**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH**

**TYRONE BRANDYBURG HARPERS FERRY, WEST VIRGINIA**

**MARCH 16, 2020**

INTERVIEWED BY DEBORAH HARVEY

AUDIO FILE #BRVB031620 – TYRONE BRANDYBURG

# EDITORIAL NOTE

This document is a rendering of the oral history interview as transcribed by the interviewer from the audio recording. Although effort was made to provide a verbatim transcription, for easier reading of the transcript, verbal pauses, repetitions of words, and encouraging words from the interviewer were omitted. The resulting oral history interview transcript was provided to the informant for review and, if necessary, correction. Mr. Brandyburg made no modifications to the draft transcript. For the original interview, please refer to the audio file.

# ABSTRACT

Mr. Tyrone Brandyburg discusses his work as Chief of Interpretation for Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site between 1997 and 2000. He describes the trajectory of his career with the National Park Service prior to being assigned to Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site as well as his later assignments up to the present one at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Mr. Brandyburg relates some details concerning planning for the park, such as the Value Analysis Study, a planning tool in its infancy at the time, for exhibits. He describes in detail discussions and decisions made concerning interpretation of the site, including the uses to which various rooms should be put. Mr. Brandyburg also describes how interpretation of the park operated during his tenure while the park administrative office was located in the old Post Office and how staff dealt with visitors there. He offers his opinion of how Cheryl Brown Henderson and the Brown Foundation viewed the purpose of the park and how the citizens of Topeka viewed the park. Mr. Brandyburg also discussed his impression of what the Brown Foundation was expected to do and what it did for the park in exchange for the annual funds the Brown Foundation received from the National Park Service. He describes the difficulties with placement of the informational signage for the park along the interstate. Mr. Brandyburg explains the purpose of holding a Grand Opening in 1998 even though the building was not rehabilitated, and the site was not opened. He briefly describes the impact of budget on the early efforts to get the park opened and address visitor needs. He discusses challenges to getting curriculum guides produced by the Brown Foundation to meet standards set by the National Park Service.

# PERSONS MENTIONED

Michael Allen, George Washington Carver, Booker T. Washington, K.G. Jones, Bessie Sherman, Linda Brown, Cheryl Brown Henderson, Latrelle, Treva Sykes, Sändra Washington, Ray Harper, Tarona [Armstrong], Carl Sandburg.



Tyrone Brandyburg, 2020

# ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH

**TYRONE BRANDYBURG**

Interviewer: This oral history interview is for the Administrative History of the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site in Topeka, Kansas. The interviewer is Deborah Harvey, with Outside The Box, on behalf of the Midwest Regional Office of the National Park Service. Interviewed today is Tyrone Brandyburg, former Chief of Interpretation at Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site and currently Superintendent at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. The date is March 16, [2020]. The interview takes place at headquarters of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

So, Mr. Brandyburg, as I’m sure you know, the purpose of an Administrative History is to document the development of a unit of the National Park System. Oral histories are one way to get information that might not otherwise be available from documentary evidence. We try to get as much information as we can from as many different perspectives as possible in order to craft a robust narrative of the developmental history of the park. This will be used by future park administrators to inform their decisions as they navigate future developments. However, I should inform you that not all the information we gather will be included in the final Administrative History. That depends on how the information advances our understanding of park development. But I do want to tell you that we appreciate that you are giving your time to share your experiences of the development of Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site to further this project.

So, I’m going to start with the easy question. I need you to state your full name and spell your first and last names.

Brandyburg: My full name is Hubert Tyrone Brandyburg, and that’s H-U-B-E-R-T T-Y-R-O-N-E B-R-A-N- D-Y-B-U-R-G.

Interviewer: Okay. Great! You did very well at that. Brandyburg: First one.

Interviewer: So, the first thing we’re going to do is, we’re going to talk about your career with the National Park Service. So, when did you first – and we’re going to move to Brown v. Board, as we go. So, when did you start with the National Park Service?

Brandyburg: Started back in 1982. I’m sorry – ’80 – yeah, ’82? ’84? I’m sorry – ’84 as a student at South Carolina State College working for Fort Sumter National Monument – Fort Sumter – Fort Moultrie National Historical Park. And I was there – I came in as a co-op student, worked through the summer and through the winter, doing mostly interpretive work, not too much on the cultural resources side, but mostly doing interpretation and manage – managing the information desk. So.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you have – were you there because you were a college student? Brandyburg: Correct.

Interviewer: And you were studying –? Brandyburg: American History.

Interviewer: American History, okay. And so, how long were you there?

Brandyburg: I graduated in ’86 and became permanent part-time with Fort Sumter as a thirty-two- hour appointee. Within six months to eight months, that position changed from thirty- two hour to a full-time Park Ranger. And, at that point, I became a Park – full-time Park Ranger with the National Park Service. First permanent job.

Interviewer: Was it always your goal to become a National Park Service Ranger?

Brandyburg: No, it changed mid-year. When the – when the Park Service – when the – actually, I was at South Carolina State to get a degree in education, so it was more of education.

History was my major. But, when I started working for the National Park Service, my mind changed. Plus, there was also quite a bit of requirements that was needed to be an educator. South Carolina had sort of a strict, almost three-test phase to get into the – into the – into the field of education, and, because of where I came in, I was a little bit off course. And that’s not the total reason why, but that was part of what was going on at the time. I was – my sophomore year – and my advisor that I had was for students that were American History majors, not education majors. And so, the prerequisite as of – going into my Junior, Senior year was a lot more than what I had achieved, you know, through my Sophomore year. And so, I had made the decision of staying the course – because it was not just myself. There were several other students that were education majors that really didn’t have the right advisor and had the courses all lined up. And so, it was a decision to stay where I was, with education, or go into just history, with a minor in education. So, it was – so, what I did, was just flip-flop it. It was education major with a history minor, and I flipped it from a history minor – major to education minor. And so, that’s how I was able to go through – plus, I was going to summer school, because my – the way the co-op program worked at the time was, when you went through, you got a grade for the work that you did. So, in essence, I went summer, winter, fall. So, I went through summer and was able to get all my credits and everything I needed from the American History side within the four-year period. And so, because I had the Park Service waiting, I chose the National Park Service over education. And I also looked at it from the standpoint that a lot of the work that I was doing with the National Park Service was educating the public, just not in a classroom with a setting of, you know, twenty kids. It was twenty kids on a day, twenty Boy Scouts in a day, adults. And it was very interesting to me that the adults were so interested in American history, which really pulled me towards the National Park Service because, when you – I

– and, again, I – the work I did as far as an educator – and I – we did – we did – we had

– did – we did have a class – a field study class that I went to and worked with the young kids just to kind of, you know, develop curriculum, those kind of things. And the kids

were not very interested. And so, the Park Service became more and more appealing as I started going through this process of the education side versus the Park Service side. And so, with the – with this captured audience that I had at Fort Sumter and the folks that were very, very interested in history and wanting to know more and more and more, and I was providing that information, it became more of a clear path to be in the National Park Service than it was to stay within education. You know, that hunkering for me to be an educator was still there. I still was able to do those things. It was just through the Park Service.

Interviewer: Yes! Okay. So, then, we’re going to go through your career. Brandyburg: Yep.

Interviewer: What was next?

Brandyburg: After spending five years with Fort Sumter – even after – including – well, total of seven with the co-op program and then graduation, I got to the point where I was starting to, you know, wonder what – you know, what can – else can I do? And it just so happened that a co-worker of mine, Michael Allen, had a fellow who was also a fellow South Carolina State graduate – told me about an opportunity at Tuskegee. But, where another alumni of South Carolina State, who married the Chief Ranger, was looking for an Interpretive Ranger. So, transfer over into – at – into Tuskegee.

Interviewer: This was Tuskegee Airmen or Tuskegee – the other one?

Brandyburg: No, it was – Airmen was this mythical thing out there at that time. This was Tuskegee Institute.

Interviewer: Oh, Tuskegee Institute? Okay.

Bradyburg: Right. And so, I said, “What the heck. I’ll take a shot at it, because I’ve never been outside of the state of South Carolina from the standpoint of staying there.” I had, you know, done a lot of different things at Fort Sumter, when it comes to the history, and I also was – for me, was the African American experience. And we talk about the Fifty- Fourth out on Morris Island at Fort Sumter. We talk about other, little stuff, but it really wasn’t, to me, hitting the bigger, bigger pictures of the African American experience in America – American history. And so, Tuskegee became really, really appealing with the concept of George Washington Carver, Booker T. Washington, and then the opportunity to do something different because, at the time, the fellow alumni was running Eastern National, because, you know, Park Rangers used to run those programs and then do all the work associated with it. And that, to me, was also a stepping block, far as moving up in the organization. And so, at Tuskegee, that was that opportunity for me to run that organization – run that part of it as well, the bookstore – the Association, rather – and be a lead Ranger because that was part of the title – the position. So, I took it. So, I lateralled as a GS-9 over into Tuskegee, as a 2 – as a lead Park Ranger, Eastern National Coordinator. And I did a whole bunch of other stuff, too, because the Chief there was – liked what I was doing and liked the demeanor – work that I was doing, so he allowed me to do a lot of different things. So, I did a lot of the cultural resources. Within a year –

I would say, a year and a half – our Museum Specialist – or, Museum Tech at the time, was taking a sabbatical. And so that allowed me to come in and not only do the Park Ranger stuff, but also deal with collections, which I found very, very interesting, to go – you know, go through and look at Carver’s papers, Washington’s papers, the – his personal effects. Those all – those things – which really started my career path, in my mind, to change a little bit because, you know, I love interpretation. I love talking to people, but that was more – to me, more exciting to go out and deal with collections. And so, after the year two, when the Museum Specialist said he was not going to come back, I took on those jobs – that position and those jobs and eventually applied for the position and got the position and came – and moved from a GS-5 Park Ranger to a GS-7, subject to furlough, Museum Tech. And so, I took on those responsibilities for – oh, I would say about a year and a half. And I started looking at the work I was doing compared to other Museum Specialists, and I also looked at the level of work that needed to be done at the park. So, I got the desk audit. And, with this desk audit, I was able to move my position from a Museum Tech to a Museum Specialist, and went from a 7 to a 9, even though it was still subject to furlough. So, at that time, when I was at Tuskegee, I was in a great position because, not only was I doing the museum work, but I also did a little bit of interpretive work as well, because I became, sort of, the historian for Tuskegee. So, the interviews and those kind of things, I took care of those things.

Interviewer: You did that?

Brandyburg: Yeah, so it became pretty fun. Interviewer: Okay. So, how long were you at Tuskegee? Brandyburg: Seven years as well.

Interviewer: Wow! Okay, and then what did you do?

Brandyburg: After I left Tuskegee, I went to Booker T. Washington Birthplace. And that kind of happened similar to what happened with Fort Sumter. The Chief – or, the Superintendent for Booker T. Washington came to Tuskegee looking for an opportunity – or, to bring a Chief in that – he was kind of looking around, and my boss at the time, Mr. K.G. Jones, was the person that he came offering that position. And, at the time,

K.G. was not interested in moving, and he said, you know, “This is a guy that may be interested.” And he asked me.

Interviewer: Yeah. “Don’t take me, take him?” (Laughs) Brandyburg: Yeah. And that –

Interviewer: So, this was, like 1998?

Brandyburg: Yes. Let me see. Oh, no. ’90 – no, ’94. ’93. Yeah, ’93, ’94, because, what – because, what happened was, it was actually a detail, so it was later, closer to ’93 when this all happened. But there was an Acting detail for sixty days, and I went on that detail and went in as Chief of Interp for Booker T. Washington. And that was my first official leadership position, and it was first official as a Division Chief. All that took place at

Booker T. Washington. And so, I went for my sixty day. They eventually advertised the job as a permanent, full-time. I was really torn between doing what I really, really liked, which was collection management, because of my degree. You know, I didn’t have any aspirations of being Division Chief at the time, and so I – when I went there, I had a great time at Booker T. Washington. I had a very, very small staff, similar to what we had at Tuskegee, so – actually, it was much smaller – and so it was a – it was an opportunity. And so, I took advantage of that and applied and eventually got the position as Chief of Interp there, which, again, had some of the same responsibilities as I had at Tuskegee, which was some law enforcement, so we were, sort of, working with the local sheriff’s department or police department to deal with law enforcement side, plus, I was over the cultural resources side of it, because Booker T. Washington was a living farm. We would –

Interviewer: Was it, at that time? It was – it was – you were doing living history? Brandyburg: Yes, we did.

Interviewer: I know it was one of the first to have living history.

Brandyburg: Yeah, and, with that, we did a lot of re-enactment, because at that particular – that particular site, we talked about the enslaved people and how Booker T. Washington was able to move from a tobacco farm into the middle part of West Virginia, near Charleston, and actually work – his father – his step-father, buying for salt. And so, he was able to move himself from, I would say, some of the bondage of slavery because, as folks know, when the enslaved people were freed, they were allowed to move, but they didn’t know anywhere else to go. And so, only a few had places to go or knew of places to go, and Washington’s family was one of those things, which, I think, changed his whole mindset of, you know, what was out there, because folks were so –

Interviewer: What was possible?

Brandyburg: Right. Yeah. Absolutely. So, folks – the enslaved people were so encapsulated in this area that they didn’t have anything else.

Interviewer: Because they weren’t allowed to go anywhere. So, they were insular. That’s all they knew.

Brandyburg: Absolutely. And so, the other part of that, for me, was fascinating – was going from where he ended up to where he began and then tying that story in as well. So, it was pretty exciting to do that. And I was there at Booker T. Washington for two years? – according to that, three years? (Scans a shelf holding various mementos of parks in which he has served).

Interviewer: (Laughs) We’re checking out all the plaques on the wall that Tyrone has received, and they all have dates, so that’s handy.

Brandyburg: (Laughs) Yeah. Which was for three years. And that – during that three years, we were able to go ahead and talk a little bit more about slavery because I knew some of the

staff that were kind of hesitant about talking about the enslaved people or what it [unintelligible], but, again, that was the park.

Interviewer: That’s the story!

Brandyburg: Absolutely! So, you can’t run away from it. And so, we were able to kind of – I was able to kind of help them go into a little more, I would say, comfort zone with speaking it.

Because this happened, you know, a hundred – two hundred years ago, and we’re – people are – some people are still holding the grudges, but, for the most part, our job is to be neutral and tell the story. And getting folks to understand that was part of, I think, the biggest thing that I contributed there, other than a couple of exhibits and some other things, you know.

Interviewer: (Laughs) So, what did you do after you left Tuskegee – after you left Booker T. Washington?

Brandyburg: That’s where I happened upon my – Interviewer: You ended up at Brown?

Brandyburg: Yes. And, again, that was one of those things where I was at a meeting and having conversations with other Superintendents and other people around the country about what we were doing at Booker T. Washington, and Bessie Sherman talked to me a little bit about the opportunity of – oh, and, first of all, she heard what I said, and found that it was interesting that – and wanted to bring someone in that – because she had just gotten there, I think, to be Superintendent. And she was – so, she was trying to fill out her roster of folks that she wanted to bring in. So, she talked to me a little bit about transferring over to Brown v. Board.

Interviewer: Okay. And this is in about ’97 or ‘8?

Brandyburg: Yes. Yeah, it was – for some reason, I did a lot of traveling around October. So, I kind of remember a lot of my moves took place in the October time, so it was probably October of ’97 that I actually went in to – transferred over to Brown v. Board.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you went to the site in 1997 – or, you went to the park in 1997 under Bessie – Superintendent Sherman?

Brandyburg: Yes.

Interviewer: And, when you first saw – let’s say, when you first saw Monroe School, what did you think? What were – what was your first impression?

Brandyburg: I – my first impression was, “Wow! This is great! This is going to be fantastic!” Interviewer: It’s a fantastic building.

Brandyburg: Absolutely. And the potential for doing things were, to me, off the chart. And, actually, when we got there, they were starting that whole concept of figuring out what the interpretive story would be at Monroe School. So, not only did – I got there at a new site, which is rare for National Park Service employees, going to a new site that’s just up

and coming, but we were actually in the process of figuring out what we were going to do. They had just finished their GMP, which was great, because it kind of give us an overview.

Interviewer: So, you didn’t have any input into the GMP? Okay.

Brandyburg: No. And – but we were starting the Value Analysis process for the interpretive exhibits.

From what I gathered, that was the first time they were going to use Value Analysis.

Interviewer: I love Value Analysis! Brandyburg: I do too!

Interviewer: It’s a wonderful – it’s a wonderful method of making decisions.

Brandyburg: Yeah. Absolutely. And we were starting that first – we were one of the first parks, if not the first park, to use that method for our exhibits. And so, we were getting into that point of getting together –

Interviewer: Okay, so you were kind of – you were kind of beta testing Value Analysis, right? Brandyburg: On exhibits.

Interviewer: On exhibits? Okay.

Brandyburg: Yes. So we – with the Chief of Interp for the Region – and I can’t think of his name right now – that was one of the – our focal points, that we were bringing in the Value Analysis king – and I can’t remember his name, either – to come in and start doing – looking at a Value Analysis on the Monroe School, and how we’ll have people going in. Because we were looking at immersing people into the resource, meaning coming in, getting a feel of what “separate but equal” meant. That’s one of the concepts that we were looking at – in that direction. And that was our focal point around the Value Analysis.

Interviewer: Okay. So, I’d like to hear more about the decisions made during the Value Analysis about the interpretation that you can remember, because the Administrative History’s purpose is to document the decisions that led to the way the park is now. So, when you walk in, the first thing you see is the – well, the first thing I saw – was the “Colored” and “White” signs, and the principal’s office on the left and the bookstore on the right. And so, what were the – what were some of the options that you discussed about how to interpret that school?

Brandyburg: Well, we went in thinking about, again, immersing the visitor into the whole story of what “separate but equal” meant. We really was – you know, kind of started out broad, thinking, “Okay –”

Interviewer: How were you going to do that?

Brandyburg: Exactly. And what can we do, and how can we do it? And where it should be. Because we were also looking at the other school – and I can’t think of the name of it –

Interviewer: Sumner?

Brandyburg: Sumner School – as the opposite of Monroe School. And there was some effort and talk of, possibly, acquiring the Sumner School. But, again, that was still part of one of those big things and big ideas that we’re all looking at, trying to get that in and making the story so that, when you go through Brown v. Board, it was not just one little area, you had to see those separations. Because, as you guys – as you know, the Brown family – Linda Brown had to walk from one certain area to the next area – from her neighborhood to a different neighborhood.

Interviewer: Past a school!

Brandyburg: Correct. And so, what better way to tell that story is to have both schools – both schools and be able to move people from one to the other, because it’s all within that same neighborhood that was there. And so, that’s where we started. And then, of course, you know, with funding and people’s understanding of – at least, our understanding of how funding was working, we had to kind of narrow that down into, “Let’s talk about what we can do within the building.” And so, our concepts that we went to went into, “How can we have folks feel like, if they go into this building, they would know – okay, if you were an African American person, then you need to be on this side or that side. If you’re Caucasian or a white person, then you need to go on this side.” And then, reverse those roles so people can see what those – that area looked like. And the original concept that we had – at least, some of the concept that we came up with, was that, when you did that – when you walked in the door, then you would go a left or a right, and, within those left or right, you would go to – if you were African American or if you were white, then you would go into, “This is what the classrooms were,” and see – you could do some comparisons. Because – the reason why we wanted to do that is because, if you look at the segregation cases – there were five cases, and the Brown case was the one that was closest to equal out of all those cases. Because, if you look at the school system in South Carolina, for example, there was a big difference and discrepancy between classrooms.

Interviewer: And that’s why it was important to the – to the Brown v. Board case was because of the equality, more or less?

Brandyburg: Absolutely. And it went beyond just the physical equality. But, with Brown, you could show there were closer equalities there, but you still had this whole concept – mental concept of what segregation did to students overall. And that’s when we get to the dolls and those kind of things. Those – evaluating kids and the kids’ evaluation of themselves of what looks mostly – and what looked most like them, and what’s the prettiest, and those kind of things. But – so, we wanted to kind of at least – again, immerse visitors in that concept, have them come in, make some decisions as they go in, and then work their way around the whole concept of the story – because you’re talking about five different stories – and the five stories would be originated in each one of those classrooms, and as you come to end, and you –

Interviewer: So, you wanted to – you wanted to set up each – different classrooms to depict the situations in the five different stories?

Brandyburg: Correct. That’s where we, kind of, originally was going with that. And then, once you’ve gone through that whole process of looking at those five different – the differences across the country, because that’s what it really, kind of, boiled down to – because you have Virginia, of course, you have South Carolina – can’t remember all of the other states that were [unintelligible - laughter] – so excuse me with that part – but, when you look at it, and you go through it, then you had a place to come back and actually think about what this all means as it relates to present day. And that’s where our interpretive folks would come in and actually sit down and talk to the folks, where they can have a place that they can – folks can say, “I didn’t know this!” or “This is untrue.” Or whatever it was, they can come back and have a talk. And I’ve – I think we’re doing that a lot now, with a lot of our interpretation, where we just have a discussion and talk a little bit about what’s going on and what they understand is there. And that – for me, we’ve always done that. Even at Fort Sumter, when we were there, we talked about flags, and people were, like, “Oh, that’s the real – that’s not the real,” you know, “the Confederate flag! The one I saw is the one with the stars and bars!” And we’re, like, “No.” And have a conversation about those things. So, I’ve – we’ve always – to me, always done that kind of stuff. And, with the Brown story, we kind of emphasized it through locations and the areas within the building because it was so – such a great building that we could have people go through and actually come out and say –

Interviewer: Was it your intention that, when people walked in, based on their race, they would go – because of the signs, “White” and “Colored” – that they would literally – would go either whichever way?

Brandyburg: That’s correct.

Interviewer: Well, what if they wanted to go – switch it, and, for instance, white people take the “Colored” lane and go that way? How were you going to –?

Brandyburg: Well, we were – we were in such – we were in such a conceptual mode, we didn’t get into the other dynamics, which is that a white individual could go anywhere they want. And African Americans –

Interviewer: Okay – could only go – follow –?

Brandyburg: One way. Right. And it – and it, kind of, talks a little bit about – if you look at the deeper end of what Brown v. Board is all about, it always goes into segregation was only for African Americans. It was not for everyone, although some people have characterized it as segregation was that whites could not go to African American sites. And that’s nonsense. That’s never been the case. They could go anywhere they want. And so, we didn’t go – we didn’t dive into that, but just looking at – from the standpoint of, when you get in, what’s going to impact you’re the best, right then? We want people to be, like, “Okay, this is not – we’re not in Kansas anymore!” you know? (Laughter) But you are in Kansas! You know, that’s one of those things. I mean, you know, we’ve got to joke around with that a little bit. We want to share – you want to – you want people to really feel what segregation was to everyone, not just the African American, but also how they impact people that weren’t African Americans because, again, if you’re talking about

Kansas, you’re talking about communities that, you know, they may play together, but then they separated. And so that was the impact, too, because of – you know, I – which I can relate, because I went to an integrated school in high school, and we always had classes and played sports together, but we never went to prom together. Which is interesting, right?

Interviewer: Right. Okay, I grew up in Illinois.

Brandyburg: Yeah, and I’m from South Carolina, so – but, again, to me, that was always a question – even, you know, you got –

Interviewer: “Why is this?”

Brandyburg: Yeah. And, you – and, really, the questions really started in seventh and eighth grade, when people get –

Interviewer: When they start having the dances?

Brandyburg: Yeah. Exactly. So, it – you know, it – this, to me, was, kind of, near and dear, too, to my heart because, again, it was one of those things that I kind of experienced. And we always think about how we experienced segregation in this – ‘40s, ‘50s, ‘60s, but this was the ‘80s. And it happened. And, you know, it’s just, like, “Okay, they –”

Interviewer: And, for some people, it still is happening. Is that weird or what? Brandyburg: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Now, when you were doing the interpretation, I assume that you interacted with the Brown Foundation and Cheryl Brown Henderson?

Brandyburg: Correct. Yes.

Interviewer: Did you have meetings with her? Can you explain to me what she wanted – how she wanted to interpret the school? I – as I understand, it was different from how the Park Service wanted to interpret the school.

Brandyburg: Well, that’s kind of interesting because, at that moment, we were going through the planning phase, and she was a part of – and she was the rep for the Brown family – the Foundation and the family. She was – she was going – mostly wanting the process to get started, okay, because it was a timeline kind of thing. They’d been working years and years to move this forward, and the Park Service wasn’t moving fast enough, so she wanted something to happen. So, I got there at a time where, when we were doing Value Analysis and putting all this stuff together, she was on board with, you know, “Let’s come up with these ideas. Let’s come up with these concepts. Let’s make it interactive.” She did emphasize that she did not want this to be “the Brown Story.” She wanted all five stories to be a part of this and not just be her family, because, again, there was – there was some concepts going on that they were – their family was more important than the other families that were involved, and so – and that was not from her.

Interviewer: So, was that – that was not from her, but that was from, maybe – was that the community was thinking –?

Brandyburg: The communities outside of Kansas. Again, you’re talking about five different, varied locations, including the Browns – including Kansas. The Kansas site gets more publicity. It’s the one that has the –

Interviewer: Okay. Because it IS the site?

Brandyburg: Yeah. And that’s the one that has the National Park in it. So, there was a little bit of, you know, rumble about how these other sites were not being fully represented in this story.

Interviewer: They felt that way?

Brandyburg: Yes. And so, Cheryl would always emphasize, at least to me, “We need to make sure we are more inclusive,” to have that total story – not just about her sister walking – because that was not it.

Interviewer: Right. And they never were able to get Sumner School, so you couldn’t really develop that walk?

Brandyburg: Correct. So, that’s why we went to going through those five different locations. I think it was, five classes on the lower level that we wanted to kind of tell those different stories based off of the bigger Brown v. Board, which is what it’s named for, but it’s also all about those other entities that were taking part in it.

Interviewer: And was it your intention, from the beginning, to restore the kindergarten school – or, kindergarten class?

Brandyburg: It was. And, now that you mention it, it was a little bit of a rumble there, and I thought the kindergarten – I thought the kindergarten school, if I am correct – which was, as you walk in, it was on the first floor, the far left corner? That was where we would have the contemplation, and folks would come in and sit down and get the – whatever they have off their mind and chest and talk to the Ranger about what we were doing. So, the kindergarten room was the one that, based off of – I – if I can recall correctly – where we would have – those kind of events would take place.

Interviewer: Okay. So, now it’s been restored to its – essentially, its original appearance. I think they have class – kids come in and sit on the desks, because, the first time I went to Brown v. Board, I thought it was still a functioning school, because there were all these children everywhere, and they were all in this classroom, and then there was a bell. So, I got the impression that I was still in a school, so I didn’t really see very much of it the first time, because I didn’t want to interrupt anybody’s classroom. So, I think that’s what they do.

Brandyburg: Oh, okay. Yeah, it’s interesting that they’ve kind of switched a little bit, because we also went to – it wasn’t the Little Rock Nine – yeah.

Interviewer: Central High School? That was the Little Rock Nine.

Brandyburg: Central High School, which – where they were – it’s a still-active school. And they just have the Visitor Center on the outside. So, we did a little bit of research from the standpoint of looking at what they were already doing – which, the school itself was doing mostly that interpretation part. And the Park Service was just starting there and kind of – figure out what they were doing. So, we didn’t want to do the same stuff they were doing.

Interviewer: Okay, did you – your headquarters, actually – where people actually went, when you were there, was at the Post Office?

Brandyburg: That’s correct.

Interviewer: So, how did that impact interpreting the site – by not – by not being on site? Brandyburg: Terrible. It was terrible, because we had to go down and bring visitors up. Because you –

they weren’t allowed, because – it was a federal facility, but we couldn’t just let people ride the elevator up. They had to kind of make an appointment for folks to come out.

Interviewer: Oh! So, your office was not on the first floor, it was on the second floor, okay.

Brandyburg: Yeah. It was on the second – yeah, it was on the second floor. And what we did, at the time was, to make it a little bit more visitor-use visitor-friendly, is that we not only had office space, but we also rented an additional office space that we converted into an auditorium where we’d show the movie, the film. And so, we had visitors come up, we would take them automatically in, do an orientation and also, you know, get the video, and then talk a little bit about it, and then kind of direct them towards Monroe School, which we had nothing else after that, for sure.

Interviewer: So, when they came into the Post Office, first, they had to notify you that they were there, and then you had to come down and take them up?

Brandyburg: Our interpretive staff had to come down and do that, yes.

Interviewer: Okay, and then take them to this temporary auditorium for orientation? Brandyburg: An orientation. And then also look at the movie that we have.

Interviewer: And did you have displays there?

Brandyburg: I don’t think we did. I can’t recall, but I – based off of what I’m seeing in my head, we did not have any exhibits, per se. We mostly used the video, and we also used the brochure as our way of getting the information out. We didn’t have anything that folks could come back and say, “Oh, let me read this or that.” We didn’t have a whole lot of that because, you know, we were still – we were actually in the planning stage, but we didn’t get to the point of actually going in and doing some –

Interviewer: You had no – you had no – oh, what’s that called? I call it a brochure – a park brochure?

Brandyburg: Yeah, we had a brochure. The brochure was fine. Yeah. But we didn’t have a interpretive plaque or anything – a panel – a temporary panel that we had put together. And that was not really one of the things, that we were, kind of, encouraged to move in that

direction. It was more of a – this Value Analysis is coming on board. We have an opportunity to – and I’m just going to kind of tell you what my job was – had this opportunity to move forward with – going with that, work with the Brown Foundation because they were doing a lot of the – some of that interpretation for us, too. So, they were doing some of the programming, and Linda would go out and actually meet at different schools. So, they were kind of like our offsite –

Interviewer: They were your ambassadors?

Brandyburg: Yeah, they were the ones who went out. They were the ones who did a lot more offsite programs than we did. We did a couple, but they did a lot more.

Interviewer: Okay, was that a staff issue?

Brandyburg: Yeah, when I got there, we had one Ranger – actually, there may have been two. Then, I brought a Ranger in from Booker T. that I thought was really – would be a good fit, and I brought her in as well. I think it was Latrelle who was already here. And I can’t remember Latrelle’s last name. And then – so, we were limited to about two or three Rangers.

Interviewer: So, you really – you had to stay on – in your headquarters. You really couldn’t – for instance, once you had given visitors the orientation, you, kind of, just had to point them in the right direction and let them go look at the school from the outside?

Brandyburg: That’s it! That was it, and, occasionally, if our facilities person was there – because we had one person that was doing facilities –

Interviewer: Treva?

Brandyburg: Treva. She would walk people through. Interviewer: Oh, is that right? Huh.

Brandyburg: Yeah, she would tell me a lot of times that people would come through, and they would be asking questions. She would just walk them through and let them go through, even though that was NOT –

Interviewer: That really wasn’t what she was supposed to do? (Laughs)

Brandyburg: – what she was supposed to do. But Treva was such a nice person, and she was so into – and I – and I love her, because she just loved the story, and loved telling people, and loved getting stuff out there. She would just kind of let people peek in and come around and so there’s – occasionally, people could run across her – and she’s out there cutting the grass, and they would get a chance to look in and take a look. But we had to say, “Hard Hat Area! Hard Hat Area! Hard Hat Area!” (Laughs)

Interviewer: (Laughs) Yeah. This was while – was this while there was construction going on? Brandyburg: No, no, no. This was just –

Interviewer: This was just while there was maintenance and stabilization going on?

Brandyburg: This was when there wasn’t even – nothing going on. It was just the fence around it, the walkway –

Interviewer: Okay, you still had the fence, then?

Brandyburg: Yeah. That was it. There was nothing. There was no actual work going on at all. Yeah, we were –

Interviewer: Okay. Just mowing?

Brandyburg: Yeah, that was it. We were just keeping – maintaining as is. More or less – the planning part beyond the GMP, and that was it, really.

Interviewer: Yeah. You just had the GMP and you were working on the Value Analysis for the exhibits, and that was as far as you’d got at that point?

Brandyburg: That was as far as we’d got at that point.

Interviewer: Okay. So, what would you say were the biggest problems, then, of being sequestered in the Post Office, regarding interpretation of that site?

Brandyburg: Just no access. We had no access to the visitor, and the visitor had no access to us. Interviewer: Or the site?

Brandyburg: Absolutely. And it wasn’t – you know, there was not really much we could do other than – and, again, we were – at the time I came in, that’s where we were. It wasn’t like we came in, and moved into the Post Office, and we had some decision-making processes to say, “Okay, well, this is the better place to go.” I understand why –

Interviewer: Sändra Washington had already set up the site at the Post Office, right? She’d already done that?

Brandyburg: Yeah, I think so. Well, there was a – Interviewer: She was the first Site Manager?

Brandyburg: There was someone who came behind her – I can’t think of his name – that was – Interviewer: Oh, yeah. Ray Harper?

Brandyburg: Ray Harper. That’s right. I don’t know. I don’t know when – Interviewer: When you came, it was at the Post Office.

Brandyburg: It was at the Post Office. I don’t know whether Ray had did it, or Sändra, or there was a combination of the two. And I understand why, because it was a federal facility, it was easy to rent, there was space there, they could do some really quick stuff. But –

Interviewer: What else? And the courthouse was there – I mean, the courtroom was there?

Brandyburg: Yeah, but it wasn’t – I mean, that’s what we’d do. I forgot about that. Yes. We used to take people through there as a part of this tour. They’d walk – get to walk them through. And then we’d have a little bit of –

Interviewer: Okay. Well, that’s something!

Brandyburg: Yeah! And now, you’re bringing stuff back! Then, we had a little bit of a panel there that folks could come and see and talk about the five cases. But that was not really a super- interpretive thing that –

Interviewer: But at least it was opened.

Brandyburg: Yeah, the courthouse was fun, but, again, it wasn’t one of those things that – it kind of takes it out of context because it really – it wasn’t – you couldn’t go in and say, “Okay, this is where it happened,” per se, but it was still part of the story that we could bring in here. Yeah, thanks for reminding me of that. I forgot that! (Laughter)

Interviewer: So, when you – did you receive any kind of training from the Park Service – Brandyburg: During that time?

Interviewer: To help you in your position at Brown v. Board, or did they think you were already pretty well trained.

Brandyburg: Did not receive any training.

Interviewer: Okay. So, Rangers very often have binders full of information and – about the site that they’re interpreting. You didn’t have any of that?

Brandyburg: No. Like I said, what we were doing – we did a little bit, if you would, of research, which went with – went hand-in-hand with developing interpretive programs. And a lot of that research is based off of, of course, what we already know to be the story of Brown v.

Board, with the five cases and being – managing into one, and why did it get to be called Brown v. Board versus some other name, those kind of things. We really didn’t go into the in-depth of all of that stuff, and we didn’t really have a whole heck of a lot that was there.

Interviewer: Yeah, since you couldn’t really take visitors through the site?

Brandyburg: Yeah. And, of course, this is a new park. So, with being a new park, you’re not going to have a whole heck of a lot. You have the Special Resource study – and I think that’s what we basically were using – that kind of helped with a lot of the information. But what people were – what I and – what I did for my staff, or had them do, was start more developing of programs versus the super-research stuff. And, again, that – a lot of the things that we needed, we could have asked the Brown Foundation to do for us, because they were receiving statutory aid from the park, and that statutory aid went towards either educational programs, which were the bulk of what they were doing, but they also could provide us with some background information – research kind of information.

Interviewer: Okay. So, that’s a – that’s a good point. For the funds that they received, what did the Brown Foundation provide to the park? I mean, you’re talking about programs. Is that going out to the schools? Is that that kind of program?

Brandyburg: That is correct. That is correct.

Interviewer: Did they provide written materials, published materials, of some kind?

Brandyburg: No publications from the standpoint of how we would understand publications would be. There was research and data that they would provide from the standpoint of, you know, if Latrelle wanted to do a program, they would – she could go and ask questions and then get some background information from the Foundation. If we wanted to talk to Linda about some specifics of her time –

Interviewer: So, they gave you access to people to talk to, to give you information? Brandyburg: Right. Correct.

Interviewer: What about – did you do, like, symposiums or any kind of – that thing that you had to invite people to come to and talk?

Brandyburg: They were definitely doing that. And that’s what – we did a lot of symposiums. That’s how I got to the point of understanding the Brown – what was going on operationally – is that I got invited to one of the symposiums and went there for two or three days –

Interviewer: Okay, was this the Brown Foundation Symposium?

Brandyburg: It was. It was, and in conjunction with the National Park Service. So, it was a – it was a mixture of both. But I think the – and just from the time I was there – how it was managed, it was mostly the Brown Foundation that was out, you know, putting this together. The Park Service added the Park Service infrastructure. Our, I should say, Regional Directors – those folks were added or invited. And, again, it was to promote and, hopefully, get more action to get the park becoming more of a park. (Laughs) So, it was one of those things of we invite the Regional Director and the Director, have a symposium, they can come in and we’ll talk about how –

Interviewer: Okay. Get them information?

Brandyburg: Yeah, how we can move this project forward. They were always pushing, “Move the project forward. Move the project forward.” Because, as you – as you know, a lot of parks may start out new, but they – it takes like eight or ten years before they actually open.

Interviewer: Okay. I know, because of all the studies. You have to do all the studies that – and the public has a problem with that.

Brandyburg: Yes. Absolutely.

Interviewer: So, let me ask you this question: in Topeka, it was a brand-new park you’d just started.

What do you think the public perception of the park was?

Brandyburg: I think people were welcoming to the story of Brown v. Board because it is part of the history of the park. (Cell phone rings – interview paused). It was part of the history of the park, but it was also one of those things where they were just happy to have us there. So, just like any other community that I’ve worked in, you have the community there, and they want you to be there to spark tourism, bring in – those things in.

Interviewer: For economic development, basically?

Brandyburg: Right. But they didn’t – there was – I never got any negative feel from the people in the community of it being there. And, again, it was one of those things that we were just getting started. We didn’t know – we were, more or less, working within the confines of the National Park Service. At least, I was. Bessie may have been out – Bessie Sherman may have been more in the community and talking to more of those folks. I wasn’t – I wasn’t doing that type work. But, what I did – when I did go out and talk to folks, it was welcoming that the park – it was going to be there. They understood that it was part of the bigger story of who they are – Topeka, Brown v. Board, they’re interconnected – you know, interconnected. And so, it was never a situation where –

Interviewer: They wished you’d go away? Okay. Brandyburg: Yeah, that was not a –

Interviewer: Even the – even the immediate surrounding neighborhood, they were okay with there were going to be a lot more people in the area, and, somewhere, they were going to have to park?

Brandyburg: Well, that was one of the things that we were trying to work through, because one of the jobs I had was to figure out where we’re going to put the signage to get off the interstate there, which is, I don’t know, 70? I can’t remember what interstate it was. And, when I was – started working with the county to make that determination, their regulation was you’re only going to put four signs at any active – at each exit. And the one that was directly – that – the one that dropped you off directly at Monroe School was already – already had four, so we had to go on.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. They – the only – they could only install four signs of any kind? That was their regulation?

Brandyburg: Yeah, that was their regulation: four signs. You could only have four at each exit. And the one that was already –

Interviewer: The closest one was taken?

Brandyburg: Correct. So, we had to, kind of, direct people up one more exit and then around in a round-about way to get to the park. So, we were kind of – I was trying to work with the county or the city to, kind of, make those adjustments, which we never – I never succeeded at getting that done. So, I don’t know how they exit to get there now, and they probably are still in a round-about way, but they may have negotiated – removed one and then put the Brown – put the Park Service sign there.

Interviewer: Okay. So, when you first started working with the park, did you have specific expectations for the job? No?

Brandyburg: No, not really. It was a new site. Interviewer: So, just go with the flow?

Brandyburg: It was - yeah, it was. It was a new site. I realized that there was nothing in place that said, “Hey, this is the direction you need to go, far as interpretation.” The GMP gives you sort of a broad-based understanding and, again, a lot of history there, but it really didn’t get the management side. It didn’t, of course – working with the – being in the Post Office. There was no, “Okay, this is what you need to do.” So, we started figuring – trying to figure things out. And that’s where we started.

Interviewer: Okay, so you were starting to figure out what to do right there?

Brandyburg: Right. And that’s when we started talking about the theater, showing the film, and bringing people up, and then what would –

Interviewer: Right. Were they not doing that before you started?

Brandyburg: If they were, they were just getting started, but I don’t think they were starting that yet.

I think they were just starting once I got there.

Interviewer: Okay. What would you say were some innovations that you instituted to improve the interpretation while you were there?

Brandyburg: I wouldn’t say there was any innovation. I think we just was bringing normalcy. Interviewer: Programs, whatever?

Brandyburg: Yeah, I think we was just bringing normalcy. Interviewer: Bringing the normal National Park Service stuff to the –

Brandyburg: Yeah, absolutely. Because we weren’t doing – from my perspective, we weren’t giving them all that I think we could have, at that time. We would do an offsite here or there. I think that was one of the things, and that was in conjunction with the Brown Foundation, so it would be Linda plus a Ranger. But, actually doing a program, that’s one of the things I wanted to try to emphasize. “Okay, let’s do a Ranger program somewhere. Whether it’s there –” and I don’t remember if I even talked about actually going to the Brown site and doing something on the outside. I don’t know. That may have been one of those things I didn’t –

Interviewer: There was a Grand Opening in 1998. Were you there then? Brandyburg: Yes.

Interviewer; Yes. Do you happen to remember – I mean, the Grand Opening of the park – the building probably still had the fence around it at that time. What was the purpose of having a Grand Opening before you could even let people in?

Brandyburg: Our intent, when we did it, if I can remember – recall correctly, was to, again, emphasize the park being there. Because folks – it was one of those long-term – you know, we’re working on this, working on this, and nothing really happened. But just to do a Grand Opening to bring people around.

Interviewer: So they’ll know you’re doing something?

Brandyburg: Absolutely. Sort of what they were doing with the symposiums. Symposium is – to me, did the same thing, which is just bring people closer to understand where we are in the process and keep people informed, because, again, you had the Brown Foundation saying, “When is this going to get done? Where is the money coming from?” All this –

Interviewer: So, you had that pressure from the Brown Foundation as well as from just the general public in Topeka, right?

Brandyburg: More from the Brown Foundation. Yeah, and then we also –

Interviewer: And what about the other four sites? Were they also pressuring you to get done? Brandyburg: Correct. They were, because, again, it was all one – but, again, it was more emphasis on,

“This is not just the story of Linda Brown and her father.” So, that’s where we got that kind of a pressure, to say, “Okay, let’s be more inclusive. Include those folks, but let’s get it open as – immediately.” (Laughter) Nothing happens immediately in the Park Service.

Interviewer: (Laughs) Nothing happens. I mean, when you establish a park, and it really does take, probably, a minimum of six years of studies to get anything going.

Brandyburg: The fastest one that I’ve been in – and I’ve been in two parks that started from ground zero – is the Tuskegee Airmen and the Brown v. Board. And the Airmen was the one that went the fastest. And it didn’t take six or seven years. It took two or three.

Interviewer: Right, for the studies - for all the studies.

Brandyburg: Yeah, and then - and that was because there was a tremendous amount of pressure that was put on the Park Service to get those studies done, one after another, and do something, because we went in – after I got – the second time there – we went in, we put in a Visitor Center - we put in a Visitor Contact Station, we – you know. We did, you know, that plus, you know, open the hangars. We were doing the exhibits all at the same time. Yeah, so, it was like – very, very fast.

Interviewer: Mmm-hmm. That was fast. And so, at Brown there was a similar pressure to move faster, and the Park Service did. Did they not do some of the normal studies?

Brandyburg: No, we went down the normal studies. We went from GMP to – yeah, there was not a management-type study, but more of looking at the interpretation – that was – first thing you want to do, because we were looking at how are we going to do the exhibit and firm that out, because we wanted to get that – we wanted – we wanted to have that in place before we actually started looking at the true restoration because, when

you start the restoration process, if you don’t know what’s going where, it’s going to be very hard to pull that stuff in and then tear it out. So, that’s –

Interviewer: Right. So, you were doing the interpretive studies before you did construction documents, basically?

Brandyburg: Correct. Yes. That’s where the Value Analysis came in. We wanted to make sure that we had that, kind of, laid out before we went into the construction of the building.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you attend the Dedication in 2004?

Brandyburg: I did not. I have not been since I left, and that’s just terrible. (Laughs) Interviewer: That IS just terrible! You should do that!

Brandyburg: (Laughs) I know! Plus, my son was born – my first child was born in Topeka, Kansas – or, Olathe, so I –

Interviewer: (Laughs) You should at least take him back to his birth home!

Brandyburg: I know! (Laughs) I know. I know. That’s terrible, and I – we – we’re working on it. Interviewer: (Laughs) So, during your time there – how long were you there?

Brandyburg: It was two and a – two and a half years.

Interviewer: Two and a half years. Alright. During that – your time there, was there any time that you had to navigate, like, a difficult situation – a delicate – or delicate situation?

Brandyburg: What do you mean? From a work standpoint?

Interviewer: Well, from a work standpoint, personnel, outside influence of – I don’t know, city people –?

Brandyburg: I think the – I think the biggest difficulty I had was just navigating expectations from my boss, and that’s just, you know how –

Interviewer: From Bessie?

Brandyburg: Yeah, just figuring out what we could do, and, it being – Interviewer: Okay. What were her expectations – Superintendent Sherman?

Brandyburg: (Chuckles) She wanted a whole – we wanted a whole lot more interpretation being done. And there was not a whole lot we could have done, more than what we had with the facilities that we had, plus, with the staffing that we had. So, it was very hard to say, “Okay, this is all we can do at this moment,” when she wanted a whole lot more stuff. Just like we did the Dedication – or, the Grand Opening, if you will. All of those things were, like, “We’re open! We’re doing stuff! We’re doing stuff!” So, then – and I think she wanted a heck of a lot more done, and we just couldn’t do it, because we just didn’t have staffing.

Interviewer: Didn’t have the staff? Didn’t have the facility?

Brandyburg: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, what about budget? How was budget going?

Brandyburg: Well, the budget – all that headed in. We didn’t have the money in place to do a lot of those things. We did have money to add new employees, which we did – one new employee to kind of help with those things. But we still didn’t have the funds to kind of move stuff into a – let’s say a – close to the Park Service level. We did – I did get a video – a very, very inexpensive video done through Harpers Ferry Center about Brown v.

Board, which I thought was pretty cool. Because, again, it was that, “What do you got? What are you guys doing, interpreters? What are you guys doing, interpreters?” So, we invested – I don’t know – I think it was, like ten or twelve thousand dollars into a video that we, later on, used as a part of what it meant. And, actually, the guy that did the video for us was very creative in how he did it, because he took students that were from local community and had them asked – or, asked them the question of what has Brown

v. Board meant to them. So, they came back and said, “Hey, this is what it meant to me, and this is how it impacts me today,” so, it was more of a testimonial kind of video, which was pretty cool, that we got done.

Interviewer: And what did you use that for?

Brandyburg: That was part of our orientation as far as the –

Interviewer: Oh, I see. That was part of the video in the – in the auditorium? Brandyburg: Yep.

Interviewer: Okay. And what other – did you have other outreach programs, like – I don’t know – you went to Brown symposiums, National Park Service Week, or National Park Week, March for Parks?

Brandyburg: Yeah, symposium was the biggest one that we participated in, and, again, we were part of what – the Brown Foundation took the lead on that, so we were just a part of that.

Interviewer: Okay. Were you part of the Strategic Planning Team in 1997, or was that before you got there?

Brandyburg: That may have been before I got there. Interviewer: You got there in October?

Brandyburg: Yeah, it was before I got there, because I remember – now that you mention that, that was something that was done with the Superintendent and the Regional Office on next steps. Because Bessie came in after Ray Harper – Ray left, and so there was – I think there were some things that – expectations from the Regional Office that were supposed to have been done which didn’t get done through Ray, and so I – they – from what I gathered, they – I’m remembering now, they tasked Bessie with certain things that she needed to get in place. And so that’s what I think is [unintelligible] part of that came in, moving forward.

Interviewer: Okay, but that was before you came on site? Brandyburg: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Well, darn! I was going to ask you all these questions about the Strategic Planning Team! (Laughs)

Brandyburg: I know nothing! I mean, I don’t even know what Bessie was saying to us, or to me, as “Okay, moving forward, these are the things we need to get in place.” Hence, the auditorium – or the semi-auditorium, or interpretive programs. All of those things, I think, were part of that Strategic Planning effort. I – that – I didn’t see the ending document. She did not share that with me.

Interviewer: Okay. The Strategic Plan?

Brandyburg: Yeah, and say, “Hey, this is where we need to go.” I was just told, “These are the things we need to move forward.” I would have a copy now, but then – (Laughter)

Interviewer: Alright. We’ve talked about the Value Analysis Study. Did you – how about the Long Range Interpretive Plan? Was that part of the Value – was the Value Analysis Study part of the Long Range Interpretive Plan?

Brandyburg: No, it wasn’t. And part of the Long Range Interpretive Planning had already taken place by the time I got there. So, we were strictly – at least, what I was strictly working on was the exhibit side. The planning side, I think, was already pretty much in place.

Interviewer: Okay. So, overall, can you describe how the interpretive programming changed during your tenure – whether or not it improved or not?

Brandyburg: Well, I would say it was – we tried to be more of public-facing, going out into the public and saying, “Hey, we have interpretive programs available, or you can come in and see a movie,” or just more out to tell people that we have something in place. I think that was a change from people would come, and they didn’t know what to expect. I think that was the biggest thing. And just, again, normalizing interpretation, that’s more or less the work that I did.

Interviewer: That was your objective?

Brandyburg: Yeah. Just doing those things because, again, the creative side – to me, there was no need, because there was nothing. I mean, we didn’t have anything already in place, so there was nothing to be creative about – just doing what we normally do in interpretation, which is, we have Rangers available, we give the interpretive program, we’re available at the site so we can see – you know, they can see you and know that you’re there, we have a film that people can come in and say, “Okay, I understand what the story is.” So, to me, it was just getting them from nothing to something.

Interviewer: Okay. And so, when you were finished, though, you still didn’t have Rangers at the site? Brandyburg: We did not.

Interviewer: You just still had Rangers at the Post Office?

Brandyburg: Right.

Interviewer: And the – but you had a movie, an orientation, and –?

Brandyburg: Yes. Right. And, I think – and, again, I’m not quite sure – and I’ll just go up to my head – I thought we were – they notified us we couldn’t have a Ranger available to go to the site.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. So, people could make an appointment to come and see the site? Brandyburg: Which was awkward, but yes. (Laughter)

Interviewer: Which was awkward, but yes? (Laughs) Brandyburg: Yes. I mean, because it –

Interviewer: So, school groups, for instance, could call up and say, “We want to bring thirty kids to see this site.” Would you let them in?

Brandyburg: No. It wasn’t that – it was more if a person called in and said, “Okay, we want to talk to a Ranger,” we could be around outside, because they couldn’t get into the building. The building was always off – even though Treva occasionally let people in. (Laughter)

Interviewer: Oh, I see. So, the building was off limits?

Brandyburg: Yes, officially. Because, again, it was a hard hat area, so they couldn’t let anybody in. But, what I’m talking about is, if someone called – and if it was a school group, “We want to meet” – they could – we could meet them there and have some orientation and information and then that was it.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you get anybody from – like, there’s a teachers’ college close by, I believe – did you get, like, groups of teachers wanting to get some orientation about Brown v. Board?

Brandyburg: No, I’m drawing a blank on that. I thought we had some interaction with the – with the schools there from the standpoint of providing – let me think about this for a minute. (Pause) There may have been some interaction with the interpretive Rangers meeting with some of those teachers and doing the teacher workshop kind of things, but, for the most part, it was never one that we had teachers on site. One of us would go in and tell the story, talk about –

Interviewer: Oh, I see. To wherever they were, you went? So, you took a program to them? Brandyburg: Correct.

Interviewer: Was that the Park Service doing that or the Brown Foundation? Brandyburg: I think it was a mixture of both. It wasn’t –

Interviewer: Okay. So, you and the Brown Foundation took a program to, say, a group of teachers? Brandyburg: Right. Yeah.

Interviewer: And a classroom of children?

Brandyburg: Both. To the teachers for the workshop. And I think we also did – when – actually had school classrooms. And I – and again, Latrelle was at – that Ranger that actually did that until – and you just mentioned her name – Tarona – until Tarona came on board, and Tarona and Latrelle, and, I think – I think Latrelle – I can’t remember, but I think Tarona took Latrelle’s place as interpretive Ranger. And I can’t think of the young lady that I brought in from Brown – Booker T. Washington, who was doing mostly the media side.

Interviewer: Okay. I can’t think of it either! (Laughs) Brandyburg: Oh, God! It’ll come to me.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, if it comes to you in the middle of the night, don’t call me up. (Laughter) Brandyburg: Okay.

Interviewer: Okay. The Brown Foundation agreed to produce curriculum guides for upcoming school programs. How did that work out? Was it helpful?

Brandyburg: It was, but it needed a lot of work. That was one of those that Bessie had us work on and look over. It worked – that whole process – and that was one of those that was one that got bogged down a whole heck of a lot.

Interviewer: It got bogged down?

Brandyburg: Yeah, trying to get it finished and looking at it a certain way, or (telephone rings) you know, meeting the standards for the National Park Service, that’s where it got bogged down. (Interview paused while Brandyburg responds to phone call.)

Interviewer: Okay, let’s resume. And I just have a couple more questions, but, before I ask them, I wanted to pursue your comment that the curriculum guide bogged down. Why was that?

Brandyburg: Well, again, it was a difference in – we were actually changing the format on a lot of those curriculums when I got there, because I found that they were not written in the proper way that we wanted to provide for schools. Because, again, with my education background, “Okay, these are the things that we wanted the kids to get out of it, and we wanted to make sure they had some end results that come out of those things.” So, we were going through that whole process of re-writing curriculum. And so, it got really bogged down because, again, there was the Brown Foundation saying, “These are the things that we have. This is what we’ve been giving. This is what we’ve been doing for years and years.” And then the Park Service would say, “No –”

Interviewer: And you were saying, “No, do it differently?”

Brandyburg: “Do it differently because this is the format we’re using.” Because they were changing up – again, the Park Service was changing, too, what the format was, and so we went back and forth quite a bit.

Interviewer: Okay, and was this impacted at all by standards from the state as far as curriculum guides, or was it just the National Park Service standards?

Brandyburg: It was both, because that’s what we normally use, and we never not use state curriculum, with state standards behind it, and so that’s – that was part of it.

Interviewer: Okay, and so the Park – the Brown Foundation had been doing these curriculum guides for years in a certain way, and, when the Park Service became responsible for the content of the curriculum guides, the Park Service asked the Brown Foundation to make some changes, and you found it difficult to get those changes made?

Brandyburg: It just took a long time. I – my relationship with working with the Brown Foundation was great. I loved working with Cheryl, and Cheryl was the type that, if she had work to be done, she asked specific people. So, you had educators that worked with – in the Brown Foundation that she would ask to help with those things. And so, it was – for me, it was just a matter of getting those things through, and I –

Interviewer: Okay. So, it took a long time to do these – make the changes?

Brandyburg: Yeah. Because, again, it was not just to satisfy me, it had to satisfy Bessie and so on, and so –

Interviewer: Right. And then up to the Region? And all that stuff?

Brandyburg: Yeah. And Bessie was very particular about certain things that she wanted in there, and so I had to go back to the – go back and forth.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Yeah, those are entertaining events.

Brandyburg: (Laughs) To say the least! It was. But it was – I had – I had no problem working with the Foundation. I had a really good working relation with them, and they – whatever we asked, that’s what they’d get. At least, when I was there, that’s what they provided. If I needed to go and change some stuff, I went back to them, and they made the change, and we went back and forth, so.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. So, the last two questions are – one – the first one is: of the work you’ve done – that you did for the Brown Foundation, what would you say you were most proud of doing that you felt was the most effective thing for the park?

Brandyburg: I think the symposiums was the most effective, and the reason why was because of the notoriety and the number of people that we had that were more informed about what was going on with the Brown story, the Brown v. Board – Brown v. Board story. And also, with the amount of information that was being disseminated out because of just the nature of the park. The park was not open. We didn’t have a lot of visitors coming, but, through the symposium, we were able to get that story out.

Interviewer: Okay. How many of those did you do? Brandyburg: Probably two.

Interviewer: Two?

Brandyburg: We did – they were every year.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. And you were there for two years, so – okay. (Laughs)

Brandyburg: Yeah. Plus, the one I went to when I first got to introduced to the symposium, which was, I think, three years before that.

Interviewer: Okay. Alright. So, my last question is, is there anything I haven’t asked you about that you would like to say about your time at Brown v. Board? Was there something you hoped I would ask you about? Or, did you want to make any comments about your time there?

Brandyburg: No, I think you covered everything, and actually just jogged my memory on a bunch of stuff, considering, you know, what we were –

Interviewer: (Laughs) And you thought you didn’t remember it!

Brandyburg: No, I didn’t! And – because, again, it’s not just in the front, it’s in the back, and so – back of my head. And so, it was – it’s kind of interesting and fun to recall – kind of recall some of the things that we did and, even though I was there for a short – really, really short period of time, we were trying to normalize what was going on at the park. And going back and thinking about it, that was really what we were trying to do. We were trying to make it so that people could really get a real good understanding of what Brown v.

Board meant. And then, also, just working with the Brown Foundation, to me, was fun, because, again, they did symposiums, and you had folks like Jessie Jackson, Jr. –

Interviewer: And you got to meet all these people? (Laughs)

Brandyburg: Yeah! Exactly! And that was fun to just have those people that were interested in that.

They were making that connections with these folks and saying, “Okay, we need to highlight this story, because it’s important.” And, as you know, with my background as an educator and educating people about African – the African American experience, that’s always been a joy to do those kind of things. So, any time I can do that and give people more information about what – you know, what was going on, and what we accomplished as people of America, that was always important to do those things, and the symposium was the one that got us out there. The little stuff, we couldn’t, because, again, the nature of where we were and how we were structured, we couldn’t do anything any more than just that.

Interviewer: Okay. And we might as – I think we should briefly discuss how you managed to get from Brown v. Board to this position. So, after Brown v. Board, where did you go?

Brandyburg: Well, I went to the Great Smokey Mountains as a District Ranger, and that was interesting because I went from a cultural park to a natural park. And so – and I was like, “Oh, my God, what did I get into?”

Interviewer: “It’s a lot of trees!”

Brandyburg: Yeah, exactly! That’s all it is, is trees. And don’t ask me what type of trees. Interviewer: Trees and birds.

Brandyburg: Yeah! And so, I went there for two years, and it was interesting, because, again, I was a Division Chief, and then I went to a District Ranger, which there was a Division Chief ahead of – that was my supervisor. So, my time there was interesting from the standpoint of understanding a big park and big park operations and how that worked, because I’ve always worked in small parks, and, of course, a natural park at that, too, and then, also, as a District Ranger, which, I had as many people as a District Chief – or District Ranger than I had for permanent when I was a – the Chief of Interp. So, that moved – after the Great Smokey Mountains, then I went back to Tuskegee as a Chief of Interp, so I was Park Ranger, Museum Specialist, and Museum Tech to the Chief of Interp, but this time it was Chief of Interp for Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee Airmen, and Selma to Montgomery Trail. And so, that was, again, a different experience. Two new parks to deal with, not just one, plus managing the one that we had. And so, it was –

Interviewer: And so, it was three – it was a – three parks?

Brandyburg: Yes. And it was fun. It was fun, but it – also challenging because you had three different locations, almost three different stories but all intertwined with the African American experience plus civil rights was interlined in all of those as well. And so, it was a – it was a very good time – five years there. And then moving from there to Moore’s Creek, where I became – I got my first Superintendency.

Interviewer: Where’s Moore’s Creek?

Brandyburg: Eastern part of North Carolina, near Wilmington. Interviewer: Okay, so back to North Carolina?

Brandyburg: Yeah, I – and so, it was a – it was a couple – I did a couple of – I did a detail at Fort Frederica as Acting Superintendent before I got the job at Moore’s Creek.

Interviewer: Okay. That’s how you became a Superintendent?

Brandyburg: Yes. It was a lateral, because I was a GS-12, Chief of Interp over three sites, and then I lateralled into the Superintendency at Moore’s Creek, where I managed a very tiny group, again, of people. And I like small parks because you get to know folks, and you get to know the resources, and your hands are in everything, so it was pretty fun. And so, I worked there for five years, I think – five or six years I spent [unintelligible] that, and then moved from there to Carl Sandburg Home as the Superintendent. Much bigger park, much bigger staff, a lot more things going on, a civil rights theme within there at Sandburg, that a lot of people don’t know, because Sandburg was for the people. He was the people’s poet. And, from there, bounced here as Superintendent of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. That’s where I am now, and enjoying every minute with a bigger staff, bigger resources, a lot more resources, but still the same Park Service.

Interviewer: (Laughs) Okay, well, I want to thank you for spending the time to tell me about your time at Brown v. Board and the rest of your work with the National Park Service. I think we’re going to find your information extremely helpful.

Brandyburg: Well, I hope so, because I – you know, like I said, I didn’t spend a whole heck of a lot of time, but we were, you know –

Interviewer: But you were there at a crucial time – the beginning, you know, when things start forming into a plan or into a procedure.

Brandyburg: Yeah. Well, I – from what I gather, it didn’t – our Value Analysis didn’t go as far as I thought it would, far as moving us into the grand perspective of what was going on at Monroe School. Yeah. So, that’s fine. That’s fine.

Interviewer: (Laughs) Stuff happens!

Brandyburg: That’s true, and I never take – you know, I never go to a park and I say, “Well, I’m going to do something and then make it stay forever,” because it’s never going to do that. So, I just need to go back and see it, because I’ve heard it was done very well, so I want to go see it.

Interviewer: Yep. Alright, I’m going to turn this [recording device] off. Brandyburg: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW