photograph with her.
- Nancy Russell: Wonderful. Were there other films that you were involved in as they were being made in the district?
- Con Heine: Well, I know one I was heavily involved in was “The Solid Gold Cadillac” with Judy Holiday and Broderick Crawford. And I had to work in the speaker’s office, and I was able to get people to represent members of Congress and be at the floor of the house.
- Nancy Russell: And at that time, it was unusual even to get to film there —
- Con Heine: Highly unusual. Today it would be impossible with the security.
- Nancy Russell: That’s so wonderful.
- Con Heine: Of course, I was here. I’ve been an observer of so much history. I was standing on the corner of 17th and Pennsylvania Avenue. I was standing on the southeast corner and I heard a commotion in front of the Blair House. And that’s where Harry Truman and his wife had been staying for about two years while the White House underwent a complete renovation. And three Puerto Rican terrorists stormed the White House, shot one of the outside guards, but didn’t get into Blair House. And that was the famous attempt on Harry Truman’s life.
- Nancy Russell: Oh, I didn’t know that.
- Con Heine: They were apprehended, and also was the same year that at least three terrorists from Puerto Rico shot up the floor of the House. It was general pandemonium when they were shooting. No member of the Representatives was killed or anything. I think somebody [was] wounded.

- Con Heine: One big representative of Texas bowled over some companions. He said, “I’m going back to my office to get my gun.”
- Con Heine: So, I’ve been this observer of these momentous things that happened in our history.
- Nancy Russell: Absolutely, absolutely.
- Nancy Russell: And played a part in many of them. And some things visitors —
- Con Heine: A background part, yes.
- Nancy Russell: Well, even things that are more public to the visitors like didn’t you do the first audio commentary for the Washington Monument?
- Con Heine: Yes, I did. I prepared and wrote a short speech for the upward trip and the downward trip. And that played for a number of years for the millions of visitors that came.
- Nancy Russell: And you’ve narrated films and other things?
- Con Heine: Yes, I narrated different films. The most important, I narrated — first of all, I wrote the entire text and then I narrated a video of the United States Capitol. And I tried to begin it and weave it with the founding of our nation’s capital by George Washington and his selection of Pierre L’Enfant to do the plan for Washington in 1791.
- Con Heine: And the President met with L’Enfant in the wilderness up on a hill. Today we know it as Capitol Hill. And that’s where he picked the site for the Capitol building. And L’Enfant looked at the president and he said, “Mr. President, I will not plan for a small nation. But I’ll plan for a nation of 50 states and 300 million people,” in his comment.
- Con Heine: And he designed everything for the future. A masterpiece of the nation’s capital.
- Nancy Russell: So that’s a good segue into talking more about the Capitol, and your involvement and your time there. Could you talk about that?
- Con Heine: Yes. Well just as an introduction to that, as I made this film on the history of the Capitol. As I was researching in my younger days, I found the original site of the famous Suter’s Tavern where George Washington, and L’Enfant and Jefferson met in the planning of the city of Washington.

- Con Heine: I also discovered that two other buildings, which their facades have been changed in Georgetown, the famous city tavern was still existing in structure and the historic Bank of Colombia where the early fur trade came in down the Potomac, the Bank of Colombia, the first bank of Georgetown, the original structure was still standing.
- Con Heine: And somewhere in here [Heine's photo album] they have a cartoon that appeared on that event.
- Nancy Russell: So, doing that research, that must've been that historian's dream eureka moment.
- Con Heine: It was. And of course, I didn't mention it to you, but the government wanted to take over the oldest house in Washington, the Old Stone House. Well, I researched that and did a complete total report. On basis of my report, the federal government acquired the Old Stone House.
- Con Heine: Here we are here.
- Nancy Russell: So, this is the Washington Post's comic page from Sunday, April 3rd, 2001. And the handwritten note on it says, "Con even made the Sunday paper comics." And so, it's showing Flashbacks by Patrick M. Reynolds. And it's showing early Georgetown and the popular Fountain Inn. And so, this is actually the result of your research, right?
- Con Heine: [Yes, I stand by it].
- Nancy Russell: That's amazing. From queens to the funny pages. You were sort of all over, huh?
- Con Heine: Yes. Got my name in there, "It was torn down and forgot where it had been. Cornelius Heine did extensive research. In '53, placed it at 31st and K. Shame it could have never been restored."
- Nancy Russell: Yeah, there it is in the text box on the comic. Wow, that's amazing. So even then, that's almost another full circle in your life as I see it because then later on, you end up with National Landmarks, HABS/HAER responsibilities. And so, there's that overlap for architecture and historic structures and things as well. It's another kind of almost full circle aspect.
- Con Heine: You're right. You're right.
- Nancy Russell: So, your work at the Capitol.

- Con Heine: Well that was very interesting. In 1962, Fred Schwengel, congressman from Iowa, and he was a Lincoln buff. And of course, I got associated with him in my earlier days at the Lincoln Museum because the Lincoln group, a group of citizens devoted to the study of Lincoln, would come there for their meetings all the time. And he would attend many of them.
- Con Heine: As I said, that's where he recommended me for [the national] award for the speech on Lincoln. Well, we were friends over the years and towards the last part of my years of the National Park Service, and the time I was changed to assistant to the secretary in 1979, I got a call from Fred. I had been one of the original founders with him [and the U.S. Capitol Historical Society].
- Con Heine: I am, probably, — definitely the last living founder of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, although I never hear from them. And he called me and asked me to come up, meet him at the House restaurant for lunch. At that time, his executive director was leaving, so he offered me a position of executive director of the Historical Society — U.S. Capitol Historical Society. And that meant the full operation of the society, he oversaw it as president.
- Con Heine: And I accepted and started in 1979, until I retired in 1994. It was a wonderful experience. I got to work so closely with different committees, members of congress, the Senate, and the House. I gave tour after tour of the Capitol. Some of the congressmen, Tom Corcoran who was a congressman of Illinois, when Denny Hastert came in as a congressman from that district. [Tom told Denny] “One of the first people you want to meet is Con Heine.”
- Con Heine: So, I would meet these congressmen. And while we had a guide staff at the Capitol, Fred Schwengel and I would take more personalized tours [with] the background [on the Capitol].
- Con Heine: I [had] been doing this for 30 or 40 years. So, we gave these tours. They became quite well known, and we gave them for outside groups. And later, my last part of the years at the Capitol Historical Society, different groups would come there to have nighttime meetings and dinners under the auspices of a certain senator. [Many were at the request of Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia who was Dean of the Senate and President Pro Temp. We became very close friends]. I'd be called in to give the tour of the Capitol [after an elegant dinner].
- Con Heine: So again, I was gone at nighttime, back home at night, 10 or 11 o'clock. And then in the Historical Society, I had to take over the complete running of the office, our souvenir stand in the Capitol.

- Con Heine: And the main fundraiser for the society was a calendar that each congressman was given 2,000 copies that they sent to their constituents. The contract to produce the calendar was [over] a million dollars.
- Con Heine: I had to supervise that each year for 10 or 12 years. I had to pick out the photographs [and] go before the committee on administration of the House and let them approve the photographs. In the Senate, the rules committee. And I did that each year. I had to go to the printing company when they printed the calendar to approve the pictures and everything at nighttime, the middle of the night sometimes. So, I did the calendar. I edited two or three additions of the "We the People" book [in cooperation with the National Geographic Society. During my time at the Capitol I undertook a study of the life of the artist Constantino Brumidi, whose love for America was inspirational. His frescos adorn the committee rooms and corridors of the Senate and House and his "Eye of the Dome" fresco in the Capitol Rotunda is a masterpiece. My resulting paper was published in the Congressional Record. I gave illustrated talks on his life to the Women's Club of Huntsville, Alabama, and at other venues].
- Con Heine: I took the tours. It was a conglomerate of things you had to do. And I remember different people would come and interview me. I'd do interviews for some of the TV stations. And it was a wonderful time there at the Historical Society.
- Nancy Russell: I've seen one of your Historical Society talks on C-SPAN actually on the internet.
- Con Heine: You did?
- Nancy Russell: Uh-huh.
- Con Heine: No kidding!
- Nancy Russell: It's on the internet, yeah.
- Nancy Russell: So here you are again in another position where you're essentially on call day and night.
- Con Heine: Yes. Not as much as those early days in the Park Service. Well, I did go two or three nights sometimes back to the Capitol.
- Nancy Russell: So, it seems to me that an important person that we haven't talked about is actually your wife. So, I wanted to give you a chance to just say anything you wanted to tell us about her. I mean, you guys had six kids. Clearly an important part of your career was her support.

- Con Heine: Yes, I could never have had that career [without her]. She was the most wonderful woman, beautiful person. And I could not have been blessed with somebody like her to be my partner as we raised our children. It was unusual the way I met her. I had been in the army in World War II serving three years. I'd been in Europe, sent over at the time of the Battle of The Bulge. And I was discharged in March of 1946. I came home to my little hometown, Streater, Illinois. Which we had talked earlier was the hometown of Isabel Story, the first director of information in the National Park Service.
- Con Heine: And I came home to Streater. And in the meantime, Catherine had just graduated from Dunbarton College in Washington. And her older sister had married another veteran coming out of the service, John Lyons. And he was given a big position in a major industry in Streater, the Anthony Body Company, and he came out to be the treasurer of that company. And with him, his wife, who was the older [sister] of Catherine.
- Nancy Russell: Older sister?
- Con Heine: Older sister. And my parents became acquainted with John and Loraine Lyons. Babysat for their baby. They came to the house. So, when the younger sister of Loraine came to Streater, coinciding with my discharge, I met her out in Streater. And then when I came back to finish my last year at Catholic University, we met, went out together, and then we were married in Washington in 1948, one year before I entered the Park Service.
- Con Heine: We had, I think, a great relationship. And as I've mentioned one time, she was deeply in love with nature as a whole, conservation, bird life, the beauty of butterflies, the love of the outdoors. We've hiked to a lot of the paths on Shenandoah National Park. We took the children there on picnics. We took them on vacations to the seashores and she did such a wonderful job. And she had to be pretty patient when I did have to be away, but I tried to be home as much as I could to be with her and the children.
- Con Heine: But she was a very, very special person. And have I lost — she's now been gone almost two years and I miss her every day.
- Nancy Russell: You were married almost 70 years?
- Con Heine: Two months less than 70 years.
- Nancy Russell: Amazing. But what an amazing partner to have in life.
- Con Heine: The last part of her life, she developed Alzheimer's disease.

- Nancy Russell: That's hard. It's a terrible disease.
- Con Heine: Very hard. I cared for her for a long time in the house. Finally, the last five months or so, we had to have her go to an assisted living facility with expertise with Alzheimer's. And she died after about five months there.
- Nancy Russell: But you took some great trips. Although she liked living here, she also liked to hit some of the other national parks.
- Con Heine: Yes, we did. We took a trip to the southwest national parks. Got a beautiful picture of her standing on the rim of the canyon, looking down at the Grand Canyon. We took the mule trip down to the valley and we went out to Yellowstone and Grand Teton. We had some nice hikes in Yellowstone. We hiked down in Hayden Valley, the stronghold of the bears. We hiked there by ourselves. And many trips to Shenandoah National Park, the Great Smokies. I guess we did get to Cape Cod National Seashore. [One of our earliest trips was to] Cape Hatteras.
- Con Heine: So, we had a good time visiting some of the parks.
- Nancy Russell: And you've never lost your love for the support of the national parks and the idea of the national parks?
- Con Heine: No. I think it's one of the greatest thoughts that mankind has [come upon]. And I hope I can get one of these speeches that I gave on the concept. Because if you go back and picture how 1870, it was the time of great greed, robber barons, multi-multi-billionaires. People were poor, and a lot of agitation today by misguided people are against wealth, and people of wealth, and so forth.
- Con Heine: Yet here was this exploring party, the Washburn-Doane Party, made up of surveyors of the territory of Montana. Bankers, lawyers, all men of prominence and wealth. And after seeing the wonders of Yellowstone, about 18 or 20 days, they saw this vast, gigantic area of beauty, of nature, of scientific marvels, of geysers, mud puddles, everything you can think of — wildlife.
- Con Heine: They sat around a campfire. And of course, the natural thing was someone started talking about taking up quarter sections of this land. And near the lower falls, [one] said that would be great sources of wealth and an income. And one man stood up, a judge for Montana — Helena — Cornelius Hedges, and he said, "No portion of this land should be under private control. It should be set aside as a national park for all time."

- Con Heine: Now, I often think, what are the unique ideas that America has given to the world, the United States? I think of really only two: the national park concept, which today has been followed by over 100 countries in the world. It has brought enjoyment, pleasure to billions of people. The other was the assembly line by Henry Ford. Unheard of in the industry. Only one country [is responsible for] those two ideas, the national park concept, the assembly line by Ford.
- Con Heine: One, preservation, the other, advancement of business and growth and wealth. But going back to the concept then, it was only a concept until Langford, who [was] on the team that explored the Yellowstone — they called him Nathaniel P. Langford, “National Park Langford” — he and Hedges took two years to come back to Congress, working with congressmen. House Congressman Vest and others, and finally came across with the legislation to establish Yellowstone [on] March the 1st, 1872. At a time of vast wealth, power, and everything, [men] came up with this idea and this great concept.
- Nancy Russell: Yup. Well —
- Con Heine: I would have a ceremony every year on the anniversary of that campfire [September 19, 1870] if I were in the National Park Service. I would have a ceremony and a program in every national park to go back to that very campfire and emphasize this concept.
- Nancy Russell: Well, so we’ve covered a lot of ground. Is there anything else that you can think of today that you want to talk that we haven’t covered yet?
- Con Heine: I think we’ve covered quite an extensive area. I’ve told you about the Old Stone House, my days at the Capitol, the U.S. Capitol Historic Society. Of course, that was a little extra career after the National Park Service.
- Con Heine: But I was able to utilize my same experiences from the National Park Service. Because when I did the video of the Capitol, I showed how important it was for those ideas to flow to Congress, and Congress to do the legislation to make other national parks.
- Nancy Russell: Yup.
- Con Heine: And I treasure some of my experiences with meeting these different people. Close relationships. In the Capitol Historical Society, I had to cover every little aspect of the operation. We had a commemorative medal program. I had to get a committee of fine arts people to design a medal for each year. Have it struck and designed, gold, silver and bronze. And we had a series of about 12 different medals [for 12 years].

Con Heine: One of the people who got so interested in the medals was Senator [Alan] Simpson, who was the son of the [first] Senator Simpson of Wyoming, Milward Simpson.

Con Heine: So, Senator Simpson would call me over to one of his hideaway offices, and every year he would want me to show him the medal that came out. And he would buy one of the medals for his collection. And other people, lieutenant governor of Maryland and the chairman of the house assembly of Maryland. I would take medals out to them and they would buy them.

Nancy Russell: I remembered two things that I wanted to ask you about. One was about organizing the Cherry Blossom Festival events.

Con Heine: That was a big, big event. That was a fun event. I'm glad you mentioned it because I was deeply involved in that. The association of states, they would choose princesses from each state. Well, as I said, I had to set up the stands for a VIP reviewing stand. I would meet the celebrities that came in. I would give the prognostication of when the blossoms would come out [for the press]. And when anything new developed, I would have to bring it into the ceremonies. [A] big thing that came about was that the government of Japan offered a historic stone monument, a symbol of the light, the Japanese lantern as another gift to the United States.

Con Heine: So, when it came, I had to choose the site for it, around the rim of the Tidal Basin. And the beginning of the whole ceremony now was going to divulge on the daughter of the Japanese ambassador lighting the stone Japanese [lantern]. Well, how you going to light it? So that fell to me to figure it out.

Con Heine: So, I first stopped in a catholic church and picked up one of these little votive lights and set it inside the stone [lantern that] had windows on it in each side of it. And then I got a little taper, like you light a candle in church, and the Japanese princess and the daughter to the ambassador could push that in and light the candle. That was the first lighting. Later, with ingenuity, we switched to an electric type of a candle, and she had just to push a switch.

Con Heine: But we had to have something that was spur of the moment that she could do. And then they had the fabulous Cherry Blossom Ball. Because Mr. Jett and myself, we worked with the Cherry Blossom committee, you see, of all local leaders, for all the ceremonies. So, we were invited to the ball, and it was a beautiful thing. If you go in here in the kitchen, my daughter made a montage of Catherine and I, our trips. And you'll see one as we're coming down the steps of the hotel at the Cherry Blossom Festival.

Nancy Russell: So, you mentioned the stars that would come. Who chose which stars, how was that arranged, and what stars came?

Con Heine: Well, the TV. The TV station. It was usually one or two TV stations would sponsor the parade and they would choose the big star to lead the parade.

Nancy Russell: And so, one of them was Rin Tin Tin one year?

Con Heine: Yes. Rin Tin Tin with his lieutenant movie star, [and] his handler. And he came, and of course I was invited to the reception at one of the hotels. I was able to bring [our] four children. And we had a wonderful picture taken of Rin Tin Tin in the center, my four beautiful children, and the handler of Rin Tin Tin. And I really like that picture. I had a couple of other pictures taken with the children and Rin Tin Tin.

Nancy Russell: I love that they brought in Rin Tin Tin to open the parade. The other thing I wanted to ask you about was the Park Service had an association, or an involvement with a boating race.

Con Heine: [The National Power Boat Regatta]?

Nancy Russell: Regatta, there you go.

Con Heine: The powerboat regattas. For about several years, they were held on the Potomac River. The owners of these powerboats were people like Guy Lombardo and other [wealthy] people. They had special drivers that would drive the powerboat, and they did the race up and down the Potomac. They had wonderful time, and again, I had to go down to represent the National Capital Parks. And I would take my boy with me, Con [Jr.]. Sometimes we'd go down, inspect the grounds and everything. And Chief Stewart of the Park police, my good friend. He would set up a [police] command post, we'd go in and visit him.

Con Heine: But one time I was down there by myself, and the powerboat race was about to begin. I'd only been in the Park Service I don't think more than two or three years. Maybe a little bit more.

Con Heine: And suddenly the weather came up so bad, so choppy in the Potomac that they couldn't race. And after all these things, bringing these powerboats in, the money involved. So, I met with the president of the powerboat regatta association and Captain [Grant Wright, who at the time as the highest-ranking Black officer in the U.S. Park Police].

- Con Heine: We discussed it and I made the decision, on my own, with their agreement that we move the whole regatta to the Washington Channel, which was protected by Hains Point and [where] the waters were calm, it was wide enough to have the whole race.
- Con Heine: We had to change the traffic patterns, move the boats, [and advise the D.C. Harbor Patrol to clear all the other boat traffic from the channel]. All kinds of things. But it was done, and the race was successful. Went off without a hitch, and everything went fine. And next morning when I reported to work, I usually had to go in and see the acting superintendent or the associate superintendent, Frank Gartside, one of the great park administrators of all time.
- Nancy Russell: I'm sorry, what was his last name?
- Con Heine: Frank Gartside.
- Nancy Russell: Okay.
- Con Heine: G-A-R-T-S-I-D-E. And he never got the tributes that he should have gotten. When I told him what I had done. [It was reported in the newspaper]. I don't think I was more than 24, 25 years old. It made an impression on him, and he thought that was something to do that and enable that thing to go forward. And from then on, he was a great supporter of me in the National Capital Parks as I was supported by everybody else. But he realized that I was able to make a decision on the spot, with [major] ramifications. If it had [failed], it would've been a [serious] flop.
- Con Heine: It wasn't, and he really was surprised and amused by that.
- Nancy Russell: Great. Anything else you want to tell me?
- Con Heine: Well, I've done a little too much talking, one of my faults.
- Nancy Russell: I don't think so. Not at all.
- Con Heine: I just still have a great love for the National Park Service, [for] the idea behind it, and I hope it continues with much success through the years ahead of us. There's always going to be new challenges to be met. But [when] you think of the great enjoyment that visiting national parks brings to millions of parents, and children and individuals. And that [this] was made possible by men like Stephen Mather, Horace Albright, [Conrad Wirth, George Hartzog] and others.

Con Heine: And today it is still going on. It's a great tribute to the ability of mankind to see the beauty and the nature that we [have] before us. And the purpose to preserve what is some of the finest things in [the natural and historical world] that we can see. And I hope that that continues.

Con Heine: And I think one way it could continue, as I said, from the days that I looked at the first diorama in the Interior [Building] Museum [in 1949], the diorama made by our museum people in the National Park Service of the very first campfire, September 19, 1870, I wish that we could commemorate that instance and that concept every year to give the National Park Service the spark that it needs to continue the great work that lay before it.

Nancy Russell: Great. Thank you so much.

END OF TAPE