

Edited transcription of Wilma Johnson Rose interview

Conducted on January 21, 2015

Interviewer: Martha Wiley

Transcriber: Matthew Trenk, September 2015

WILEY: Today is Wednesday, January 21, 2015. This is historian Martha Wiley, interviewing Wilma Johnson Rose -- do I have that right?

JOHNSON: Yes, that's correct.

WILEY: We will be talking today about Wilma's time with the Job Corps here at Cumberland Gap. Wilma, if I could ask you to state your full name and your age, if that would be alright?

JOHNSON: Sure, my maiden name is Wilma Alleyne Johnson. I married my husband Daniel Rose so I'm Wilma Johnson Rose now. You said my age?

WILEY: If that's ok [laughs]

JOHNSON: Sure, I'm 67.

WILEY: 67, ok. So, I have just been reviewing some of our files on Job Corps and I'm just going to ask you some basic questions on how you got involved, and then maybe get into some more details about the work done here over the four years that we had the Job Corps center here. When did you first become involved with the Job Corps here at the park?

JOHNSON: I was first interviewed in mid-May of '65 and... my father had found out about a job there, so he went over there to interview and he said, "C'mon kid, let's go." I had just graduated from high school so it was, you know, time to start job hunting. And they interviewed him and they didn't interview me that day, but they were impressed with him, and I think I sat in on his interview.

So a couple of days later, Delmar Robinson called and said, "Mr. Johnson, were you here the other day with your daughter?" And he said, "Yes, I was." I wasn't [there] at the time, I was somewhere else, and he said, "Well, have her call me please." So I called and he said, "Can you come in for an interview? We think we have a job for you." So I went in on Monday, they interviewed me, asked when I could start working, I said whenever you want me, I could start today if you wanted me to, not realizing the rigmarole we had to go through to get hired. So, "we probably can't do it today but plan on coming back tomorrow morning at 8:30." Ok. So I started work ten days after high school graduation, and one day after I was 18.

WILEY: So it looked in the beginning that your job might have been considered temporary - I think it was called an enrollee clerk, is that correct?

JOHNSON: That is correct. They did a thirty day special ... appointment, because they were getting ready to start receiving Corpsmen. And so they needed someone to help with bringing the kids on and doing notifications of next of kin and you know, doing all of those forms. I came on initially to do that.

WILEY: Was your father also hired?

JOHNSON: No, he wasn't.

WILEY: [Laughs] Ok. Were you local? Were you living in Middlesboro at the time?

JOHNSON: No, we lived in Harrogate out of Patterson's Crossroads.

WILEY: So they advertised for staff in the local area.

JOHNSON: Apparently they did, but my father worked with someone whose sister started working there and I guess word got passed around, and that's how he found out about it.

WILEY: Ok. As enrollee clerk, when you began, it was supposed to be temporary. How did that evolve into the long term job? Were you here until it closed in 1969?

JOHNSON: I was. In fact I think I was, if not the last, one of the last staff members to leave. I think I departed in late June. And then went on to Washington, D.C. from there.

WILEY: Ok well, I didn't know. Tell me a little bit, we'll veer off a little, what did you do up in D.C.?

JOHNSON: I initially worked for, still of course worked for the National Park Service, I was out at Rock Creek Park and worked as the assistant for the secretary of the superintendent there.

WILEY: I see. How long was that for?

JOHNSON: Probably about a year. And then you probably know Wolf Trap Farm Park [National Park] for the Performing Arts? I became secretary to the general manager during the preconstruction days of Wolf Trap. And I worked there for one season and then volunteered for, I think one or two seasons after that during the first opening season and then, of course, I moved on in to Washington D.C. to the Washington office. I worked as secretary to the chief of contracting and property management in the Washington office, also, at the time.

WILEY: So how long were you with the Park Service all together?

JOHNSON: Fifteen years, I guess.

WILEY: When they closed the center here, did they make provisions to move the staff to other Park Service jobs?

WILEY: Yes, they did. In fact, they offered me three different jobs when I got there. And actually they pulled me up for interviews. And while I was there for interviews they offered me three other ones and I kind of liked the Rock Creek Park area with the little creek stone house, that sort of thing.

WILEY: Ok, well, we got off on a bit of a tangent -- let me backtrack a little. When you began as enrollee clerk, and you mentioned this a little, can you expand a little on what you did, what your duties were?

JOHNSON: Just about anything and everything. My primary duty was probably as enrollee clerk, interviewing as the Corpsmen came on board. And they came in dribbles, initially. But I would interview them and get ... their next of kin, and set up their paperwork with their social security numbers so that they can get paid. And on occasion when they couldn't remember their addresses or social security numbers or something like that, I would get on the phone with them and we would call their families to get the information, so we could get all that information, and have it available if we needed it. And, this is sort of getting ahead of the game, but we did actually need it. About three o'clock in the morning, I would say probably in '67, probably have the documentation on the bus wreck, and the three or four Corpsmen that were killed.

WILEY: I have seen a mention of that. I did have that on my list to ask you a little more about that. Because I saw that it happened, I think coming back from Knoxville, is that correct?

JOHNSON: I believe they were coming back from Oconaluftee, N.C. which may have been through Knoxville. I don't remember where exactly the accident occurred.

WILEY: I don't know many details of it but I did see mention, like you said, I think three Corpsmen were killed. [Note: Six Corpsmen were killed in a 1966 bus crash.]

JOHNSON: Yes, and they called me at like three o'clock in the morning and we started collecting information to contact the next of kin.

WILEY: How did that accident occur, do you know?

JOHNSON: No, I don't. I just remember that Bob Wakefield was driving the bus and they been to, I believe, one of the basketball games. They played with some of the other Corpsmen at the other Job Corps centers. And it was a bus that, I believe, overturned, and I don't have the details.

WILEY: Well, going back to the recruitment, can you tell me a little bit about how the Corpsmen were recruited? A lot of the documentation we have are some statistics. . . seems to have quite a large turnover certainly that first year, and I wondered if you could tell me a little about the ages or the average age of the youth that came, and where they were coming from.

JOHNSON: As I recall, they were anywhere from 18 to 22, and they were really from all over the nation. We had some from Texas, Raymundo Flores... no, he wasn't from Texas, he was from Arizona. And we had some from Texas, Johnny Boone was one. We had some from Tennessee, I think Harvey Skel, and some from Virginia, quite a few I believe, David Christianson, Jason Beesley, ... But they were really from all over. And some didn't like the rural area because they were from urban areas. And they were restricted, kind of like you would be on a military base. And I think some of them just didn't like that kind of area. We also had some that did really, really well in their training and moved on very quickly to, say, a job at Westinghouse.

WILEY: I see that partnership described. Was the application process, was this advertised? I know it was one of the goals of the program to help disadvantaged youth get educational training so, how, how did you target the youth to come?

JOHNSON: We didn't do that. It was done on a national and local basis. I would imagine it would be something like the Department of Economic Security. Much like, you know, the welfare kind of office, those sorts of things.

WILEY: Demographics studies. So were the majority of the youth, either Hispanic-American, African-American, generally minorities?

JOHNSON: It was a fair mixture. Caucasians ...Blacks ... Hispanics, and those were the ones that stand out as far as, you know, the nationalities or races that we had at the time.

WILEY: Ok, and it looked like it was different. Now some of these youth, how long was the average stay of the Job Corpsmen?

JOHNSON: I think, probably it was a year depending on how well they did in training. Of course, the major focus was education and more important, GED. And of course, they got a vocational training at the same time. As I recall they worked, one week in the vocational training program, and next week they would work in the educational center.

WILEY: I see. I was going to ask how the days broke down -- if it was a mixture of day by day - but it was week by week. Ok

JOHNSON: I think it was week by week.

WILEY: So tell me a little bit about James Batman. He seemed like he was a very dedicated center director.

JOHNSON: He was indeed; he was a gentleman, he was very fair I thought, he was an ideal boss. But what do I know I was only a [laughs].

WILEY: [Laughs] Well, sometimes we can be a little more critical when we're younger. Was he there the entire four years that you were?

JOHNSON: No, he wasn't. He was probably there for two years although I'm not absolutely certain. And it seemed like we had a Richard Nader who came in as the center director. And then toward the end it seemed like Bill Ingram took over. Maybe Charlie Orr was in the mixture as well, but he may have been acting director.

WILEY: Ok, I can look that up. So tell me a little bit about the open house in June of '65. I gather that was a time for prospective Corpsmen and families to come visit the center?

JOHNSON: No, it was primarily for the community. Because we really didn't recruit that much, didn't have that many Corpsmen drop in from the area. They tried-- instead of placing them in the community where it would be so much easier for them to go home, they tried to place them so that there would be a barrier if you will, to making it easier for them to leave. And that was my perception, that may not have been true. But I think the open house is really for the community to walk into the center and we didn't really have too many Corpsmen at that point. I don't think the Corpsmen didn't start actually arriving until early June.

WILEY: Yes, it looks like there were maybe 40 Corpsmen by the end of that month, I think.

JOHNSON: Yes. And it seems like they came in, I don't know, from ten to twelve, on and on. But again, I think it was more for the community, so that the community would understand what was going on and what their purpose was... and more public relations than anything.

WILEY: So with the community, and even today sometimes, I will speak of this to people and they will say, "Oh, that is when the juvenile delinquents were here," you know and it seems to even now... they don't quite understand what the program was. And I wondered if you could tell me a little about the community relationship.

JOHNSON: I think in general it was really pretty good but, as in any assistance program, there are a few bad apples. I think there was some violence, I think there was some drinking, I think there were probably some, some girl trouble if you would. They were given a pass, much like a military gate pass, they were given passes on the weekends to go to the movies or to dances. And a bus provided for transportation. But I think there a few bad apples, but I don't think it was a really big deal.

WILEY: It certainly looked like they did a lot of work in the community, not only participating in the parades but, I guess I see a little league field and a playground. Can you tell me a little bit about what they did for the community, the Corpsmen?

JOHNSON: I think they did some volunteering and helped collect turkeys for thanksgiving for baskets for the needy. I think they did do some rebuilding for some structures of, I believe it was for a youth facility. The ball fields, I do recall. And of course there was a tremendous amount of work in the park at the Hensley Settlement, they renovated it, and they have tours there today, I understand.

WILEY: Oh yes.

JOHNSON: They did a lot of roads and trail work, built a lot of, I wouldn't say a lot of homes, but a number of homes for the park staff. Over near where you go out of the main park headquarters and go left, and I believe that up on a hill there are several park houses. Up there before you get to the red light before you cross the creek.

WILEY: Yes, sort of behind the visitor's center?

JOHNSON: I don't remember them being behind the visitor's center but there were some that were between the visitor's center and where the Middlesboro hospital clinic, KFC, the main head traffic light there on 25E and Cumberland Gap Avenue.

WILEY: Ok yes, with Hensley, I know I've seen it mentioned that was one of the primary reasons that there was a center established here. I guess there were eight centers in the general region and one of the reasons they picked Cumberland Gap was because of this opportunity to restore Hensley.

JOHNSON: I imagine that was one of the factors that was under consideration. Of course those decisions were made before I started work, so I don't think I saw any documentation on what was submitted in order to get a decision made. That was probably taken care of at the park headquarters.

WILEY: There are some quotes that it probably cost half for that restoration than it would have if you had to hire contractors or staff, that having Job Corpsmen was just a win-win for everybody working there.

JOHNSON: Yes, I think you are right.

WILEY: Now, from what I understand, I don't know how much you were involved with the Hensley projects. If you could tell me a little about that . . . I guess the descendants of Hensley, Jess Gibbons, worked with the youth on their work up there. Can you tell me about that?

JOHNSON: I don't recall a whole lot of about that but I know we had some of the . . . staff to probably provide historical perspective. I do remember the name Sherman Hensley that was working with both the education center and the work center, on the planning and again the historical perspective of what the buildings were for and, you know, the various pieces of background that probably evolved into the history of Hensley Settlement.

WILEY: Yes, we have an incredible- .

JOHNSON: I guess, I'm not sure about this, I guess either the park bought Hensley Settlement or it was donated to the park by the Hensleys.

WILEY: Yes, see it was . . . part of the land was acquired actually, we are not authorized to directly purchase land but it was purchased by the Kentucky Parks Association and donated, but there were some issues with some eminent domain I think, perhaps Sherman's land was taken, you know, we paid a price, the park association paid a price but there were some disagreement as to that, and eventually was taken to eminent domain, I believe. But I know there were incredible numbers of oral histories done in 1960 and 1970 with Hensley and Gibbons residents that tell all kinds of great information up there.

JOHNSON: Oh, that's good.

WILEY: Yes. But Hensley, as you mentioned, I mean it's probably our most popular destination, probably outside the Pinnacle, and it's interesting to see just how much the Job Corpsmen did up there when you look at the photos before and after. Did you have a sense that Corpsmen as a rule, enjoyed doing that kind of work up there? I imagine it was alien to many of them if they were from urban areas?

JOHNSON: I think they did enjoy it. In fact, I think a lot of the Corpsmen enjoyed everything they did at the Job Corps center. I think it was perceived by most of them as a second or third chance. To pull themselves out of the desperation they were in, to build a new life for themselves. And it would be

interesting, I don't know if you are able to contact any of them, but it'll be really interesting to get perspective from them now.

WILEY: Well, I was going to ask if you stayed in touch with any of the staff or Corpsmen over the years.

JOHNSON: No I didn't . . . lost track of just about everybody years ago. In fact one of the things I did last night in prepping for this interview was to pull out my employee . . . association, Park Service membership directory which I just received a few days ago. And I am the only one I know of that worked for Job Corps anywhere. Actually, I think there are a couple that are still in there.

WILEY: I think that in Mammoth Cave, a couple of people like Mr. Riebe, I think, did you know him? He's-

JOHNSON: Oh, I love him. I'm just looking now, Richard Naeder, N-A-E-D-E-R I believe it was.

WILEY: Is he still around?

JOHNSON: I believe I saw where he died a few years ago. They were all, at the time it seemed that they were all much older than me. But that probably is not the case. There are a couple of others that were at the headquarters that were in here but I didn't find any that were at Job Corps. But if you would like for me to go back through the directory, I think I might be able to give you some names of people who were involved at the Washington office, that might be able to give you some background that I can't give, such as the recruitment and that sort of thing.

WILEY: Well, that would be very helpful if you have the time. . . . It looked from some of the minutes of the journals that this Cumberland Gap was used as a training hub for other centers?

JOHNSON: It appeared that way. I didn't realize that until I was reading through the first anniversary of But it does look that way, they apparently had initial training at Cumberland Gap and then moved on and I don't know if it had to do with education, or if it had to do with work programs, or dissatisfaction being in the local area. I don't know what how . . . were affected. But Grover Barham may be able to tell you that; but I didn't know. . . . Some went to Oconaluftee and some went to, one went to Chicago area, Cleveland, maybe it was. So I don't know the rationale, or maybe Delmar can tell you that.

WILEY: You know, the park was pretty young in those days, how was the relationship with the Job Corps center and the park? The two staffs, how did that work out?

JOHNSON: I think it was probably pretty good. I really don't recall any disputes or anything like that but I may have been protected from them. A lot of them, especially the ones in the vocational area, some of the staff actually came from the maintenance department at the park. Gene Miracle, I know you know him, would have been one of them, and I think Carl Webb, I think Carl is no longer with us anymore.

WILEY: Glenn Justice, I guess.

JOHNSON: Probably Justice. Fields Benton I think came from Virginia...

WILEY: Ok. So with the superintendents it looks like... I'm trying to go back to my list of superintendents, but I'm seeing Luckett and Kulesza, if I'm saying that correctly, were superintendents at the time?

JOHNSON: Yes, Luckett was the one who was there initially, apparently during the application process and planning process. And then Jim Kulesza, I think it was Jim, came in not long after the center opened. It was Kulesza.

WILEY: Kulesza [pronounced Cuh-lee-za], alright, thank you. I have not heard that name pronounced. Tell me a little about the sports. It looks like that was a big part of leisure time here, creating the athletic fields and the basketball. Can you tell me a little about that?

JOHNSON: We apparently had some pretty good ball players, baseball, basketball, boxing, and they entered into intramurals between... different Job Corps centers that were in driving distance. And I recall going, I believe it was Morristown, Jim and Carroll Estep for Golden Gloves Boxing. We also had George Foreman visit the center. [WILEY: Oh my] And that was really quite a thing for the community and for the Corpsmen. George Foreman was very, very young, I believe he had just won the Olympics in boxing. And I guess he was doing tours, and getting better known. But that was a neat thing. I don't recall when that happened but I'm sure if you could go back you will be able to find it. There were, as I recall, there were trophies that were won, and the Golden Gloves, and in basketball and baseball, but I don't know if the trophies were just the intramurals, or what they were as far as the softball and the baseball go, I don't think they had a football team.

WILEY: I haven't seen any mention of that, no.

JOHNSON: It seems like the baseball, softball and basketball, and the Golden Gloves Boxing were the major sports.

WILEY: Now, I guess dances were, again with local community . . . I guess this is a two part question. I can see they had some socials with girls brought in from somewhere, or girlfriends visiting, and also that sometimes in the community, like families or members of the community, might host parties or Corpsmen or staff.

JOHNSON: I think mostly it was the community dances that they had, but I did notice in my preparation that there was a Valentine's Day dance that was held. And in fact I saw a picture of myself dancing with one of the Corpsmen in one of the documents that I would use.

WILEY: Oh really?

JOHNSON: Yes. In fact, the Gap did that . . . and had people sleep overnight.

WILEY: We have those in our archives. I'll look them up.

JOHNSON: In March of 1969... there's a dance report on a Valentine's Day, 1969. The pictures are in red, and I'm dancing with a guy—did not have glasses on I was wearing contacts at that point—I was dancing with one of the corpsman and I cannot remember his name. But it's on the right side in the middle.

WILEY: Ok, I will look that up.

JOHNSON: He had on a white shirt and looks like I had a dress, I'm not sure.

WILEY: With the education initiative, it looks like some of the reading was really much needed . . . some basic reading skills needed?

JOHNSON: I don't question that probably some of them were the product of social promotions. And then when they got to high school level they just really couldn't compete. And so I think the remedial, especially the reading and the math was quite necessary for the majority of the Corpsmen. Roger Rector is one who might be able to give you more information on that, because he was in the education department.

WILEY: Ok. We've talked about a little bit, the work in the park . . . hands-on work in the park. Looks like that would have been very beneficial all the way around.

JOHNSON: It would have, it was. I know they built buildings, seems like they built open maintenance facilities. I recall them doing loading docks at the dining facilities. I think they helped in

construction and setting up a staff.... I don't know if you realized or were aware that they actually brought in a double ...triple wide modular homes.

WILEY: I see those in the photos, right where our headquarters are, across from the Bartlett Park area.

JOHNSON: Yes, yes. They were across from the office, the center director's office that I worked in.

WILEY: It looks like also that one of the things supplied for these young men were medical and dental checkups?

JOHNSON: Yes. Yes, whenever Clore came on board, she was the nurse, and she made sure that there was a program set up with a doctor, I believe it was Dr. Smith, to make sure they received physicals and medical care, preventative shots and that sort of thing. And there were a number of Corpsmen that were diagnosed with sickle-cell anemia which may have accounted for some of the loss that wouldn't be otherwise explained. Sickle-cell anemia at our ... was prevalent in the blacks at the time. I haven't heard much about it in recent years, but apparently it was rather ...an infliction to the black community.

WILEY: When you say Dr. Smith, would that be Kenneth Smith, locally, or...?

JOHNSON: I believe it was William, but I'm not sure.

WILEY: Ok, I can probably look that up.

JOHNSON: You can probably look that up, if you like me to.

WILEY: That would be good and I will look in my files too, it's probably written down somewhere.

JOHNSON: But getting back to the sickle-cell, once they were diagnosed with the sickle-cell anemia, they were medically discharged.

WILEY: Ok. Was it not treatable at the time or-?

JOHNSON: Incidentally not.

WILEY: With this, let's go ahead, I guess. As your job evolved over the four years, what was your final position description?

JOHNSON: Secretary to the center director.

WILEY: Ok, and I guess you can fill me in on all this, but I gather when President Nixon came into office, he closed down a number of the Job Corps centers. I'm not sure why Cumberland Gap was chosen, it looked like the people who worked there objected to that and felt that they were doing a lot of good in the community, and for these young men, and I wondered if you could tell me a little about that, what you remember, how it all came about?

JOHNSON: You know, I cannot recall that. Interestingly, looking at the *Gap Gazette*, going back to April of '69, there is no mention of the center being closed. But I remember going to Washington, D.C. late in June, early July, so apparently, the decision was made in the May-June timeframe and very quickly.

WILEY: I can find that if you're interested. I've come across that in the files in front of me, but I think it was a very, very sudden decision. I guess Nixon would have come into office in, well, elected in '68 and then inaugurated in January, so yes, that summer. And I just couldn't read between the lines why Cumberland - you know, not every center was closed - was one of them. So I didn't know if you had any insight into that?

JOHNSON: The only thing I can assume was that it was... a small center. I believe the highest number of Corpsmen we had was around 100. And it may have been that they kept open the larger Job Corps, or the urban Job Corps centers. Again, Grover Barham might be the one who can give you the information on that. Jim Batman, Delmar Robinson might also be able to because he left, he went from Cumberland Gap to, I believe Oconaluftee, and eventually I believe he was the superintendent at Oconaluftee.

WILEY: Ok. With the Corpsmen who were here when it closed, were they sent to different centers?

JOHNSON: I can't recall if they were or not. I guess it was just so busy that I can't focus on what occurred at that point.

WILEY: Ok. Did you feel that ... that this was an overall successful program?

JOHNSON: I thought it was. I thought we had a number of Corpsmen that went on to the army, that went on to jobs, that felt better about themselves, and I thought that the park and the City of Middlesboro, the area, the tri-state area, really benefitted . . . as well as economically, and structure and renovations and improvements, so having had the Job Corps center here for the four years.

WILEY: Well, it certainly seems like it. As I say, I keep discovering more bits of infrastructure that we take for granted that was built by the Job Corps. It's funny to me when I see... you mention the maintenance building... I see these listed as temporary structures and of course they are still standing 50 years later. [Both people laugh] So they did a very thorough job.

JOHNSON: I haven't been there in since 2007, and I don't think I have been back in that particular area, you know, driven back in that area since I left there in '69. But yes, they were temporary buildings, but they were buildings as I recall.

WILEY: ... You know, you hear so much about the CCC and the difference they made to infrastructure and parks, and it really seems to me as I learn more about the Job Corps, not just here, but in Oconaluftee, Mammoth Cave, a lot of places, they were really responsible for building some of the national park infrastructure. And Hensley too. I don't know what would have happened to Hensley.

JOHNSON: I think it would probably have been abandoned. Really... Richard Nader might be able to help you on some information as well if you track him down.

WILEY: Did you say you thought he had passed away, or..?

JOHNSON: I am not sure if he did or not. I did not find his name in the retiree directory. And I don't know if anybody at personnel at the Washington office would be able to track the people or not.

WILEY: Ok, I will follow up on that. I'm just kind of beginning on this project, so that's really helpful to have these names to look up. You mentioned about a first anniversary, did you say, Corpsman Book?

JOHNSON: I think this is the one you said you had. It's the *Corpsman Chronicle*.

WILEY: Oh ok, yes that's-

JOHNSON: It's in the 1966... it was the first anniversary publication.

WILEY: Ok, I think we do have that.

JOHNSON: And that actually matters in a bit of history. The introduction talks about the historical mountain pass, Dr. Thomas Walker, 12,607 people in the city of Middlesboro, and there is a typo on that introduction I am positive it is a typo. It said in September '65 the green light was given by Washington. That had to have been in September of '64.

WILEY: I think that's correct because when we look in the journals, it was September '64 but there was no funding at that time, so the actual construction here did wait until, I guess it started in January of '65 here, but yes, I think you're right it was, it was in '64. Technically last year would have been our 50th You know, we have the four years of, I'm not sure who put together these wonderful journals but they do talk about the wonderful work done, very much specifics in work done and sports and things. But I really enjoy getting your view as somebody who worked here the whole time, so that helps fill in some of the gaps. Is there anything else, and I'm sure as I review this later and start transcribing I will have follow up questions, but can you think of anything else that comes to mind when discussing the Job Corps here?

JOHNSON: It's too bad you didn't talk with Virginia Huff.

WILEY: Oh I did, I should have said.

JOHNSON: Oh, good.

WILEY: Now, I'll qualify that, I had two or three oral history interviews with her ... it would have been 2009 when I first came on board, that was the 50th anniversary of our dedication. And so we talked a lot about the beginnings of the park and her work. Now, I don't recall talking a lot about Job Corps at that time, because at that time I was not as aware as I am now of the contributions. I do want to go back and revisit those tapes though. I want to follow up with her, that's true but, yes she's a wealth of information.

JOHNSON: Oh she was there from beginning to end. ... She was certainly a knowledgeable, professional woman. We didn't get along sometimes, but I admired her and thought she was a professional.

Some of the things that I did there that we haven't touched on were a lot of clerical work, time sheets, back then we used carbon, purchase orders for Delmar, of course I did the interviews with the Corpsmen. I repaired some of the office machines, I operated a teletype machine, had to send a report every morning via teletype. Kept records, backed up Georgia, Georgia Jefferson was the secretary to the center director, backed her up until she retired and then I took over. Interpreted rules and regulations and all of those things helped me as I got into the government contracting field. And when I retired I was director for contracting for Fort Tortuga contracting office.

WILEY: Oh, so you traveled all over.

JOHNSON: I moved on, yes. I was with the park service for I think 14 years, and then I worked for FEMA for four years. And then my husband transferred to the Norfolk, VA area - Newport News area, and then I started to work for the army there, where I worked for something like 18 years. So I moved from the GS-2 corps types to a GM-14.

WILEY: I'm sure over the years, a lot of changes in the management.

JOHNSON: Oh yes, absolutely, and changes not only within the organization, but between organizations.

WILEY: So the relationship- I'm sorry...

JOHNSON: Go ahead.

WILEY: The relationship between the Park Service and the Job Corps, was the Job Corps, at least here at Cumberland Gap, underneath the superintendent? I mean, was James Batman, did he report to the superintendent?

JOHNSON: Yes, I think he really reported two ways: one would be to the Grover Barhams ...to the Washington offices as well as the superintendent, so I think the guidance as far as ... the park came under the superintendent, primarily Kulesza at the time. And then the Grover Barhams of the world came from the Washington office, the Job Corps direction and guidance.

WILEY: Ok, so where you ended up, you were secretary to the superintendent. [JOHNSON: Yes] And so were you basically second in charge there?

JOHNSON: Administratively, yes, but other supervisors who were, you know, we had for example, administrative assistants, and that was the Delmar Robinson position, we had Corpsmen supervisors, we had a Corpsmen supervision and education officer, we [had] work program officers, so as far as the education and the work programs there were supervisors that were more scored... . I guess assistants to the center director, but I was secretary.

WILEY: Ok. Well you've given me a tremendous amount of information. I really appreciate it. I'm going to go back over this, follow up on some things with you as I look them up, if that's alright. I will send you an email with information and like I said, probably a couple of questions as I review this. And I do appreciate it, and if you have anything else, I would love to hear from you, I will send you this recording and you can listen to it and decide if there is something else you remembered

JOHNSON: No, I can't think of... oh! One thing we did have that the community really enjoyed, as well as many of the Corpsmen not only from the Gap, but I think they came from up in Kentucky and maybe from Oconaluftee as well, and that was Paul Revere and the Raiders put on a concert in town.

WILEY: Oh I think I saw that mentioned, yes.

JOHNSON: And it was awesome [laughs].

WILEY: [Laughs] Well...did they go to Nashville one time as well and had a lot of good outings?

JOHNSON: They did a lot of good outings. In fact I remember one story. They saw a woodchuck on the side of the road and one of them said, "Oh look at that baby bear" and just pleased forever for that one.

WILEY: [Laughs] ...

JOHNSON: Couple of funny stories. Jim Batman was always a joker and I don't know if you want to hear this or not. [WILEY: Sure, yes] Well ok, a bit of a funny story. One day, Jim, I was still a corps typist, and one day he had given me a project to work on that he really wanted to have right away. And then he decided to take me up and help pay the Corpsmen. And as I recall we went up to the maintenance building and they were in a long line, and we gave each of them, and they signed for, \$15 in cash. And that was, I don't know if that was a monthly allotment or a weekly allotment. But it was pretty small amount and he never made me do that before. And so I fussed with him, "But you wanted me to get this done right away." And he said, "I know, but I need your help with this. I do need the other thing done right away, but, this thing has priority for the moment." So ok, I trudge along with him up to the maintenance building and we pay the Corpsmen and I go back down and he said, "Now don't forget, I want you to finish that document as quickly as you can." So I went back to my desk and my old royal typewriter, manual... and it wouldn't type, it would not type. I could not get the keys to work. So I don't know if you ever seen the old royal manuals or not.

WILEY: Oh yes, we had one.

JOHNSON: But they have a lid you pull off so you get to the keys, and sometimes they would get stuck, so you have to go in and very delicately separate the keys so they continue to work properly. So I pulled that cover off and there was a turtle on top of the keys, no wonder they didn't work.

WILEY: ... a live turtle?

JOHNSON: A live turtle. I pulled that cover off and as I discovered the turtle, I threw it backwards behind me. And young Batman and Delmar Robinson and I don't know who else was standing behind me and they absolutely roared and the cover almost hit Jim Batman in the head. So he almost got his just dessert, but we all had a laugh over that. Then I realized why he wanted to send me away from the office for a while, so they can plant the turtle. Another time I walked into his office one morning, and there were a pair of women's legs, standing up on his chair. They were inflatable legs. And he knew I would see those and scream, and the other guys would enjoy them. He was, he was a jokester, and he made it fun to work there.

WILEY: It sounds like it was fun, and I would have thought the exciting time in the history of the park really, ... setting things up and being on the ground floor of the creation of a national park.

JOHNSON: And it happened very quickly from my perspective. If the decision was made, a crew was made in September and it opened in June, I think things happened very quickly to have that much facilities and equipment and ready to run in a six month period. I think is pretty amazing.

WILEY: Yes. Well, this has been a pleasure. Wilma, thank you so much, I will be back in touch very soon and please don't hesitate to call if you think of anything else.

THIS TRANSCRIPT HAS BEEN EDITED FOR CLARITY AND EASE OF READING. THE ORIGINAL IS ON FILE AT CUMBERLAND GAP NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK.