Interview with David Hedrick
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Interview # 1: February 22, 2012
Interviewer: Julie Dirksen

Dirksen: Today I'm sitting in this lovely home of Dave Hedrick, with his lovely wife Mary. Dave is just this great guy who has been involved with the New Salem site for many years and we're going to talk today. But before we do, I do want to say that this will be a maybe little more different than the usual interview because Dave had contracted spinal meningitis and he is totally deaf. He is able to talk, though, and be his wonderful self, but we will be doing some things back and forth. So, I would like to have his wife Mary talk to you a little bit about what happened. Mary.

M. Hedrick: Back in 2008, in December, he started complaining about having a bad headache. He had bumped his head at work. He didn't think he had bumped it that hard but it got so bad—the pain—that he decided that he was sick enough to go to the emergency room. He just kind of went downhill pretty quick. He started to have symptoms of stroking and that was from the toxins of the bacterial meningitis. They were unable to identify what was happening with him for a while. They could not do a spinal tap because he was on coumadin for a prosthetic valve that he has in his heart. Generally, if you know that you have bacterial meningitis and they treat you with steroids before starting the antibiotics, you do not lose your hearing, but they didn't know. They knew he had some sort of infection because it was also in his blood, so he had sepsis and meningitis, both. He was put in a drug-induced coma and was in intensive care for over a week. We know that about eighty percent of the people who have this kind of meningitis do not survive and those that do, do have sometimes very serious disabilities. Dave has always

has a great attitude. We realized that he's very fortunate to be able to continue to do things that he enjoys. He has to do them sometimes in unorthodox ways and it takes him a lot longer to get things done. We are able to manage to communicate simple things with him reading my lips. We do charades (chuckles) and we have tried to do sign language. He has short-term memory problems and he has difficulty remembering what the signs are. He also had cochlear implants placed and because meningitis is what it is, success with cochlear implants for people who have had meningitis is not generally as well as, say, somebody who is born deaf.

Dirksen: Thank you so much, Mary. Well, now we're going to meet the star, and that is Dave Hedrick. So Dave, what I would like for you to do is to introduce yourself and talk about yourself.

D. Hedrick: I'm David Hedrick and I've had a career with the State of Illinois, primarily at Lincoln's New Salem. I grew up in southeastern Illinois, about four hours southeast of Springfield. I grew up on a farm. My father was a World War II veteran, and after the war, he came home and ran the family farm. In addition to the farming, he worked a full-time job in a factory to support his farming habit. My mother was a graduate of the University of Illinois. She had a career as a homemaker raising five kids, but also teaching high school math. So they were both hardworking, of German descent. I could characterize my upbringing in West Salem, Illinois, as very rural, white, Protestant community. I first saw my first African-American person in Evansville, Indiana, when I was probably eight years old, so it was a pretty sheltered community. I credit my parents for pushing me, probably at about thirteen years old, pushing me to think about a career, what I wanted to do. They weren't really tolerant of people floundering around to find their way. My brother, a year older than I was, the oldest in the family, was very sharp, a very smart kid, and he was destined to be a doctor and he's today a pediatrician. I wasn't going to be a doctor, I wasn't going to be a lawyer. They pushed me to really think about what kind of career I would like to do, like to pursue. My family, I think, was not very typical in that they took a lot of vacations, if you can imagine hauling around five young kids. We went camping a lot. We went to state parks a lot. We really acquired a feeling for the outdoors. Having grown up on a farm, I was very in-tune with the out-of-doors, but we went all over the country, primarily the Midwest, but also around the country, exploring parks and recreation areas. I think that was a little unusual for my neighbors and friends that grew up where I grew up. At about early in high school I decided what I really wanted to do was to work in a park and recreation setting, which was a new field. Well, it was becoming more professionalized. There was actually curriculums in college for careers in parks and recreation. We didn't know much about it and my parents took me to the Tennessee Valley Authority, TVA, to meet with a staff person, to get guidance about where I would go to pursue a career in parks and recreation. This was probably about a sophomore in high school, which I think was a little unusual for my friends, because they weren't being groomed for a career. They just kind of moved on. So a representative from the TVA suggested, since we lived in Illinois, that they

had a curriculum at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. That was really a leading effort in the parks and recreation field. So that was pretty well the route we took. My parents were very farsighted and I am very indebted to them for pushing me and suggesting. They realized, and I realized, I wasn't going to be a doctor (chuckles - wife is talking the background.) and so as I graduated, toward the end of high school, I remember one gathering, I don't remember what kind of meeting it was, but we all had to express what our plans were. I said I'm going to major in parks and recreation and people laughed. They had never heard of anybody majoring in parks and recreation (chuckles). But I was dead serious and so off I went to Southern Illinois University.

Wife in background: In Carbondale

Dirksen: In Carbondale.

D. Hedrick: At Carbondale.

M. Dirksen: What year was this?

D. Hedrick: It was 1968. I graduated high school in '67.

M. Hedrick: Okay. Talking in the back ground. He went to junior college for one year.

M. Hedrick Oh, you went to junior college for one year? Junior college?

D. Hedrick: Oh, yeah. I went. College was expensive, even though very affordable by today's standards. My parents had five kids. My dad was working two jobs. My mother was raising five kids and working as a high school teacher and, quite honestly I was a C student in high school because of some… I think, I was in the shadow of my older brother, who was a genius. I also, at twelve or thirteen years old, I was stricken with rheumatic fever and I spent several months in bed. As a result, I had a heart issue and was no longer able to participate in sports. My attitude, my personal attitude wasn't that great because all my life I'd excelled at sports. Here I am, instead of playing football, I'm in the marching band. I just couldn't accept some of the limitations that I had, so I wasn't the greatest student.

Dirksen: You were bored.

D. Hedrick: I was bored. Well, as I got ready to go to college, I was a little concerned, you know. I was concerned: one for my ability, and second for finances. So I went to Olney Community College, which is a junior college for the first year and I did real well. I made the dean's list. I decided I'd better study (Dirksen laughs). I was a better student than I was in high school but, again, my parents gave me some good advice. A lot of people go to junior college and take a lot of classes that don't apply to their major. I took the college catalog from the junior college and then I went to Carbondale at SIU and met with a counselor and I said, "Show me the classes I can take that will apply to my major." So I did; every one applied to my major. I graduated in four years and I didn't lose a single credit.

So when I got to SIU there was some concern about my physical ability because of my heart issue from rheumatic fever. I applied for a scholarship for vocational rehabilitation, which was a state program to rehabilitate people with disabilities to become productive, taxpaying citizens. So I went through a bunch of tests, a battery of tests, and they said yeah, he's smart enough to go to college and they provided some financial incentives, some scholarship or financial aid.

When I went to SIU and told them I wanted to major in parks and recreation. They were a little concerned about my physical ability. They had two programs: one was recreation and one was forestry. I enrolled in recreation because they wouldn't allow me to go into forestry. I went into the municipal recreation program curriculum and after the first semester, I transferred to the forestry and they never figured it out. (Dirksen laughs) Because the forestry has more outdoor recreation than the municipal recreation. There are a lot of similar classes, but I went into the forestry curriculum in parks and recreation.

Dirksen: And this would have been in 1968 or '69?

D. Hedrick: The actual curriculum was Outdoor Recreational Resource Management.

Dirksen: Year?

D. Hedrick: It was 1968.

Dirksen: Okay

D. Hedrick: Yeah, 1968, probably '69 I went to Southern.

Dirksen: Right.

D. Hedrick: That was during the Vietnam War and many of the people I know were going to school there primarily to stay out of the draft. I assumed that probably when I graduated I would fail the physical exam for the military, and I did. Near graduation, I was called for a physical and I was deemed not able to participate in the Vietnam War due to a heart murmur, which was okay with me. I've since had a mechanical heart valve installed, and I'm pretty normal. But at the time, during my adolescence and early education, I was limited in my physical activities. I've always been interested in the out-of-doors. I'm an outdoor kind of guy. I work outside just about every day summer and winter. I don't get a lot accomplished, but I piddle around outside. My hobbies have always been outdoors. I've been interested in wildlife and hunting and fishing, hiking, canoeing, boating, anything outdoors. With this degree, the reason I went into parks and recreation, I thought, man, this will be the perfect life. I could work outdoors. I could basically live outdoors and I assumed I would probably end up in some mountain or on an island.

Dirksen: Really?

D. Hedrick: I assumed I would live somewhere way out, maybe Alaska.

Dirksen: That's a long way from Illinois.

D. Hedrick: When I graduate, I'm looking for jobs in Alaska and some island or on a coast and there weren't a lot of jobs (chuckles). The first job I was offered, shortly after I graduated, was with the Norridge Park District, which is a Chicago suburb.

Dirksen: With what?

D. Hedrick: Norridge Park District.

Dirksen: Norridge, okay.

D. Hedrick: It's a small park district on the border of Chicago. It's a northwest suburb.

Dirksen: This would be 1970?

Hedrick: 1971. I graduated from SIU in '71, went to work for the Norridge Park District as a Superintendent of Recreation. If you remember, I'm a farm boy from southern Illinois, a very rural community. I'm living on Harlem Avenue in Chicago, (Dirksen laughing) working in an Italian neighborhood. I think there was cultural shock from both parts. (Dirksen laughs) It was a great experience. I don't regret it at all. It was actually a wonderful experience because I'm dealing with… It's a small park district. I had a director, a couple of maintenance guys and a superintendent of recreation and an office lady, secretary. As Superintendent of Recreation, I was in charge of all the programming, youth programs, youth athletics.

Surprising to me, we had a very large adult athletic program, 16 inch softball, which is bloody. I mean, there were fights. We had adult flag football. We had adult hockey. I mean there's real serious Chicago guys that are taking their revenge out on each other on a court. I'm twenty-two, twenty-three years old learning all these programs. I had one hundred and ten part-time people working for me, which again was a blessing, because had I gone to a remote state park with two or three staff, I would probably been there forever. I had a great experience working with lots of people, lots of programs. We had everything from art classes to day care for kids. At the end of the school day, the schools turned their facilities over to us, to the park district, which we hired teachers that ran educational programs, that ran open gym programs, volley ball, you name it. We had the high school, the grade schools. We were able to hire staff from the schools that actually worked for the park district to make use of these facilities after hours, because the schools didn't want to pay for it. We'd charge admission and we had swimming pools, we had swimming lessons, we had competitive swim meets, so it was really an eye-opener for me.

Dirksen: How long did you stay there?

D. Hedrick: I worked there three years…

Dirksen: Three years, okay.

D. Hedrick: …and it was really quite a challenge for me because of all the…it was a lot of evenings. I mean, there was the after school programs in the schools and the athletic programs in the evenings. I lived close. The first two years I lived close to the park district, I was just a mile away, so I could go back and forth. But the third year, we bought our place in the suburbs, in Hoffman Estates, in the far western suburbs, and it was a good half-hour drive, so it wasn't as easy. At that time, the director of the park district left and he went to a larger park district in the suburbs. We got a new director and I realized I probably should look at other options. I always had this feeling that I wanted to work for the Department of Conservation.

Dirksen: Why?

D. Hedrick: Because of the state park situation. The Department of Conservation operated the state parks and historic sites.

Dirksen: Were they separate?

D. Hedrick: The Department of Conservation was an umbrella organization that operated all the state parks, the wildlife areas, the natural areas and also the state historic sites. It was two divisions. Actually, it was like four divisions. State parks was one division, historic sites was another. Let me back up a little bit. Before I went to the Norridge Park District, when I was in college I worked at the Touch of Nature Outdoor Laboratory, SIU outdoor laboratory, it's called Touch of Nature. It's a series of camps and I worked there for about two years, off and on in the summers and sometimes in the winters. I was hired for the first summer as the only resident counselor for the high school conservation workshop. There was a different campus every week. Again, I'm twenty-three years old, twenty-four, no, I'm twenty, twenty-one years old, supervising the only person there at night with these high school kids.

Dirksen: Whoa!

D. Hedrick: We had some professional staff who would come in during the day, but go home in the evening. I had these twenty-five kids I had to keep track of (chuckles). It was a fun job. We basically worked outdoors. We did conservation projects. We did boating, hiking, camping.

Dirksen: That would be good job training.

D. Hedrick: Yeah. That was a great job. That was a great experience. Sometimes I worked in the other camps where Mary worked. Mary was a special education major. She worked with special populations. Sometimes off-weeks, I'd work in that camp. During the winter, I did some work for the camp doing some maintenance

activities and it was a great set-up. The last summer that I was in college, I applied for an internship with the Department of Conservation and I was hired as a summer intern at Giant City State Park. My job was to investigate and help design some equestrian trails, horse trails, within the state park. Giant City's a large, large state park with very rugged terrain.

Dirksen: Where?

D. Hedrick: South of Carbondale,

Dirksen: South of Carbondale.

D. Hedrick: Which was like three miles from the camp where I was working.

Dirksen: Right.

D. Hedrick: I knew the layout pretty well. I was hired and it was a great experience. At first we did a lot of hiking over the terrain to figure out where we wanted each trail to go. It was probably a ten mile trail and we had to go from the high levels down to the low levels back up to the high levels up and down. We had to scout out where this would go and lay it out on a topographic map.

Dirksen: All right, all of this experience is another reason why you were perfect for New Salem.

D. Hedrick: It all comes together. We had to figure out where we wanted this trail to go. We put it on topographic maps. We did a lot of hiking and the staff at Giant City and the regional manager figured out I knew what I was doing, so they basically turned me loose.

Dirksen: And you were only twenty-one. Right? Twenty-one?

D. Hedrick: I went with flagging tape, by myself. With the flagging tape, I'd mark the trail and they did some spot checking and said yeah, this works. So after two or three weeks of that, they gave me an old four-wheel-drive jeep and a chainsaw and said make this trail so we can get a tractor or a bulldozer through it. So I cut out the small trees. I spent a couple of months out by myself cutting trees and making this trail.

Dirksen: A modern day Paul Bunyon.

D. Hedrick: By the end of the summer I got it all laid out and we got it cleared. I didn't run a bulldozer, but I ran a tractor and a mower and a staff would run a bulldozer and we got the trail all laid out. Then we decided we wanted to create a horseback campground on the far edge of the site. So the Department of Conservation had a tree spade and the forester came in and we marked a lot of trees that were suitable for removing, trees of two to three inches diameter, but pretty big trees. I was a farm boy, so I knew how to run a tractor and operate equipment, so they gave me

this big tractor and a big tree spade and I would go around and dig up a tree and go plant it over in the future campground. So again, it was good experience. It worked so well that the regional manager kept me on a couple of months after the internship ended to continue working on some of these projects, which gave me a little more money; it turned out to be a great project. As a result, I got a great recommendation from the Department of Conservation staff. So after the Norridge Park District, I decided it's time to apply for the State of Illinois, for the Department of Conservation.

Dirksen: Why?

D. Hedrick: Why?

Dirksen: Um hum.

D. Hedrick: Because I wanted to work in a more rural area. I wanted to work in an outdoor setting. I decided it was time to apply to the State of Illinois and the Department of Conservation to work in a state park.

Dirksen: You were tired of Chicago?

D. Hedrick: I'd been in Chicago.

Dirksen: Ready to leave.

D. Hedrick: I was a farm boy and I wanted to work outside.

Dirksen: Right, (laughter)

D. Hedrick: The State of Illinois had—and I think still has—a very awkward system of applying for work. You had to identify three choices, three county choices. You couldn't apply for statewide. You had to apply for a specific county and you had three choices, one, two and three. I could apply for, I thought, boy, Giant City would be great, but they had a manager that had just started. He was going to be there another twenty years; had I applied for Jackson County, that manager, I'd have to wait twenty years for him to move on. So I had to figure out where these openings are going to be. I called the regional manager where I worked at Giant City. His name was Don Cole. I said, "Don, I want to apply for an opening in the Department of Conservation, but I don't know where to apply." He said, "There's going to be an opening at Pere Marquette State Park," which is a huge state park over by Grafton. I knew I wasn't qualified for Pere Marquette, but I applied for Jersey County. And sure enough I get a notice: Come for an interview for Pere Marquette State Park, Jersey County, for the superintendent's job. So I went down to Grafton for an interview. The interview went great, but I knew I wasn't qualified for that large operation. I mean, it's the biggest state park in the state. I mean there's ten thousand acres and a hundred buildings and a lodge. But I went through the interview and it went very well, but I left thinking, "Well, we'll see what's next."

I got this letter saying, nice letter saying you were not hired, but keep in touch, we might have something for you. I'm thinking, yeah, right, I've heard that before. (Dirksen laughs) But about a week later I get a call from a regional land manager down in southwestern Illinois, said, "We have an opening at Fort Kaskaskia. We'd like for you to apply." Within three days I got two more calls from two other regional managers. One said, "We have an opening at Ferne Clyffe State Park," which is southern Illinois, "and we'd like to consider you. We think you should apply." Then I get a call from central Illinois and the manager said, "We have an opening at Jubilee College State Park and we think you should apply." I'm thinking, "Man, that was a good interview." What had happened is that Ray Norbett, who is Linda Norbett Suits' father, was in on the interview. He was a career guy at the Department of Conservation, and he told these managers, "Here's somebody that would be a good manager. We should consider him." Suddenly I'm getting these calls. So Mary and I would make the rounds. We looked at Fort Kaskaskia, we looked at Ferne Clyffe and we looked at Jubilee College. Jubilee College is near Peoria. I personally liked Ferne Clyffe because it was southern Illinois, it's more my home turf, but it's very rural and Mary is a Chicago girl and we decided that we'd be better off near a more urban area, someplace like Peoria. So I decided I'd focus on Jubilee College. I told them I'd like to apply for Jubilee College. Basically, I'm the only one interviewed. It sounds like I had political clout, but I did not. I had no political clout whatsoever.

Dirksen: What year was this?

D. Hedrick: It was 1974. I went to Springfield for an interview for Jubilee College State Park. I went to the interview and they hired me on the spot. The regional land manager told me to stop by Jubilee on the way home and introduce yourself, which was a real bad deal. We stopped at Jubilee on the way home, near Peoria, and I walked in, I think it was the next morning. The staff of three people were there. The staff consisted of the current manager and two maintenance guys. I introduced myself, I said, "I'm David Hedrick. I just came from Springfield. I was hired as manager of this facility." They had not bothered to tell the old manager he was being replaced.

Dirksen: Oh no!

D. Hedrick: They didn't bother to tell the two maintenance guys that there was an opening they might want to apply for. I mean it was a pretty cool reception. (laughter)

Dirksen: Yes, understandably.

D. Hedrick: I mean, I was really set up. The regional land manager didn't want to tell them. What was happening is, this was under (Governor) Dan Walker's administration and the Director of the Department of Conservation was Tony Dean. They realized they'd better professionalize their staff. I mean, there was a lot of political hacks. A lot of people that weren't cutting the mustard, and they were trying to hire some professional staff and that's my opportunity. You know, I just

happened to show up when they were trying to modernize the staff. Well, about a month later I moved to the residence on-site. Well, actually, the old manager was living there (Dirksen laughs) who didn't know he was being replaced and they gave him six months, I think, to move out, so we had to find a place to live. We had a small child. Our son Tim had just been born about a month before, three months?

M. Hedrick: Three weeks.

Dirksen: Three weeks.

D. Hedrick: We had no money. The starting salary at Jubilee was nine thousand dollars a year and we had to find a place to live temporarily for a few months, but we managed.

M. Hedrick: And we did not get a paycheck for three months.

Dirksen: You did not get a paycheck for three months. Oh, my gosh.

D. Hedrick: So, actually, Jubilee was a wonderful experience. Oh yeah, the regional manager who forgot to tell the old manager he was being replaced, forgot to send in the paperwork.

Dirksen: (laughs) This is a nightmare.

D. Hedrick: It will be a month before you get your check, I don't know, at least a month. So a month came and went and there was no check. I called him up, I said, you know, I really need some money. Well, we forgot to submit the paperwork. It's going to be another month. It was a nightmare. I think we had to take out a loan, I don't know, borrowed money from the relatives or what. Credit cards? (laughs) It was a struggle. But the old manager, the manager I replaced, had worked thirty years for Caterpillar tractor. He actually had a college degree. He was an accountant. He wasn't suited for the work that he was doing. He didn't spend much time outside. We lived in a little house on-site, it's called a site residence, which is required; when the phone rang, it rang in his house, because he never went outside. His wife would answer the phone. So if there was a message on park business, we'd have to get transferred out to the shop. It was a pretty unprofessional operation. (Dirksen laughs)

But, I show up. Jubilee College consisted of an historic building, a large historic building, and eighty acres of parkland. But I was told during the interview that there's three thousand more acres that the state owned. It's just a matter of converting it from rental property—which has been rented out for farmers—to parkland. The first year I basically just worked with the eighty acres and the historic building. But this historic building was going through some renovation, a big renovation. I mean, it's a huge college structure built in the 1850s. It is made out of limestone, had a chapel. It is really a beautiful building, but part of it had fallen down in a pile. Part of my job was to help stabilize it and work with contractors to stabilize it and restore it. During the next year, we

cancelled all the farm leases and converted the three thousand acres to parkland and we started building trails.

Dirksen: Yep, back to land, right?

D. Hedrick: We developed thirty miles of trails in the park. I loved it. It's beautiful rolling hills and the Jubilee Creek. In fact, a lot of it was inaccessible. You just had to walk in or ride a horse in. I worked with a local equestrian club and we set up a route for a lot of trails; we did a lot of clearing with small equipment, built some creek crossings, built an equestrian campground. We also applied for some state funding, and received a lot of money for roads, picnic areas, campgrounds. During the five years I was there, we did a lot of construction, a lot of capital improvements and it was great timing because I had the experience of converting this raw rural land into recreational resource.

Dirksen: Mary, what did you say?

M. Hedrick: I wanted him to talk about the atmosphere or the general public around that area.

Dirksen: Okay, Mary asked for him to talk about the relations with the community. Okay. All right, now Dave.

D. Hedrick: In addition to Jubilee College State Park, I also was in charge of the Rock Island State Trail, which was an abandoned piece of railroad that's thirty miles long from Peoria northwest.

Dirksen: How long?

D. Hedrick: Thirty miles.

Dirksen: Wooo.

D. Hedrick: The Rock Island Trail is thirty miles long. The State of Illinois had acquired the land through a donation from the Forest Park Foundation, which was run by Bill Rutherford, who was an ex-director of the Department of Conservation. Unfortunately, when the railroad abandoned the property, it sat idle for many years and the railroad sold off the bridges. They removed the bridges and a lot of the drainage structures and the local farmers started encroaching on the land, started farming it. So here I am, with this new property, this Rock Island Trail and this new Jubilee property and we're doing a lot of construction, a lot of contractors working. We're starting to develop this trail. The local people didn't want the state to build the trail.

Dirksen: What about your staff? Three people?

D. Hedrick: Three people. We had a lot of seasonals and we had a lot of youth programs. We had Youth Conservation Corps, Young Adult Conservation Corps, which are

federal employment programs to hire people to do conservation work. I mean, we had thirty kids working there sometimes, you know, which spread me pretty thin.

Dirksen: Yeah. (laugh)

D. Hedrick: But the state decided we had to get serious about this trail, this railroad property, and we had to get the farmers to quit farming it and we had to tell them to stay off. They sent me and a lawyer to visit every land owner. (Dirksen chuckles) He was a Special Assistant to the Attorney General. My job was to explain to the people we're going to build a recreational hiking and biking trail out of this. It's going to be a tourist attraction and it's going to be good for the community. The attorney's job was to tell them we're not going to let you farm it. You're going to have to get your…

Dirksen: Self out.

D. Hedrick: … property off it. We're not going to let you, I think it's called, "acquire through adverse possession". If you farm it long enough you get to keep it, so we had to tell them legally, this is our property, you're trespassing, you have to get off, which didn't make me very popular. I mean, it was a hostile territory. It really was. We're getting calls at home. Mary's getting calls at home, threatening, threatening calls. I mean it was, it was a challenge. That's why they wanted to get rid of the old manager and get me in to go out and be a little more forceful.

Dirksen: Be the tough guy.

D. Hedrick: The old manager was not about to do that. I was fearless. (Dirksen chuckles) So, I go out and over the next three years, four or five years, we did some development. We built some bridges. We started building a trail bed. We did a lot of work at Jubilee with the trails and with construction with roads and picnicking areas. We did a lot of trails. It was a period when we had a lot of snow. The winters were very cold and a lot of snow and we developed cross-country ski trails and we developed a very active cross-country skiing program. We had a local ski shop in Peoria that would bring skis out to Jubilee every Saturday and Sunday morning and they would rent them and we would have cross-country ski instructions. I was an instructor and we had several instructors; we'd teach people to ski on the hills at Jubilee, which was a perfect spot. In the afternoon we'd go for like a ten kilometer ski tour and we were out skiing around on these beautiful trails. It was great. We converted a shelter to a warming house, put in a big wood-burning stove and wrapped it in plastic and it was a center for the ski activity. It was great fun.

Dirksen: Okay. So how long did you stay at Jubilee and then where did you go? Five years?

D. Hedrick: I stayed at Jubilee five years.

Dirksen: Okay.

D. Hedrick: When I went there, I remember the first few weeks, I had just moved from Chicago, inner-city, to a state park with a beautiful setting. I remember sitting on the hillside of Jubilee, which has these huge big white oaks, beautiful setting, with this historic building, and I thought, "Man, I'm in Heaven. This is the greatest place to be." I really thought I'd stay there all my career, especially with the three thousand acres that we had to play with. We were developing the park.

M. Hedrick: He told me that he would change every five years so he would not become stagnant.

Dirksen: Okay. Mary said that he told her he would only stay five years, and so he would not stagnate.

D. Hedrick: We settled into this community. In the five years we had met a lot of neighbors. I just loved the park. It was a great place to work. It was very remote as far as interference from supervisors. (Dirksen chuckles) I mean, they very rarely ever showed up.

Dirksen: You had your own place.

D. Hedrick: It wasn't big enough to attract a lot of attention, so I had a lot of freedom, a lot of flexibility. During that period with the historic structure, I worked very closely with Ron Nelson, who was a regional historian, which is like a regional administrator.

Dirksen: Of what department?

D. Hedrick: Department of Conservation.

Dirksen: Okay, you're still at Conservation. Okay.

D. Hedrick: He was the mastermind behind the restoration of the Jubilee College building and he really was an expert in that area. He lived and worked at Bishop Hill and he was involved in the restoration of a lot of historic buildings, both at Bishop Hill and around the state, a lot in Chicago. He was not trained as an architectural historian, but he really was. He had a lot of skills and a lot of knowledge and I worked with Ron a lot because of the historic building at Jubilee. One day he told me—after about five years at Jubilee—"There's going to be an opening at New Salem and I think you should apply." I said, "Nah, I'm not interested. I'm not interested in New Salem. I'm interested in Jubilee. This is where my strength is, and quite honestly, my background is not history."

When I was in high school, I was blessed with two history teachers that were football coaches who were very uninspiring. (Dirksen laughs) I hated history class. In college I didn't take any history classes. I don't know how I got by but I don't recall any history class. So here I am, thinking about applying for a job in an historic site. I said, "Nah, that's not me. I want to stay at Jubilee. I'm happy to be here the rest of my life." About a week later, I get a call from Chuck

Taminga who's like the head of lands and historic sites at the Department of Conservation. He said, "We really want you to apply for New Salem."

Dirksen: What year?

D. Hedrick: Seventy-nine.

Dirksen: Seventy-nine.

D. Hedrick: I said, "Okay, I'll think about." So I called him back and I said, "You know, I've got a young family and I'm not making much money. I'll go on two conditions." I knew that the house at New Salem was small. It was a two bedroom house. It was set up for old people. I said, "If I'm hired, I would accept the job if the house can be expanded to another bedroom, another bathroom" and for X amount of money; I forget what that X amount of money was, but it was like a six thousand dollar raise. I mean, to me it was big money. So they said, "Okay." Well, I went for an interview. So Mary and I drive down to New Salem. We stop at a restaurant in Petersburg to have lunch and there's a news article on a bulletin board that says, *"Save Our Park"* and there's a picture of protesters for Petersburg, Menard County, picketing New Salem, with signs that said, *"Save Our Park"*. It was the first clue that we had hostile territory. (All chuckle) We go to the interview and it was a good interview. They felt that my background with dealing with hostile territory and managing people and programs was probably a good fit. And, quite honestly, New Salem was a mess from a park standpoint.

Dirksen: How?

D. Hedrick: I went there the middle of July. I started work the middle of July. There was garbage everywhere. There was grass under the picnic tables as tall as the table. They never moved the table to mow the grass. It looked like a dump. It really did. And that's why they want a park guy instead of an historian.

Dirksen: Right.

D. Hedrick: So, they hired me. They said, "You're hired. You're moving in two weeks." In two weeks we're moving. They sent a moving van. In two weeks we move into the house.

Dirksen: Did they make the house bigger?

D. Hedrick: Oh, no. The house was not enlarged yet, but it was in the long-range plan. I move and within the first month, I had several encounters with the locals. The Chamber of Commerce had a committee that was inspecting the park and writing up all the deficiencies. They impressed upon the governor that they should have an investigation.

Dirksen: Who was the governor? That would have been '79?

D. Hedrick: It must have been Jim Edgar.

Dirksen: Would it have been Walker?

D. Hedrick: It must have been Jim Edgar.

Dirksen: We'll find out. Anyway, go ahead.

D. Hedrick: It might have been Jim Thompson. Thompson was before Edgar, right?

Dirksen: Uh huh. Yeah.

D. Hedrick: Yeah. Walker was when I was hired, but probably Jim Thompson.

Dirksen: Okay. Alright.

D. Hedrick: It was Jim Thompson, it was. So the governor appointed a committee; the committee's name—I love this—the name of the committee was, The Committee to Investigate the Problems at New Salem. (Dirksen laughs) He appointed two of his staff, the director of the agency and two local people.

Dirksen: Who was the director?

D. Hedrick: It must have been David Kinney.

Dirksen: Okay.

D. Hedrick: They had two local women, two local citizens. They'd have weekly meetings and they would have this list. We'd walk around and look at things and they'd jot down this list of things that need fixing. Finally, I told them. I said, "Look, I've been here a month or two. It's going to take a little time and it's going to take some money and we'll work on these things." They gave me a little slack—they knew—and we started seeing some improvements. I mean, this park started looking better and we started putting more money and effort into fixing things. Small money, nothing big, but just cleaning the place up.

Dirksen: I'm asking, David, what was the park at this time?

D. Hedrick: New Salem State Park.

Dirksen: No, but what size?

D. Hedrick: Well, it was about the same size as it is today. It was a little bit smaller, probably about five hundred acres but, you know, the historic village has like ninety buildings, ninety structures, and the parking lots were bad, the roads were bad, the water system was bad. The buildings had roofs that leaked. The steps going from the village down to the mill was like a mountain path, (Dirksen laughing) people falling down.

Dirksen: What are you asking, Mary?

M. Hedrick: About how you got involved in the community.

Dirksen: Okay. So how did you get yourself involved with Petersburg?

D. Hedrick: Because the Chamber of Commerce was an active advocate of promoting change in New Salem. I started going to the Chamber of Commerce board meetings to give a report. I'd just report on things that we were doing and things that we planned to do and efforts to get some money to fix things. You know, it takes a while, a year or two, to get money through the system and we'd submitted.

Dirksen: Was this state?

D. Hedrick: The state, yeah. We were submitting requests in the capital budget for improvement projects through the Department of Conservation. Quite honestly, historic sites were low priority for the Department of Conservation. They were more concerned with state parks, with hunting programs, natural areas, fishing programs. Historic sites were kind of the foster child of state parks and that's why things were in such bad shape. They didn't put as much effort and resources into the historic sites as they did the hunting programs and the fishing programs and the state lakes. Yeah.

Dirksen: Money.

D. Hedrick: It took a while, but I developed a good relationship with the local community. After a short time the Chamber of Commerce board put me as a regular meeting agenda item, a New Salem Report, and I was invited to give the New Salem Report. That was a big help because I was able to interact with the community. They could voice their concern and I could tell them how we were addressing those concerns. That was probably the best thing that ever happened with the overall plan at New Salem. One of the problems, not only was the facility in desperate shape, there had been a master management plan done.

Dirksen: By whom?

D. Hedrick: By the Department of Conservation. Master management plan was kind of a new concept for the Department of Conservation. They did not consider community involvement. It was a total closed committee. It was heavy on natural resources and lots of studies of plants and animals but nothing from the historical interpretive perspective. They had all kinds of biological analysis, but nothing from the history angle and here we are a historic site. It was a learning experience. It was a great mistake not to involve the community. It was total secret, but it leaked out to the community that some of these things were being considered. That's before I got there. I'm not sure how it leaked out, but that's why they wanted somebody new in to get over this stumbling block.

Dirksen: Okay now, I wanted to ask you, Dave, who did the history to put the New Salem into history?

D. Hedrick: The plan was done by the Department of Conservation and it did not address the historic site very well. It did a very thorough analysis of the biological aspect, the plants and animals and the natural resources associated with the site, but didn't really talk about Lincoln or the historical interpretation very much. Very general and that wasn't my strong suit. Shortly after I started, Bob Coomer was promoted to the Head of Historic Sites in the Historic Sites Division.

Dirksen: Right. It was Historic Sites Division.

D. Hedrick: Division of the Department of Conservation.

Dirksen: Exactly. Yes.

D. Hedrick: A few years later, under the Jim Thompson administration, the Historic Preservation Agency was created. At that point…

Dirksen: By Governor Thompson.

D. Hedrick: …. there was a struggle between who worked for who. David Kinney was appointed director by Thompson. David Kinney had been the Director of the Department of Conservation. David Kinney was appointed the new Director of the Historic Preservation Agency. There was also the Board of Trustees, which was run by Julie Cellini and Sally Schumbacher. They really weren't sure who worked for who. It turns out the Board of Trustees won (Dirksen laughs) and they got rid of David Kinney. I really didn't deal very much with the director. During the period of transition when David Kinney was director, I really felt comfortable with David Kinney. I had worked indirectly for him when he was Director of the Department of Conservation, but I really didn't work directly with him. When he became Director of the Department of Historic Preservation he got very interested in New Salem. He also joined our volunteer program. He'd come out on the weekends and he'd work in the gardens.

I should point out that in this transition, when I was trying to get the community involved with New Salem and trying to massage the relationship between the community and the state, I started a volunteer program. I went to New Salem in 1979. In 1980, we started the first formal volunteer program. There had been volunteer assistance on special events. Once a year there was a special event called New Salem Christmas and a local women's club would help with that event. There was really no formal training or formal volunteer program until 1980. I started the program and we got, I think, thirty volunteers the first year. We eventually ended up with like a hundred and fifty. That gave us some real ambassadors; some local people who were very entrenched in the community started volunteering at New Salem and started to become part of our team. That helped a great deal.

The next year, I told my boss that I wanted to start a support group for New Salem similar to what we had at Jubilee. At Jubilee we had a group called the Citizens Committee to Preserve Jubilee College. It was a group of local people who helped us with special events and helped push our cause for funding. My boss at the time had had a bad experience with a local community. That was before Bob Coomer. And he told me, "Don't do it. It will just be a group of local people telling us what to do." But I realized the value of the local support and a local committee and I also saw it as an opportunity to raise and keep some money for the site. So I did it anyway. (Dirksen laughs) At one of my Chamber of Commerce board meetings I gave a New Salem report on what we're doing. I said I had this idea I would like to start a support group for New Salem, but it's going to require fifty dollars. It costs fifty dollars to file the articles of incorporation with the Secretary of State and I'm going to be looking for fifty dollars, and I'm going to be looking for some local people to help me create this group. There was a lady there from a local bank, First of America Bank. She's on the board. She went back and told the bank president what I had in mind. I got a call that afternoon. He said, "We've got fifty dollars for you and we want to help." I went and met with the bank president. We had a retired bank president named Clarence Tozer, who had worked for the bank for fifty years, who was retired, who agreed to be one of the incorporators. It requires three people to incorporate.

Dirksen: So what did you write down?

M. Hedrick: I don't think it was First of America Bank.

D. Hedrick: First National Bank of Petersburg.

Dirksen: Yeah.

D. Hedrick: I don't know.

M. Hedrick: (unintelligible)

D. Hedrick: It's no longer in business. It sold out.

M. Hedrick: (unintelligible)

D. Hedrick: It takes three people to incorporate with the Secretary of State, so it's Clarence Tozer, myself and one of my assistants, Eileen Altig, who was a very dedicated assistant at New Salem. She worked for many years as an assistant manager at New Salem. She was a really hard worker, dedicated. She'd put her whole life into New Salem.

Dirksen: Who was that?

D. Hedrick: Eileen Altig. A-l-t-i-g. And Clarence Tozer...

Interview with David Hedrick
HP-A-L-2012-007.02

Interview #2: February 29, 2012
Interviewer: Julie Dirksen

Dirksen: Today I'm meeting with Dave Hedrick and his wife Mary. We seem to have stopped the last interview discussing the Lincoln League, which Dave started here at New Salem. So we're going to start with him talking about that and explaining not only the start-up of it, but what it was all about. So Dave, Lincoln League.

D. Hedrick: The relationship between the State of Illinois and New Salem and the community was not the best. A lot of people were suspicious of the state and what the state was trying to do in the long run with New Salem. A lot of it came from the master plan that was done that did not involve any local public input. There were rumors about rerouting the highway around New Salem and around Petersburg. There was talk of limiting the number of people that would be allowed in the park each day. At the time, we were getting lots of school tours, up to two hundred buses a day. It has since been reduced to a limit of forty a day and there was talk of how this was going to hurt tourism, in the community and how it was going to hurt the local businesses. A lot of it was just miscommunication and lack of knowledge. I knew from our experience with the Chamber of Commerce, that the local people really do care about New Salem and they weren't nearly as hostile as they were leading us to believe. At a Chamber of Commerce meeting, I made a comment that I'd like to start a support group for New Salem. At the time, I was going to the Chamber of Commerce, to their monthly board meetings, and giving a New Salem report, which seemed to be very welcomed. After I went back to the site after the meeting, I got a phone call from the president of the First National Bank of Petersburg saying they had a check for me. I'd mentioned at the meeting that there would be a fifty dollar charge to file the articles of incorporation for a not for profit corporation to start the support group. The bank president called me and said they had a check for me for fifty dollars to get me on the road to forming a support group.

Dirksen: Who was the chairman?

D. Hedrick: Who was from the bank?

Dirksen: Um hum.

D. Hedrick: Randy Killebrew was the president at the time. Clarence Tozer, a very active member of the community who had been president of the bank for a long time—in fact, he had a fifty year career with the bank. I eventually asked Clarence Tozer and Eileen Altig to be incorporators. It took three people to incorporate: Eileen Altig, who was one of my assistants, Clarence Tozer and myself were the three people who filed the articles of incorporation of the

Not-for Profit Corporation. At the time, I first told my supervisor that I was planning on starting a support group and he told me not to do it.

Dirksen: Who was that?

D. Hedrick: Keith Skully. He said it's just going to be a bunch of local people telling you how to run the park. We referred to it as the park in those days. But I knew it was a good idea and I had a lot of support for it, so I went ahead with it regardless. He didn't seem very adamant; he just said, "I wouldn't do it." I don't know that he told me not to do it; he said he wouldn't do it, it's going to be a mistake. But I did it anyway.

At first I held a public meeting and told the local community what I had in mind. This was before I filed the articles of incorporation. I probably had about thirty people at the meeting. It was held at the New Salem Lodge, which was right on the highway at New Salem at that time. There was a lot of interest and a lot of suspicious comments. I remember one specifically from Bill Corson, who was a local business guy; he said, "Dave, what are you really trying to do?" I said, "I'm trying to create a group that will support New Salem and raise money for New Salem." He actually was one of our first board members. I knew Bill was the kind of person that felt deeply about New Salem. The first president was Nellie Owen; Nellie was an elderly lady at the time. She and her husband had run the New Salem Lodge for many years. They originally had run the Wagon Wheel as a restaurant, which is a log building right inside the entrance of New Salem. The state cancelled their lease and they moved across the street and built a new lodge, which was pretty old by the time I arrived on the scene, but it was still operating She was not involved. She was an elderly lady in Petersburg and I asked her to be the president. A lot of people, with Bill Corson and Nellie Owen on the board, it immediately opened up a lot of local people to be involved with the organization. They were two people who had been critical of the State. I remember Nellie saying—I'm not sure the words she used—but she basically was saying she's beyond her prime, but she knew that she was being asked as a figurehead, as a front for the organization. I said, "Yes, and that will help us a great deal." (Dirksen laughs) So she willingly accepted. She was our first president. Immediately it was adopted by the local people because Nellie and Bill and some others would protect their interests.

Dirksen: That's right.

D. Hedrick: So it worked out very well. I was very pleased with their participation. They served three year terms on the board and every year when we had people—I think we had nine people on the board, nine or ten—and they would rotate when their terms expired. So every year we'd have three new ones and every year one of the times I asked for new board members, they appointed me as the nominating committee (Dirksen chuckles). I was not on the board. As the Superintendent of New Salem, they deferred to me to recruit and recommend people to go on the board. So I think they were putting a lot of trust in me and it worked to my advantage, of course. I would find people who were **truly interested in** New Salem and it seemed to work out real well.

Dirksen: Right. Okay, Dave, what were some major accomplishments that Lincoln League was able to do?

D. Hedrick: The Lincoln League, primarily, was a device, not a device, but it resulted in a lot of local support because it was an organization that local people could participate in and show their support for New Salem. There was a graduated membership from fifteen dollars to a hundred dollars. I don't know how many members there are, probably a couple hundred members at this point. But they're people who are willing to put their name down in support of New Salem. Several times when we were successful in acquiring money in the operating budget, the capital budget because the local people were showing their support for a project that the State of Illinois was going to fund. The State of Illinois, if not for the Lincoln League, there wouldn't have been a local voice saying, "Yes, we think that's a good idea."

Dirksen: See that's a major accomplishment.

D. Hedrick: It was the voice of the local community. When I came to New Salem, the District Historian at the time told me, "This park does not belong to the community, it belongs to the State."

Dirksen: So you're showing me the picture.

D. Hedrick: If it hadn't been for the local community, this reconstruction would never have taken place in 1918.

Dirksen: In 1918? That's when Petersburg and the community stepped forward to reconstruct.

D. Hedrick: There was a local pageant in 1918 and a reconstruction. This was a community event.

Dirksen: Okay.

D. Hedrick: People came out to New Salem and actually built **these** log buildings. They weren't really authentic and were eventually replaced, but it was a great

demonstration project where the local community said, "This is State property, but the State hasn't built anything. We think we should build things." The State gave them permission to come out and to have a pageant and they came out and they rebuilt three buildings, three of them.

Dirksen: That was in 1918.

D. Hedrick: 1919. 1918 was the pageant. The pageant inspired people to come out.

Dirksen: All right. And so then, David, when that was in 1919, then you came in …

D. Hedrick: It was before my time.

Dirksen: I know. I know. In 1974.

D. Hedrick: The State owned the property.

Dirksen: So initially the community stepped forward and in 1919 it was the community and then they finally got the state in 1933. Correct?

D. Hedrick: They reconstructed three houses, as well, three demonstration projects to show the community how strong that the state should invest some money and reconstruct the buildings.

Dirksen: Right.

D. Hedrick: My supervisor told me, "It does not belong to the community, it belongs to the State," I thought it was probably a little short-sighted. The community played a role in the past with reconstruction, and they would again play a part in getting money to maintain the facility and to extend programming. Really, the impetus for many to tell the Chamber of Commerce and the State that I wanted to start a support group was that we had so many projects on the horizon. I knew from past experience that they could spend a lot of money and it would be an opportunity for us to get some money for improvement projects and keep it for New Salem. Without the support group, it would go to the General Fund, which had been done in the past. Prior to my arrival, there was a major Hollywood movie called *The Awakening Land* with Elizabeth Montgomery.

Dirksen: When?

D. Hedrick: It was in the early '70's. It had been prior to my arrival. They had a major impact on the village. I mean, they tore up roads and the burned half of the Rutledge Tavern down. They ended up paying the State tens of thousands of dollars if not hundreds, I don't know how much. I just heard rumors that a lot of money was paid to the State and New Salem didn't see much of it. So I saw this filming project on the horizon. It wasn't a major film, but I knew it would be an opportunity to generate some money and keep it for New Salem projects. So I

thought, I've got to get this thing incorporated soon. That's what stirred me to do it when I did it.

We were able to raise a little money. We raised money through membership and through various projects like the building projects. We had several fundraisers. The money went not only for special events. State funding is always sporadic. Sometimes we have a lot, though we didn't think it was a lot, and sometimes we had less. Sometimes we had to cut back special events. About that time we had a cut-back and we had to cut some money out of the budget. The Lincoln League agreed to fund some of the special events. In fact, they funded them all. They funded all the out-of-pocket expenses for the special events, which allowed us to not only maintain the events but to add events. We added a lot of events over the years.

Dirksen: Such as? What kind of events? Events, what kind?

D. Hedrick: What kind of events? Well, when I came to New Salem, we had one event; it was called the New Salem Christmas. We ended up with a Summerfest, too, which was known as a Corn Boil, and it always happened about the time sweet corn was ready, so we'd bring in two hundred ears of corn, put it in a kettle and boil it and give it away. People loved it. We had a storytelling event, we had a candlelight tour, we had a bluegrass—called a traditional music festival—but it ended up being more bluegrass, which turned out to be a huge event. Eventually when we had the outdoor theater, we moved it to the outdoor theater and we had a night show Friday and Saturday nights. We had an art contest and art shows. We had lots of one-day events.

M. Hedrick: Quilt show.

D. Hedrick: Quilters? Oh, yeah, quilt show, big quilt show. We had a fiber arts fair, spinning and weaving.

Dirksen: A lot. So, we're going to wrap up about the Lincoln League; David's going to say a few more things about that. Then we're going to move on to *Looking for Lincoln*.

D. Hedrick: The Lincoln League raised money for us in a lot of ways. They also appropriated money every year to allow us to hire interns.

Dirksen: Okay.

D. Hedrick: It started out with two. I think we ended up with ten each year through Illinois College. We developed a relationship with Illinois College through Dick Taylor and Jim Davis. Jim Davis is a professor of history at Illinois College. Dick Taylor was a historian for the agency. He nurtured that relationship with Jim Davis. It eventually got to the point where Jim Davis was helping us with some volunteer training, staff training. It got to the point of talking joint ventures. We ended up with a meeting with Dean Olds of Illinois College and Jim Davis and

Dick Taylor and myself and worked out a plan where we would hire interns from Illinois College students. The interns: some were history, some were education, some were environmental sciences. Environmental sciences students were naturalists who did walking tours and the campground programs for the campers. History majors were interpreters in the historic village. The education majors were counselors at our day camp. We developed a Pioneer Life Day Camp with Illinois College. Again, this would not have been possible without the Lincoln League because the Lincoln League allowed us to apply for grants at Illinois College. It also allowed us to incorporate money, to receive and incorporate money. The day camp had a weekly fee. We had kids every week in different age groups. The fees would go back to Illinois College.

Dirksen: When did the camp start? That's what we need to know.

D. Hedrick: The Lincoln League also…

Dirksen: When did the camp start?

D. Hedrick: What year?

Dirksen: About.

D. Hedrick: I'm not sure.

Dirksen: Okay.

D. Hedrick: I can find out.

Dirksen: Okay. That's all right.

D. Hedrick: We ran the day camp out of the Wagon Wheel, the log building at the park entrance. It was a great facility because it's a log house. We had recreational activities there, plus craft activities. Plus they'd walk right up to the village on the trail and work in the village. They did all kinds of activities: feeding the animals, caring for the animals and currying the animals, carrying water for livestock, gathering the eggs, working with flax and wool on the spinning wheels, dipping candles. I was really proud of the program and it couldn't have been done without the Lincoln League and Illinois College. We just weren't set up to do it. Illinois College provided the camp director. They provided two vans that we used to pick the kids up in the mornings and deliver them back in the evenings. Take them out to New Salem for the day. It really was a wonderful program. It is still going on but to a lesser extent. We were running it all summer.

The older camp we called junior interpreters, junior high and high school students who spent more time in the village and did more in history training. They actually worked in the village as interpreters, which worked out great because most of our volunteers were older people who had time to do that, so this added youth to the interpretive program.

Dirksen: A different dimension. Okay, this camp that David was talking about is fabulous and it is still ongoing, but not to the extent as he said. It was when he was there. But now we are going to shift gears a little bit and go to some of the reasons, not only about the Lincoln League and what they have done, but when this happened as far as becoming part of the agency. So Dave is going to talk about Governor Thompson and the creation of the IHPA (Illinois Historic Preservation Agency).

D. Hedrick: Over the years I worked for the Department of Conservation and the Department of Natural Resources. When I went to New Salem, New Salem had been managed by the Department of Natural Resources. I was very comfortable with the arrangement and I started hearing rumors that we might be going to a new agency called the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. I thought, "This is not good."

Dirksen: Why?

D. Hedrick: I guess it was fear of the unknown. I was very comfortable where I was. I knew the supervisors. And suddenly [I] was going to have a new agency. I was brought to New Salem because of my park experiences and my park training. I'd spent about four or five years getting the park in what I considered a much better shape and here we're going to an historic preservation agency. My training was not history. I wasn't a historian. I was very skeptical that I might not fit in too well. Over the years I had come to trust Dick Taylor. Dick Taylor was a historian with the agency, in the Department of Natural Resources. He made many suggestions which I always followed up on, always accepted his suggestions. I felt several head managers did not welcome Dick's involvement. They took it as a threat. I, on the other hand, saw it as my saving grace. (Dirksen chuckles) Not being a historian, I could rely on Dick Taylor. He made many suggestions on interpretive programs and the history program. He led staff training one day a week. One morning a week we had an hour or two of usually some kind of book review, a book study, some historical piece in our visitor center, and this went on for years. That was a wonderful experience for me as well as the other interpreters. He brought great insights into our program and we relied on Dick and his associate, Mark Johnson, for that assistance. So we're thinking about going into a new agency and I'm thinking, I've been here four or five years and I told my friends when I went to New Salem I probably wouldn't stay there very long because of the history. I'm not a historian. While they needed a park guy at the time, I figured I would outgrow that and they would need a historian. Among our colleagues, we park guys were called parkys (Dirksen laughs). I was a parky, not a historian. Anyhow, Governor Thompson was suggesting a new agency. He created a new agency called the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

Dirksen: And this was in 1985?

D. Hedrick: 1985. I'm thinking I need to find a park to transfer to. There weren't any parks open that appealed to me at the time, so I thought I'll just ride this out a little while to see what happens. It wasn't long that I realized Jim Thompson had great

vision. He was able to create an environment where we could apply for capital money and operating money. We certainly had more money than we ever had before. At the time we didn't know they were the good years, but it really was. During that period we had many infrastructure improvements: water lines, sewer lines, new buildings, buildings were repaired. At New Salem we had ninety buildings.

Dirksen: Wow.

D. Hedrick: Most of them are small. Some of them are just one room, but there are ninety structures, many of which needed replacement logs. Log buildings were never intended to last forever. They were, at most, temporary buildings and here we were, building ninety temporary buildings. Most of them are temporary. So a lot of them needed work. During Thompson's administration, we got lots of money.

Dirksen: Okay, while you are a parky, but you did oversee, though, the design and the historic programs?

D. Hedrick: The design: probably the input was Bob Coomer, Dick Taylor and myself. We would develop a list of what our needs were, the worst buildings, the worst and the major needs. I remember one year I was so proud of myself, I had over a hundred capital project requests.

Dirksen: (laughs) Oh, my gosh.

D. Hedrick: When in the past we maybe had one or two. In those years, we might get, and some were minor, I mean, ten thousand dollar projects. Some were fifty thousand dollar projects. We've got a bunch of them. It was happening because of the new agency, the Historic Preservation Agency that Jim Thompson, Governor Thompson created, that allowed us to access more money. When we were part of the Department of Natural Resources, we were competing with the duck hunters, the fur trappers, the natural areas, the state parks, and recreation areas. We had parks that had swimming pools. With the state park lodges, we were competing with that little money and we were always getting the short end of the stick. Jim Thompson saw that. I was very wrong in my assumption that we were going to get short-changed. So when we started getting all this money I'm thinking this might be a good place to stay. (Dirksen chuckles) The first big project that happened was the visitor center. I remember the dedication for the visitor center. Governor Thompson was there. Julie Cellini and the board of directors were there. It was one of the happiest days of my life.

Dirksen: What year?

D. Hedrick: I'm not sure. I'll have to look.

Dirksen; Okay. Alright.

D. Hedrick: The visitor center was something that had been talked about forever and there was not much of a chance of us getting a visitor center prior to the Historic Preservation Agency. The visitor center would be a place where we could have exhibits. It would provide an orientation as to what people are going to see. Prior to that, people got out of their car or off the tour bus, walked through the village without any kind of explanation of why we're there. So it gave us a great place for an orientation show, employed exhibits to demonstrate and explain why the village was reconstructed and what happened there. There were times…

Dirksen: When did the outdoor theater start then?

D. Hedrick: There were times when people, especially in the winter, would get out of their car and walk into the village and maybe see one interpreter, at the most or two. So the orientation show at the visitor center gave them a good orientation as to what they were about to see and some of the history associated even if they didn't encounter any staff or volunteers. In the summer, we had lots of volunteers and more staff. During that period of the Thompson administration, we had lots of interpreters, lots of seasonal staff and some of the interns. We had a few interns through the state, but mostly through Illinois College. So the visitor center was a great addition, but also allowed us…

Well, first of all, the state financed the visitor center but it did not provide money for an orientation show or exhibits. The Lincoln League stepped forward and they funded the orientation show which was fifty thousand dollars. They funded the exhibits. I forget how much money, it may talk about it in here. But that gave us a great excuse to have fundraisers. The Lincoln League held several fundraisers, one of which was a high dollar, for us fifty dollars a person. We had a music show that was all volunteer. We brought in lots of people that volunteered to do the show. So again, it gave the local people an opportunity to express their support for New Salem. They came, they bought tickets, they contributed. We had silent auctions.

The Lincoln League also, over the years, developed a reputation for supporting New Salem and I was able to lobby my supervisor, Bob Coomer: instead of the gift shops being run by Ralph Newman, who lived in Chicago, that it should be run by a support group and the money, the profits, be put back into the programs. That was kind of a hard sell because Newman was politically associated with every governor; he contributed money to both parties. His office for the New Salem operation was in the John Hancock Building in Chicago. I mean, he lived in the John Hancock Building and his office for the New Salem operation was in the office building. We initially got rid of him when the state contract expired and the contract went to the New Salem Lincoln League. The New Salem Lincoln League then took over what used to be the museum to what became the New Salem Museum Store, which carried crafts and hand-made items that would be in character with New Salem. I use that term pretty freely in character with New Salem.

Dirksen: It makes sense.

D. Hedrick: We wanted to feature items made at New Salem and gave our volunteers a chance to demonstrate broom making, demonstrate what we call crafts today but were trades during the New Salem years. People worked in the blacksmith shop and made items that they could donate to the Lincoln League that could be sold in the gift shop and the profits go back to the organization. Once a year I'd submit a budget request for support for New Salem. The treasurer would tell me how much money they had in their bank and I'd request a hundred percent of it. (Dirksen laughs) Every year they'd give us, appropriate a hundred percent.

Dirksen: Every year?

D. Hedrick: Every year, but we were only spending money we had in the bank. Unlike the state, we didn't spend money we think we're going to get this year. So each year they would raise some more money and put it in the bank and the next year I'd request it all. It was very tricky. (Dirksen laughs) It wasn't an automatic spend on the appropriations. Sometime the board would have suggestions, other ideas or a change in priorities and I was very sympathetic to their input, but at the end, we got a hundred percent of the money. One of those requests one year was for a tourist radio station. We applied for a grant through the New Salem Lincoln League. I forget who it was with, it was like for twenty thousand dollars, for a tourist radio station and we received the grant. We have two transmit towers: one in Athens, one in New Salem to transmit tourist radio. If you go on the highway, you'll see a sign that says "Turn Your Radio" and it should be operating today. Of course I can't hear it because I am now deaf. (Dirksen chuckles) We would broadcast all the activities at New Salem plus there was a sister organization called the Menard County Tourism Council which ended up taking it over. They are responsible for the broadcast. We had a broadcast booth at New Salem for many years. We would broadcast ourselves, you know, the daily or weekly activities. It is now at Ben Kiningham's house, who is a member of the tourism council. He was retired from being a professional radio announcer and he'd broadcast from his house on the phone line. So that's an example of how the community involvement with New Salem and New Salem Lincoln League was instrumental. I suggested to the League there was monthly costs associated with the radio station. I think it's probably a couple thousand dollars a year for the upkeep of the radio station and every year the Lincoln League appropriates the money to support that program. It not only supports New Salem but the community. So it's a good marriage between the New Salem Lincoln League and the community.

Dirksen: Dave is going to focus his remarks now on the visitor's center, the exhibits and the outdoor theater, which is very important to New Salem.

Hedrick: In the visitor's center, and the auditorium in the visitor's center, we had the opportunity to not only have the orientation show, but to do shows in the evening on certain days. At the time there had been an outdoor theater in New Salem

since about 1935. When the visitor's center was built, we had to remove the old dilapidated theater and its seating. At the time the visitor center was built, the only venue we had for a theater was outdoors. For the first couple of years that we had the visitor's center, the outdoor theater moved indoors. So instead of an outdoor theater, we had Theatre in the Park moved indoors. We also had an auditorium because it was set up for a movie. We didn't have any theater lights or theater sound system. The Lincoln League provided the money for a sound system for the indoor theater and for theater lights. If you look in the theater today, you'll see a pipe grid throughout the indoor theater. Two New Salem carpenters and I installed all that pipe in the ceiling. We set up scaffolding and we built that scaffolding, built that grid, which is massive. Whenever we could get some used theater lights from the state surplus, we hung the lights. In the meantime, through various fundraisers, we raised money for a new sound system and new theater lights. We raised it through the Lincoln League and we had some state appropriated money. We were able to have a really state-of-the-art sound system and lighting system in the indoor theater during that period. Two years after the visitor center was built we were able to get state funding for an outdoor theater. What you see today is the result of that state funding. The state also funded money for the theater lighting and sound system outdoors. Again, it was funding the visitor center and the physical plant and the outdoor theater that we were able to get through the Historic Preservation Agency and through the support of the Lincoln League and the community. So the community was 100% behind the State at this point. In a few years we went from a very suspicious feeling in the community to one that encouraged the State to spend money at New Salem and to make improvements.

Dirksen: What about the exhibits?

D. Hedrick: The exhibits have evolved over the years. When I came to New Salem, the exhibits was in what we now call the Museum Store. It was called the New Salem Museum. The New Salem Museum was the first building ever built at New Salem before they even reconstructed the cabins. It was the park headquarters. It was where the custodian, who was the superintendent—it was called a custodian at that time—it was where he worked out of and that's where all the staff worked out of and upstairs was the museum. It was all exhibits fabricated from artifacts that the Old Salem Lincoln League had gathered. When the visitor center was built, there was no money for exhibits, so the Lincoln League provided money to buy exhibits. The Lincoln League did not give the money to the state, but paid the money directly to the vendors. At the time the Historic Preservation Agency had a curator by the name of Jim Allen. Jim was very artistic. He was the mastermind behind the exhibits at New Salem. Jim Allen had previously worked with the Department of Natural Resources and originally with the Department of Conservation and had a long history with people that worked with our agency. He designed exhibits and he would find vendors that could build exhibits and do the artwork. The Lincoln League paid the bills. It worked out very well. It worked out very well for the amount of money that the Lincoln League had to spend. Eventually the State appropriated more

money and some of the exhibits were updated and improved. What you see today were a combination of the New Salem Lincoln League exhibits and the State of Illinois' funded exhibits.

Dirksen: Okay, now we are going to move on, again, with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and the various directors that Dave has worked with.

D. Hedrick: My tenure with the state has been with several departments and directors. Originally I was hired in 1974 by the Department of Conservation to manage Jubilee College State Park. My supervisor at the time and the guy that hired me was Jerry McDonald. I don't remember how long he worked there, but eventually, probably within a year, he was replaced by Jerry Schaefer who was regional director in Rock Falls, Illinois. When I went to New Salem in 1979 my supervisor was Keith Skully and at that time we still worked for the Department of Conservation. After about a year, he was replaced by Bob Coomer, and Coomer was the Director of Historic Sites. Through budget cuts, all the regional historians were laid off. Bob was hired as superintendent… actually he was hired as Superintendent of Historic Sites and he was superintendent at the time the regional historians were laid off. Over time, before 1985 the Department of Natural Resources was created out of the Department of Conservation. Bob Coomer and I—at that time we worked in New Salem—was governed by the Department of Natural Resources. In 1985, the Historic Preservation Agency was created by Governor Thompson. Bob Coomer was still my supervisor and the director at that time was David Kinney, who had been the Director of the Department of Conservation, the Department of Natural Resources. (Dirksen chuckles) David Kinney was hired as director and the Historic Preservation Agency was given a board of directors, which was something new.

Dirksen: Board of Trustees.

D. Hedrick: Back in the old days of the Department of Conservation and the Department of Natural Resources, there was no board of directors that really governed. I think there was an advisory board directors, but we never heard from them or knew them. David Kinney was appointed Director of the Historic Preservation Agency and also the board of directors, which I think there was kind of a power struggle. Ultimately, David Kinney was let go and the board of directors were running the thing. The board of directors appointed Mike Devine.

Dirksen: It was not the board of directors, but the board of trustees.

D. Hedrick: There were two local ladies who were on the board of trustees that were very instrumental in New Salem and the agency and seemed to be particularly interested in New Salem. One was Julie Cellini and the other was Sally Schaumbacher. Back in the old days when the Federated Junior Women's Club of Springfield helped us with the annual Christmas event, Sally Schaumbacher was a volunteer. Sally used to come out and be a volunteer at the New Salem Christmas. So she knew a little bit about New Salem and seemed very interested

in New Salem. Julie Cellini was also very interested in New Salem. They hired Mike Devine as director. I'm not sure, Mike Devine, I think was with the State Historical Library prior to that. He came aboard as Director of the Historic Preservation Agency and still the State Historical Library. Is that the right term?

Dirksen: Uh huh.

D. Hedrick: I'm not sure when, but eventually he was replaced by Susan Mogerman. Susan Mogerman was very involved with New Salem.

Dirksen: That was in 1991. Okay, so there was Susan Mogerman and then Maynard Crossland and then Bob Coomer. Go ahead.

D. Hedrick: Susan was very much instrumental in the activities of New Salem and seemed to be involved in the planning of the projects and the activities. I had more interaction with Susan Mogerman than any director before her. Eventually Maynard Crossland became director. The director I had the most interaction with was Bob Coomer, who was my supervisor directly for twenty-some years and then he became director.

Dirksen: Of the agency.

D. Hedrick: Bob Coomer was a wonderful supervisor to me. He seemed to have a lot of trust in me and I didn't bother him with the small details. I never bothered him unless it was something I thought he needed to know or I needed advice. I made a lot of decisions at the local level and he seemed to accept that. As an example: one day the boiler in the visitor center went out and I called in the Petersburg Plumbing and Heating, which installed the system. The boiler had cracked. It was a major, major beast, as big as a bus. A boiler's made like a sandwich with various pieces bolted together with bolts ten feet long. The technicians split it apart and said one of the sections is broke. This was morning when it went out. By noon they'd tore it apart. You need a boiler section. They got on the phone and found one in Michigan. Of course, it would be a few days before we got it. I said, "I'll go get it." I got on the phone. They arranged for the night guy to load it for me. I got in the truck. I went to Michigan, picked it up, got it back that night. The next morning, they had it installed. By noon the next day we're back in business. I never told Bob about it. (Dirksen laughs) I just happened in conversation one day later I talked about the boiler. I told him the story and he said you know, he wished he had more managers like that. You know, I didn't call him to say my boiler's down, what do I do?

Dirksen: No, go ahead.

D. Hedrick: So he said, when it comes to evaluation time, remind me of that story. Well, I never did.

Dirksen: I love the story.

D. Hedrick: I thought he showed trust in me and I didn't put him in situations where I had to tell him things that he didn't need to know. For example: I didn't tell him things that he didn't have to deal with. If I told him, I knew he'd have to deal with it. One day the Menard County Sheriff called me and said we're concerned for your safety and we think you should be. Well, he said, "I want you to come see me," which is never good. I went in to see him and he said, "We're concerned for your safety and we think you should carry a gun."

Dirksen: Why?

D. Hedrick: Sometimes as a manager, you have to deal with people that are dangerous, especially at a park situation. In a state park, you have people hanging around for reasons that you don't have in a normal museum. He had reason to believe a very dangerous individual was out to get me. He said, "We think we should arm you and we can do it. We're going to make you a deputy and we're going to send you to police training." I never told Bob that. I never told him that story. They sent me to a week's police firearm training, with all kinds of training, and I was deputized. You have to remember, I'm the site security after hours. I live on-site. If an alarm goes off—many alarms in many buildings—goes off at two in the morning, I go out to check it out. It was that way to set somebody up. So I'm deputized. I'm carrying a firearm and I never told, I mean, it's concealed, they didn't know it. I'm also given a police radio. The sheriff gave me a two-way radio. So when an alarm goes off and I go out after hours, I radio the dispatcher and tell him I'm responding to the visitor's center, the alarm's going off. The dispatcher notifies the deputy on duty and they meet me there, but I'm there first, but, you know, I'm armed. It's still dangerous. So that's the kind of thing I didn't bother Bob about the details. I knew he would have to deal with it. He'd have to condone it or deny me, which neither one he'd want to do, so I never told. I think, he knew I was deputized eventually, because I'd see him. As part of the system, I had to ride one day a month to a couple of shifts a month with a deputy and they'd see me at a public place. I'd be outfitted in a police uniform. So he knew I was deputized, but I never really told him the whole set-up. (Dirksen chuckles)

Dirksen: Okay. We know how you adjusted to Bob Coomer, which was sometimes by not telling him everything, which I love—I love this story—but how did you adjust to each of the previous directors' management and also, what happened with the governor's office once you became part of IHPA?

D. Hedrick: I worked for several directors. Some were somewhat involved with New Salem, but most of them we didn't deal with too much. David Kinney was the first director. He actually joined our volunteer program. We started a volunteer program. He wanted to support it and he'd come out and work in the gardens and be an interpreter, a volunteer interpreter. I was very appreciative of his willingness to do that. He'd come out on weekends and tool around the garden. Mike Devine, I didn't have much interaction with. In fact, I can say I probably didn't have any interaction with Mike Devine. Maynard Crossland was involved

with several projects and he showed a lot of interest in New Salem. Susan Mogerman had probably the most involvement over the years with the visitor center and the restaurant development and the infrastructure improvements. She was involved with a lot of that and provided direction and suggestions. Of course, with the Lincoln League involvement, she had to endorse their activity and involvement at the site and she was very willing to do that. The person I dealt with most was Bob Coomer. He was probably the shortest tenure of director but the longest period of direct involvement because he was my supervisor for many years. I had probably the closest relationship with Bob Coomer and Susan Mogerman. Susan was kind of a non-nonsense director who, tell me your problems and let me see what I can do. Bob worked behind the scenes and, as I said before, I didn't bother him with the minor details, but whenever there was a public issue or a need, I let him know and he was very responsive to that need.

Dirksen: He's a great guy, yep, I agree. Okay. How has IHPA changed since you started with the agency?

D. Hedrick: IHPA was changing the delivery of services. I think, from the standpoint of the budget, they have been limited a great deal in recent years. I was very fortunate to be able to work for the agency when there was money available and willingness to spend money at New Salem. My job originally, when I came to New Salem, was to get the park property in order. That happened rather quickly because of the money that was appropriated and the emphasis given to that. Eventually, it evolved into additional programs and through the Lincoln League and through state resources, we were able to add a lot of special events and educational programs. So I was more involved with the planning and implementation of programs. Eventually, my job was people management, staff management. When I started it was more on-the-grounds improvement and management. Eventually it became more of a people manager.

Dirksen: I agree. I totally agree. So, what do you see that were the agency strengths and weaknesses?

D. Hedrick: The agency has always been blessed with very dedicated people. I look back over the years when we first started, one of the first capital coordinators was Ed Keating. We had district historians and Ed Keating were the people who designed all the capital improvement projects that guided us to where the need was; they would guide us to what the solution might be and how to get the money. We had very dedicated people like Ed Keating, Jim Allen, and the district historians like Ron Nelson. Over the years, as I mentioned before, Dick Taylor and Mark Johnson were the brains behind the interpretive programming. If it hadn't been for them, I wouldn't have survived at New Salem nearly as long as I did. I chose to leave after thirty-five years with the state and went to work for the Nature Conservancy. I had hoped to work there for many years, but my health failed and I had to resign. I look back on the Historic Preservation Agency as the golden years of my career. Of all the agencies I worked for, Historic Preservation Agency was the place that allowed us to really shine and allowed us to develop an

association with a support group. I haven't mentioned the riverboat. During the last few years, we built a replica of the riverboat that Lincoln came down the Sangamon River on. The Lincoln League helped us get money and the state helped us get money. The agency allowed us to build a boat and put it on the river. I'm not sure all agencies would do that. I mean there's some risk involved. (Dirksen chuckles) We put staff on the river and we floated this thing up and down the river for a summer. It was a wonderful project. It was great exposure for New Salem and the volunteers and the staff that were associated with it. It was a great project. It was a fun project. I look back, there were a lot of those fun projects that the Historic Preservation Agency allowed us the freedom, and I guess ultimately the freedom came from Bob Coomer, because he was the one that would allow us to do this. A lot of agencies, a lot of supervisors probably would not have allowed us to venture into some of these projects. We had people firing historic firearms in the village at special events. We had people butchering hogs in front of the public.

Dirksen: Right. I've seen all that. You had the oxen, you know, turning the wheels and pulling.

D. Hedrick: We had animals on an incline wheel, a treadmill. We had animals in the village demonstrating pulling wagons. We had one terrible accident in the village with animals where a visitor got gored with a horn of an oxen, a small child. It was one of the first years I was at New Salem and I thought, "Man, this is it. Never again." But we implemented some safety precautions that we were able to continue doing that kind of activity. But they gave us the freedom to do that.

Dirksen: One more question. If you could go back to the beginning of your career, how would you change it?

D. Hedrick: I know it sounds probably contrite to say I wouldn't change a lot, but I really wouldn't. It's been a wonderful experience. I've very indebted to the State of Illinois, the Historic Preservation Agency and everybody that I've worked for in that period. If I had it to change, I would probably be a little more tolerant to some people. The management of people in my case was learn by trial and error. I learned a lot in the thirty-five years I worked with the state. I managed a lot of people. In the early years… I look back, I made some mistakes that I'd given people a little more credit. I think the advice I'd give to a young person is to trust your subordinates until they prove you wrong. Sometimes I was a little bit short on that end, but I've had some great assistants over the years and without fail, they've made me look good. I'm very indebted to the directors of the trustees of the Historic Preservation Agency. Julie Cellini, specifically. She's very supportive in an indirect way for many years. Whenever there was an event or activity that we requested her to help with, she was always anxious to come and show her support. Quite honestly, I feel very fortunate to have been able to work for the Historic Preservation Agency in the State of Illinois. When I visited the site when I was about nine years old, I had never dreamed I would spend thirty

years of my life at New Salem in the role that I eventually endured. It was a great experience.

Dirksen: New Salem was lucky. New Salem was lucky to have you. Yep. In closing, one of the things that David did share with me is that not only did they live here because he loved his job and he and Mary loved living here with the people and everything with the community, but he was, in fact, chosen First Citizen of Petersburg several years ago. He doesn't quite know what the date was, but here he was. What a wonderful closing for such an outstanding career.

(End of Session #2)