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Ed Rizzotto
October 28, 2013

Interview conducted by Alison Steiner
Transcribed by Teresa Bergen
Digitized by Marissa Lindsey

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ANPR Oral History Project

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The narrator has reviewed and corrected the transcript.

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[START OF TRACK 1]

Alison Steiner: Okay. It's October 28, 2013. I'm Alison Steiner. I'm interviewing Ed Rizzotto.

Ed Rizzotto: Rizzotto.

Alison Steiner: Rizzotto.

Ed Rizzotto: Mm hmm.

Alison Steiner: And we're at the ANPR Ranger Rendezvous number 36 in Saint Louis, Missouri. And I always like to start interviews talking a little bit about your background. Going way back, where you were born, what year you were born. Early, early history leads up to—

Ed Rizzotto: Well at my age, there's a lot of way back to go. I was born in 1944. I'm almost a baby boomer. I grew up in a residential town, historic residential town south of Boston, where we still have the oldest church in continuous use in the country, the oldest coed school, second daycare in the country. We also have the original Talbot's women's clothing store. [Comment: The locals also call it the "mother store."] But more significantly, it was where the Lincoln family came from. The president was the sixth generation of a family that landed in Hingham. And little-known fact, if you go to Colonial [National Historic Park], and you see the surrender of Cornwallis, he is, everybody knows who Cornwallis is, a British commander. He was surrendering to a Major General Benjamin Lincoln from Hingham who was an ancestor of the president, but the connection was never made, who became the first secretary of the war. And so, there were Lincolns doing things.

Ed Rizzotto: In fact, another Lincoln, Levi who later came U. S. attorney general, from that same family, right after the Revolutionary War, looked at the new constitution, every state had a new constitution. Looked at the Massachusetts constitution. It doesn't mention the king anymore, and it didn't allow for slavery. He went to court in like 1781 and slavery was abolished in Massachusetts way before everybody else got to it. While the judge allowed the plaintiff slaves to be freed, not all Massachusetts slaves were emancipated for various reasons. So, it was a cool town to be in on the seashore.

Ed Rizzotto: But my park roots go back to maybe Boy Scouts. In the eighth grade, I don't know quite how the assignment was given out, and my eighth-grade teacher had us writing essays. And I wrote an essay, why I wanted to be a park ranger. Apparently, she had a pretty weak field of essays because she put mine into a contest, and I won a two-week scholarship to a conservation camp in the Berkshires. So, I decided to be a park ranger pretty energetically a long time ago. My first degree and my second degree both involved park management. I later went on at the graduate school. But I actually was somebody who knew what they wanted to do all

along. It was fun because it ended up being many more things than I knew a park ranger would be. Way beyond my imagination. Not only did I get to do different jobs in different places, I got to travel to every state at least once, and I got to every continent at least once, except for Antarctica. And I'm still having fun. I'm building a house now, but as soon as the house is done, I'm probably going to do some contract work for Washington. And there's an international project called Rangers Across Borders at the IRF, the International Ranger Federation runs. And I'm going to do some work with them, too.

Ed Rizzotto: My father worked till he was at least 93. I don't think I'm going to do that. But I really, it's such a nice thing to be doing. Not so much the way I did it, but what I was doing. You'd see all these other people who didn't like their jobs. They were doing things that most of us go, oh, I don't want to be a corrections officer, whatever it would have been. I understand the government has a lot of good purposes, but to me, being a park ranger is just the top. Yeah.

Alison Steiner: Going way back, you mentioned the eighth grade. Can you talk maybe a little bit about what your mother and father did? What they were like. And then kind of what led you to write an essay about wanting to be a park ranger that early on.

Ed Rizzotto: My folks are pretty common people. Blue collar. My grandparents were all born in Italy. My mom was a telephone operator. If you know who Lily Tomlin is, I don't know if you're quite old enough, but she was a comedian on television who'd sit there at a switchboard, plugging cables and tell jokes. My mother did that without the jokes, and then she was a service rep. You could actually go in then to meet a service rep if you had a question about your telephone bill or wanted to add something to your telephone, you could actually sit down with somebody. That's what my mother did.

Ed Rizzotto: My father was a carpenter. He originally built wooden boats. Then he went on to do remodeling and cabinets. The first time he retired, he was the deputy chief of maintenance for our school system. He could kind of fix everything. During World War Two, he worked in the shipyard. He was good with metal and wood and all that stuff. But they were just, you know, town folks. You know, I mean, good people. I love my parents. I don't mean that. Don't misunderstand me. But they gave me a nice beginning in a nice town with a decent education. Neither of them went to college, of course, but I was exposed to a lot of things.

Ed Rizzotto: Mom was unusual in that we would visit local sites, even when we didn't have visitors, if you know what I'm saying. So, we would go on day trips here and day trips there. We didn't have a designated summer thing. We didn't really have summers off. I took my longest vacation last year. It was three weeks. I started working when I was 14.

Ed Rizzotto: But we had basic beginning. Nice education and good folks, good values. My father's generation had had some discrimination. You know, Italian immigrants. I remember making a joke one time with my brother. I called my brother a guinea, which is a pejorative for Italian. My father was like the other side of the house. But he could not have come quicker if he'd run through the walls. He sat us down and he took advantage of that moment to explain we didn't do that, our family didn't do that, we didn't do that to others. So, he made a good lesson that just because you were discriminated against didn't mean you had to do it again. And he rolled those lessons off to my brothers and I. So, they were blue collar people, but they were pretty good folks.

Ed Rizzotto: Part of my upbringing was woods and outdoors and Boy Scouts. I'm still involved. I sponsor Eagle Scouts. Every now and then, if it's the right Eagle Scout, I give him a guest membership to the ANPR, thinking maybe they'll get nudged down that path. But when I think of it, it's surprised me. Because it's been really pretty good.

Ed Rizzotto: I was in a bad accident in the military. I was an army officer for a little bit. But I've been lucky, lucky, lucky.

Alison Steiner: So, going back to when you were in the Boy Scouts—

Ed Rizzotto: Yeah.

Alison Steiner: And kind of that essay that you wrote, I guess what did you think of when you thought about a park ranger? What did you envision that experience or life to be?

Ed Rizzotto: Well, our troop was very oriented towards strenuous and outdoor activities. We would take what they call beeline hikes, which means we would go to a point, pick out a topo map, and then set a straight compass bearing up and over the White Mountains, down ledges, into almost impossible situations. [Comment: The story happened in New Hampshire (Green Mountains) versus Vermont (White Mountains)]. And when we came out, see how close we had been to what we thought we would be. We were always very close. We would go out and practice our skills. I can remember, when you're a younger Boy Scout there's a hike you do, and you have to do a meal; it's a five-mile hike. And a bunch of us did it as a group. I planned ahead, thinking what would be a good thing to do for this? I took the five-mile hike. We got to the spot. And everybody else had planned a different way. You had to have a meat and a vegetable, a grain. It had to be a balanced meal. And almost everybody else did a hot dog, a carrot stick, and they toasted a slice of white bread over the fire.

Ed Rizzotto: I get out my little kit. I had flour in a little sack. I cut up my beef. I browned my beef in a pot. I added vegetables. You know, carrots and celeries and potatoes, which I peeled. I mean, I didn't do anything ahead of time. And I cooked beef stew from scratch. I made some Bisquick dough and I had some Bisquick biscuits. Unfortunately, everybody else

had to wait like an hour and a half for me to finish so they could all leave. But you know, I always enjoyed that. I was a leader in Boy Scouts. I ended being with the Boy Scouts, even through college, as assistant Scout master, taking other kids and trying to teach them stuff. Outdoor skills and values. So, I think the Boy Scouts helped. The fact that my leaders in Boy Scouts were doing things that weren't just in gymnasiums and all of that. Working with other people who were very involved. Living maybe out of the city but getting in to see the historic sites. Seeing other people who were doing ranger stuff of various kinds because we visited parks. Just somehow the values that bubbled through it. It was probably pretty subtle, but I just thought, this is what I wanted to do.

Ed Rizzotto: And then I had people like the eighth-grade teacher. Who on her own really helped me. You know, I had never been to camp before. We didn't have a ton of money. So, people like that, just here and there.

Ed Rizzotto: I am still in contact with my college advisor. We did the same things in college. I was his assistant. That's how I got money to go to school. I built my first building – my first park building, is a shelter on a long trail that goes from Connecticut up to New Hampshire. It's been designated in the national trail system. Everybody else along there had built three-sided Adirondack lean-tos. I got this project; we were going to do it with the students in the class we worked with, the professor I worked with. He was lining up materials. We built a four-sided solid cabin with glass windows. Five bunks, or ten mattresses. An overhang with a wood shelter. A fieldstone floor. I came up with a giant circular fireplace design. We adapted a chicken brooder, which is a big, wide metal hood. And then we adapted it to a pipe. And then a 55-gallon drum. And then another pipe out through the ceiling. So, you could sit around inside this fire pit. You could enjoy the fire. You could, you know, cook. The heat would go up. We welded a box into the 55-gallon drum. So as the smoke went around it, you could bake things in the box, and then it would eventually go out the roof. It was an elegant building. Well, that's a little over the top, but for a trail shelter, it was pretty cool.

Ed Rizzotto: That was my first building. It was a college experience with people who enjoyed the outdoors like I did and benefited people who were hiking that trail. I mean, they would have been in Adirondack shelters and gone like, "Holy cow! This is the real deal." It was fun.

Ed Rizzotto: I ended up doing a lot of building in my lifetime. Projects of various kinds. When I was at Gateway, I had like 30 million dollars. It was just there at the right moment; we were getting our construction money. All of those little skills, some of them from my dad, because he was a builder, carpenter planner type. And part of it because my first job in Washington was with the old Park Practice program. And what that program involved – they don't do it anymore, because it's one of these things they don't have money to do. But we had people in the field who would visit parks

and facility managers and all that, and they'd look at the innovations that had happened in those parks.

Ed Rizzotto: One of my designs actually made it into the magazines. But it was *Grist* and *Park Practice and Design.* And what it was is we would simplify and then publish park buildings, park structures, maintenance tricks, park philosophies. It was a series of magazines. So, we'd capture stuff from all over the country. From our parks, federal parks, and also from state parks, things like that. The boss was always traveling. And then we'd, on a subscription basis, we'd go out to not only park sites everywhere, but all of our partners.

Ed Rizzotto: So, you could go into design, they were organized using loose leaf binders and you could go to the toilet section, and you could look at 20 or 30 other designs that have worked someplace. And you thought, I can use that. I don't have to necessarily start from scratch. Or you'd see something that a maintenance person had done someplace. You could either copy it right out of the publication. Or right down at the bottom, it said here's the contact. So maybe you could go and get their blueprints, or you could say, gee, I want to make a version of this. So, it was a wonderful opportunity to learn things and then share things with other people working in parks.

Alison Steiner: And when was this?

Ed Rizzotto: Oh, it was a long time ago. In the '60s. Yeah. I'm as old as I look. I point at my bald head and I tell people I came by this quite honestly. I earned it.

Alison Steiner: So, is that your first NPS job?

Ed Rizzotto: I had held municipal park positions earlier, but that was my first NPS job. I got it – this is on tape, though. I got it in this funny way. As I told you, I just really wanted to be a park ranger in the park service. At the time, I was studying park administration at U Mass, Amherst. There was a fellow named Connie Wirth, who may sound familiar to you. He was a director of the park service. But he also graduated from the same school I had.

Ed Rizzotto: He came back to guest lecture one week. As part of that, we had a little coffee thing, you know. So, we could schmooze. Connie was talking to my advisor, and I was standing there listening. And he said, "You know, we should have somebody from the program down in Washington."

Ed Rizzotto: My advisor, he was a nice enough guy, but not particularly energetic, said, "Well, how about Ed?" I was only standing two feet away. It was the easiest choice. I was really pleased with the choice. So, I got to go to Washington for my first job. And some people said I'd get it out of the way. I've worked in Washington since, but I've never been stationed there after that. I was able to go on to other things. My next station was in Yellowstone.

Ed Rizzotto: And in Yellowstone, I worked at Lake, which has been completely restored. The old ranger station is now a National Historic Landmark. I have looked at the Register [National Register of Historic Places]

nomination papers. I'm not even mentioned. I'm sure that's an oversight. But I met great people there. Rick Smith, who was the second president of ANPR, he and I were seasonal roommates. You know, neither of us knew if we were ever going to get to be permanent. He went into the Peace Corps and got in. I went in another way. But it seems to have worked out. Certainly, Rick has done a lot – if you know Rick. Yeah. Pretty good guy. He was also an international president [International Federation of Rangers] and consultant. So, I was lucky to come upon people who inspired me. People who taught me. People who let me see things.

Ed Rizzotto: My sub-district ranger there put me in charge of a small fire crew. People kept on giving me chances to do stuff. And I don't know if I let them down, but boy, I had fun. [Comment: Near the end of my Yellowstone time, NPS Founders' Day, August 25th, occurred and it was treated a little like Christmas by the rangers and some of the emergency medical clinic personnel, most of whom would not be together on the coming December 25th. In private quarters, there were ornamented trees and other decorations, the sharing of food, drink, small presents and celebration. There was also a bit of melancholy knowing that many of us were leaving and so contact lists were shared and people were looking forward to re-gathering the next year. It was really clear how special our service was to everyone.]

Alison Steiner: So, going back again—

Ed Rizzotto: Sorry.

Alison Steiner: Oh, no. This is how all interviews are. (laughs) You were talking about both in Boy Scouts, trips that you did with your Boy Scout troop.

Ed Rizzotto: Mm hmm.

Alison Steiner: Then kind of moving into college, it sounds like you built a shelter and you said you kind of did that with friends who were also outdoorsy. I guess I'm wondering, was it unusual? Your interest and involvement in outdoor activities, was that unusual at the time? Or was that part of the community you were in?

Ed Rizzotto: I don't know. Yeah. I don't think the interest in activities was unusual. The college thing was. I was the first one to graduate in that program at UMass. So, there weren't very many people being, there were plenty of other things to be trained in – forestry, wildlife biology, biology, landscape architecture. I actually minored in those. But my major was park administration. And I was the first class in two schools in that program. Both as an associate and then later on as a bachelor candidate.

Alison Steiner: And have people in that program, do you know people from that program who've moved on to the NPS to have successful careers? Or did they go in different directions?

Ed Rizzotto: Before I retired, and I can't name one of them now, I kept a mailing list of people like that on my e-mail. So, every now and then I would see

something. And then I would share it with the other UMass grads. And they certainly are out there. I mean, Connie Wirth probably was the first. [Comment: Connie Wirth was NPS director from 1951 – 1964 and started his NPS career in 1931.] But the fellow just down south, I can't think of his name, is a superintendent. So, there are still people doing that. The curriculum has changed a little bit. It's probably, it was self-deprecating, but they refined it. I was like the prototype, but I wasn't the final product, thank God. And I'm glad people still are doing that. I think it's tough to be, you know, it's very hard with the park service getting smaller, to get people on permanent.

Ed Rizzotto: I always use the Andy Fischer story when I tell people, I'm not sure if it encourages them or discourages them. Andy worked; I was in the regional office. He was district ranger at Cape Cod National Seashore. And he retired as chief ranger at the Grand Tetons. He was ranger of the year in the Intermountain Regional Office. Whole career, stellar performance. Everybody who ever worked with him said if I had to pick somebody out, he'd be the top two or three. And this was a while ago. He worked 11 summers before he could be permanent. You know, the fact that people hang with us and learn and finally get on board. It's just so gratifying that they really understand how important it is, want to do it.

Ed Rizzotto: And I had people who brought me through the same way, at college, you know, summer jobs, you know. I started doing park work as a summer experience first year in college. I worked for a municipal system for two years. When I was in the military, because I was drafted out of school, I did the Vietnam thing. Not my fault. I was sent. I didn't volunteer. I was sent. But when I came back, I was in an army base, and as I said, I had a little injury. And so, they couldn't send me to a military unit, per se, they put me on staff as a Deputy Post Engineer. And we get into a conservation program. It was something called the Nashua River Water Association. We took our park service skills, I did and others who worked with me, and we created green belts along the river. And we took the river from being one of the most polluted rivers in the country to one you can now swim and fish in. but which is all protected with like open space on both sides. And we were lucky.

Ed Rizzotto: Now, again, this is not the park service. The bar is really low. The army is definitely not the park service. And there's good parts of the army. But our program was selected as the best conservation program worldwide in the army that year. Now, again, the army isn't really a conservation organization. But we were very successful. And those park service skills, things I'd picked up, things I'd learned from the Park Practice Program, people I could reach out and ask for advice. People I'd worked with who inspired me. People taught me, you know, what I could do if I tried hard, had faith in me.

Ed Rizzotto: You know, this idea that you would go out and you would do 25 miles a day on foot, on patrol. I played soccer. I ran track. But if you said to me,

"You know, every day at work you're going to hike 25 miles a day up and over the Rockies," I'm going, "I am?" But then I did. So, it was an evolution. I'm not sure it's successful. But certainly fun.

Alison Steiner: So, I'm looking at your resume, so I'm following you on the dates and everything.

Ed Rizzotto: Yeah. I'm jumping around.

Alison Steiner: Well, I just want to make sure since this is a recording that we kind of just go through exactly the progression that you're talking about. So, you were in school at UMass-Amherst.

Ed Rizzotto: Yep. Doing summers in parks.

Alison Steiner: Okay. And was one of those summers the Park Practice? Or was that—

Ed Rizzotto: That was a summer. It was a Park Practice summer. Yeah.

Alison Steiner: So, in 1965 was a summer.

Ed Rizzotto: Mm hmm. Yeah. That's when I ran into Connie Wirth, a former director.

Alison Steiner: And then in 1966, was your experience in Yellowstone also a summer job?

Ed Rizzotto: Yeah, it was. I was ultimately going back to graduate school. I thought, anyway. I thought.

Alison Steiner: Okay. And then at that point, you said that you were drafted while you were in school.

Ed Rizzotto: Well, I was going to be drafted. It was a weird thing. I got a letter to take a physical. And I said, why would they want to waste their time giving me a physical?

Ed Rizzotto: So, I called up my draft warden. It's a completely different thing now. I said, "You know, you sent me this letter for a physical. But I'm a graduate student."

Ed Rizzotto: He said, "Well, sort of." I said, "Well, why would you want to give me a physical?"

Ed Rizzotto: He looked at his little papers. He said, "You're probably going to be in the September calls." That meant they were going to draft me. I was in grad school, okay? I was going to lose my deferment.

Ed Rizzotto: Every county made their own rules. Each had a quota. Every county made their own rules. And in my county, they did not give graduate deferments. Okay?

Ed Rizzotto: So, I had a job that year. I was supposed to go out to what was called the Western Office of Design and Construction. This was before Denver Service Center. They used to have one in east coast, west coast and in DC, before they consolidated in Denver.

Ed Rizzotto: I gave up that job. And I stuck around to deal with my options in the army, whatever it was going to be. Because I didn't think just getting drafted was going to be very selective. Something I left out. It's serendipitous, but my senior undergraduate year in school, one of my friends who wasn't going to graduate school, had wanted a job as a park manager down in the state of Connecticut system. He convinced several of us to take the civil service exam. The idea was, if several of us took it, they would administer the exam on campus. So, we did it as a favor to him. I thought we should all get some experience in civil service, and I never thought anything more of it.

Ed Rizzotto: About the time I got my notice from my selective service issue with being drafted, I also got a letter from the State of Connecticut saying I was the one who passed the test. My classmates hadn't. And could I come for the interview? And I said, I've got time on my hands now.

Ed Rizzotto: I went down there, and I had a very nice interview. Frankly, they were enamored of the park service. They realized that if the park service had made the mistake twice of hiring me, then why didn't they?

Ed Rizzotto: I explained to them that I was going into the military. And they said, "We'll hire you for as long as you can work for us."

Ed Rizzotto: And so even though it was kind of an accident, I got some experiences there as an assistant superintendent of a state park on Long Island Sound. And learned a lot of things there. Then the army thing was going along. I was trying to figure out what I would enroll in to avoid the draft, and I ended up enrolling as an army engineer to go to Officers' Candidate School. They gave me an option of 120 days to delay entry, to get my affairs in order. Well, I could get my affairs in order in the next 20 minutes. I had maybe two suitcases, a second-hand car and nothing else in the world.

Ed Rizzotto: But I took the 120 days and I stayed with Connecticut and they put me into the central office. One of my minors had been landscape architecture and design. The park administration program involves a lot of kind of interesting things. I came in and they lost a person. So, I ended up working with their budget person, drafting maps and plans and sketches for their capital works budget for their next several years, of the state park program in Connecticut. They got the most money they ever got. I don't think it was my hard work or ideas, but somehow that package of stuff that the bunch of us worked on there in Hartford really turned a lot of hearts and eyes or whatever in the right direction in the capital in Hartford. The next thing you know, they just got the biggest appropriation to rebuild parks and roads and buildings and put in stuff.

Ed Rizzotto: I got to design one of them. It's on the shore in Westport. I took a *Grist* design and I adapted it. I took a simple, central building that was a concession stand where you'd walk up and get your hamburger or your sandwich, that kind of a window counter thing. And then I extended it. So,

we made the building longer and each end became a picnic shelter. So now you could go there and get food. And we would put toilets into it. If it's a cloudy day or a nasty day, you could be under cover. It's still there. Yeah. That was probably like my second real building. I built huts when I was a kid. But the trail shelter and then the one down in Westport was my second one.

Ed Rizzotto: And so even that summer that I wanted to be on the west coast and at the WODC [Western Office of Design and Construction] ended up being good experience. The summer was good on the shore. That was the summer of '67. And staying up with the Red Sox then is a reminder of now, because they were peaking. They're in the World Series again, with the same team, the Saint Louis Cardinals. They didn't win it all in '67. I think they're going to do better now.

Ed Rizzotto: But the summer was still rewarding. I was living with the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps]. Some of the buildings of the park had been built by them. Connie Wirth had been involved in that, directing the NPS – state park CCC program from 1933 – 1942.

Ed Rizzotto: The winter in Hartford worked out very well. And then I went into the service. I earned engineering skills and construction and a bunch of other stuff that became helpful and handy along the way in park work. I went off with military training, training other people in construction. I was an officer in Vietnam, which wasn't quite as happy. I was in a bad accident.

Ed Rizzotto: But when I got back, I got to do this thing at Fort Devens. Because I had been injured, I got to go into conservation again. So even, in a perverse way, that worked out, too. You know, I had little blips, but I always had something lucky that would happen to me. It was always interesting. I was always learning a lot. I mean, you would look at me and say I didn't learn much. But you don't know where I came from. I mean, I did.

Alison Steiner: So, was there anything you learned in your work with the park service that helped you when you were in the army? And then I guess vice versa. When you left the army and you moved back into conservation, were there certain skills or practices that you took with you from that experience that helped you move forward?

Ed Rizzotto: Yeah. I mean, we had a real conservation program in the army. I had a background in plant materials, in construction, in outdoor recreation, in trail systems. I also got to design a piece of the Appalachian Trail.

Ed Rizzotto: But you know, when people are in the east and they see the parks, they sometimes I think lose sight of what a broad experience it is to work for the park system. Okay? I once had the smallest National Park Service site in the country. It's the Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Historic Site in Philadelphia. It is, I think, a tenth of an acre. Maybe even a little bit less. It's a very small row house. He was a military engineer who came over from Poland and volunteered with George Washington and taught the

rudimentary American forces how to build barricades against cannonballs and angles of fire. Anyway, it's the smallest unit. It's a very simple place. A janitor can run it most of the time.

Ed Rizzotto: But when you get to the other places, there's all kinds of things that you are doing in your parks that can relate to municipal management, state parks, education. You know, we haven't talked about the high school I ran. So, there were lots of bits and pieces of work jobs I'd had and things that translated to park work. Because park work is just, if you go to the right place, park work is almost anything you can imagine. You know, I'll talk to people now who want to work with the park service. They'll sometimes say things like, "Oh, but the park service would never have any need for that." I almost would challenge people to pick out a career and then not find someplace that a park or a regional office or something wouldn't need that service.

Ed Rizzotto: I benefited from that because I was in the park service, and I tried lots of different things. My friends say that, "Well, you didn't work out in this, and they tried you in that. You didn't work out on that." Whatever reason it was, it was fun. I got to stay in the park service. I got to see the broad definition of being a ranger, a caretaker for resources and people. Even here, I had fun. The slogan, "Stewards for Parks, Visitors and Each Other." You know that slogan? It's on the cover of *Ranger* magazine. Okay? I was on the board and that was my suggestion. And it's there four times a year. And it came from my experience.

Ed Rizzotto: You know, the park service is the first thing. And then when the visitors came, we had to care for them. And some of them needed more help than others. We know that, right? It's on tape but we won't share it with visitors, right? And then we had to care for each other. Because we're watching each other's back, you know, doing tough things. Kind of like the army in that way. Besides whatever the big purpose was there, you had to have each other. Not always a lot of scrapes, but kind of be watching out for each other. Good life lessons, you know?

Alison Steiner: When you left the army, it looks like you stayed actually quite a while working, looks like the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

Ed Rizzotto: That's right. Yeah.

Alison Steiner: And some other, I guess, non-park service jobs. I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about those experiences. And then it looks like after that, you went back into the actual park service.

Ed Rizzotto: Yeah. When I got out of the army, there's a freeze in the park service. Okay? On the other hand, Connecticut for whatever reason had been, you know, the service had been okay there. They had a freeze on, too, but it was a smaller organization. I'd worked in the office of the state park

director. And he went to the governor, literally, and they made an exception to my hiring back.

Ed Rizzotto: And so, I went there. I had a family by then. I had a couple of kids and a wife. The jobs actually overlapped. I was still finishing up army conservation projects and starting state park projects. I supervised a small group of state parks not too far from Hartford. In the end, I was still sort of going back and forth. Obviously not being paid by both. I don't want the taxpayers to get upset about this. And I also got to go back to grad school then, too. So, I stayed on for a while.

Ed Rizzotto: Did good things there. The state parks were mini versions of the federal parks, so we were doing interpretative programs, development programs. I was one of the founders of something called the ITI, Interpreters' Training Institute. In New England and in New York, we started a program every spring where we would gather resources, training resources, from within the park service and from the various state parks. And then we would host this like at a camp in May. What it was was the orientation for all those organizations' interpreters. Each state would send people, the national parks that were local would send some people. And rather than each of us having to run a program, we ran a program with all our resources. And that went on for many years. It may still exist. So, I was actually working back in some ways with the park service then. Because we hosted the ITI in Connecticut at least three of those years. And I did YCC [Youth Conservation Corps], YACC, which were also programs that existed in the federal government.

Alison Steiner: And can you just explain what the YCC and YACC—

Ed Rizzotto: YCC was the Youth Conservation Corps. What it was a summer program for kids between the age of 15 and 18 who wanted to experience outdoor conservation work. It was a mixture of kids from all backgrounds. One thing was, we screened for serious criminal backgrounds, but otherwise, we almost took randomly from the pool of applicants. So, we ended up with kids who were very affluent, kids who were not very affluent, people who were in the city, people who lived outside. It was great doing this work. One, they learned a lot. Each crew of 12 had two teacher-leaders in vans. So some of it was outdoor environmental education, and some of it was what we would call spike camping. They would go to a site and maybe work on a trail or a trail bridge. Or we'd clear an overlook and they'd have lessons from biologists and scientists assigned to, while they were there. And it was a great summer experience. They were paid for it, too. But there were other things going on as well. The Young Adult Conservation Corps or YACC was a similar year-round program employing slightly older but still young adults.

Ed Rizzotto: I remember when the YCC spike camped, some of the kids had never camped before. They lived from very urban situations. One of the first times out, I remember one of the counselors talking about, the city kids

were up all night. There were crickets or something like that. And they didn't know what that was. But they out in the woods and they were these tough kids, you know, city kids, were very nervous about being in the woods. And they got over it.

Ed Rizzotto: The exurban kids, Greenwich and Stamford was part of our region, very wealthy kids. When it was a late day and we went spike camping, they sometimes would get dropped off at nine or ten o'clock at night in these very nasty neighborhoods in the city. And so those kids, they were very ill at ease as well, for a different reason.

Ed Rizzotto: Then you'd see them come through the summer. And they'd learn about each other. Often whites, I mean, they learned lots of things about each other. They learned about the outdoors. We always made sure that they had projects that they could remember. So besides the menial stuff, so maybe at some point they did gather trash or something, they would always have a bridge or a trail or an overlook or something that they had built that they could go back to. That stuff is still there, I mean, in some cases. It's not national parks. But little steppingstones for people who are just learning about the outdoors. I wander all over. I'm sorry.

Alison Steiner: That's fine. You mentioned that during this period where you were working for the state—

Ed Rizzotto: Yeah.

Alison Steiner: —that you at this point had a family.

Ed Rizzotto: The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

Alison Steiner: Okay. At this point, you had a family. And I was just wondering if you could back up a little bit and tell me about your family.

Ed Rizzotto: Well, yeah. I'm not married anymore, but I'm friends with my former wife. She was always a great mom and a great teacher. And if you know my two daughters, you see how they benefited. One of my daughters is now getting her master's in special education. She has two kids. The other daughter is in human resources. Both kids I'm really proud of. You know, people, my friends look at them and they say, "Julie," Julie's my former wife, "Julie really had a hand in this." Again, I'm lucky. I'm close to the kids. We do things together. We've been to the Grand Canyon. Melissa's been to an IRF International Ranger Federation meeting in Australia with me. They love Cape Cod like I do. That's where I'm building a house. That's part of, I guess, family. My dad purchased some land on a lake in Cape Cod back in the '60s. And my mom passed away; she had cancer. And I didn't really know my dad had that property. But when I went back to help him out as he got older, he was grousing about tax bills.

Ed Rizzotto: And I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, I thought he was talking about the house he was living in. It wasn't just that. It was his Cape Cod house lot on a lake with a solar aspect. It's on the north side of the lake. So, the lake side, the big glass window, I've designed the house

with big glass solar windows, was in the right spot. Big trees. We saved all the trees. We took down three trees to build everything. The guys who drove trucks and delivered stuff hate me. But it's all come out very nice. It's a very – it's not in my resume, but I was an accessibility coordinator for a while.

Alison Steiner: A what coordinator?

Ed Rizzotto: Accessibility coordinator. Which meant that was a regional person who would answer and manage issues about handicapped accessibility and civil rights. So that when people were in a development situation, early on there were not standards for outdoor facilities for handicapped. So, you kind of had to adapt them and invent them along the way. We were doing that in our own parks, and we also did that with the external program. I'm jumping off a little bit here. But they were programs where the park service existed to help state parks and other people like that.

Ed Rizzotto: But my house down on the cape, the family house, I designed it. It's accessible. It's extremely energy efficient. It just hugs the trees. It's got four levels. It's a narrow lot. But other than the third level, there's a deck, and there's a 22-inch oak tree that goes right up through the middle of it. And you can reach out windows and touch trees. So, my family has maybe benefited from what I learned in the park service. And my family reinforces my love for the park service. So anyway, I've got two daughters and I have two grandchildren.

Alison Steiner: And what year did you get married, and then what years were your daughter born?

Ed Rizzotto: I got married just after I graduated from college, just as I was starting to the army. And both of my kids were born while I was in the army. Okay? One of them is, to me, the second important person from Shirley, Massachusetts. You have to be an outdoor detail person to know who Benton McKay was. He was the one who thought of, he created the original Appalachian Trail. And he was born in this little town in Massachusetts where my youngest daughter was also born. So, they were my important people from Shirley.

Ed Rizzotto: This is how small Shirley was. I went looking for Melissa's birth certificate. I got the address of the town hall. I go to this village of Shirley. And there's nothing that even looked like a town hall, let alone the address I had. But I went up to the door. I said, these people live here. They must know where the town hall is.

Ed Rizzotto: I knocked on the door. A woman came there. She was very polite. I said, "Gee, I've got this address. I'm looking for the town hall." I said, "Where is it?" She said, "Well, this is it." I said, "Really?" She said, "Well, I'm the town clerk. The town hall is my kitchen table."

Ed Rizzotto: Okay. So, Melissa, my youngest daughter, and Ben MacKaye came out of this little town. [Comment: Besides conceiving the Appalachian Trail,

Benton MacKaye was also a founder of the Wilderness Society.] It was fun when I later got to work on the Appalachian Trail. When it went from being a voluntary trail, if you know what I mean, there were people who owned private land, said, "Sure, you can use my place" until they died or something happened. The trail would wiggle a lot. It always went from where it started to end. But in between, it wasn't in public ownership in many cases. So well into the '70s, it would wiggle. It might go to a nicer green spot, but it might also go roadside. Because whoever owned the property the trail went over, it might be changing purposes. It might be developing for houses. Maybe they left it to their kids, the kids didn't want the trail going through their backyard.

Ed Rizzotto: In the '70s, park service got authority to make it a permanent trail. I got to work on that when I was in Connecticut, too. I got to design a piece of the trail in western Connecticut. It was an area where the trail was temporarily going down a roadside, and we wanted to get it off roadside. So, I ran some various routes up, just west of where Kent School is. And I found one I thought worked out really well and they adopted it. It's a teeny piece of a very long trail. But it was fun doing it. And it was fun because of, there was this little connection back to that town where the original people had come from who had thought of the trail. So, anyway. So that's something else I did in Connecticut. I worked on the AT.

Alison Steiner: So, at what point did you move into working for the National Park Service again? And what caused that transition?

Ed Rizzotto: Well, I finished grad school. And I always wanted to go back to federal service.

Alison Steiner: And what was your graduate degree in?

Ed Rizzotto: It's an MBA in organizational management.

Alison Steiner: And from where?

Ed Rizzotto: University of New Haven. It's the other New Haven school. It's not Yale. But still, you know, I enjoyed my time there.

Ed Rizzotto: So, I wanted to go back in. But there had been freezes. [knocking] And then near the end of the Carter administration—Is someone at your door?

Alison Steiner: I'm going to check.

Ed Rizzotto: Okay. Near the end of the Carter administration, they started opening up again. So, I went from no job offers to like four. I mean, all at once. One was in West Virginia, and three were in Philadelphia. I went down to Philadelphia and I took one of the jobs. It was an interesting job. A little big like the Park Practice job. The program is gone now. Again, something they lost money for. It was called Park and Recreation Technical Services, or PARTS. The chief in Washington had this kind of novel idea. It was the PARTS program.

Ed Rizzotto: What we would do every year – we would survey our park superintendents in the Mid-Atlantic and North Atlantic states for what were the key issues, or critical issues in their parks, for which they had no immediate expertise or training or whatever. And with a bunch of very bright men and women, including my college advisor, which was serendipitous, I got hired to this job and I went to the old Mid Atlantic regional office. The associate director was walking me around to meet my new division. I went to one office, and one of my employees was the guy who advised me in college. The guy who got me the first park service job. The guy was a little bit— whatever. Nice guy, okay? But it was just weird.

Ed Rizzotto: Anyway, what we would do was we would develop technical references. We would give training programs. We would consult. We did a new program every year. Each of the regions at the time had an office like this. So, like in the Mid Atlantic, we'd put together a technical manual on vandalism control and management. But if you read any of those works, you realize they have case studies from all over the world. It was a very coordinated program. You'd come in with these proposals near the end of the fiscal year. Part of it was to see if you could get fully funded for the next year. And part of it was to see what the national program was. It was a national plan. And so, if a project of ours was adopted, we were in contact with all the other regional offices – there were ten then. And we would not only help them with their projects, but they would help us with ours. Like we would say, "Here's what we're working on, and we need case studies in this area. And what are you working on? Oh, we have a case study. We'll write it up for you."

Ed Rizzotto: So, we were all feeding back and forth. It was really fun. Acid mine waste control was one of the projects we worked on. Energy conservation. Maintenance management. A book I think they called *Winning Support for Parks and Recreation.* [Comment: The original working title *Making the Case* was changed when it was finally published.] We came up with about 140 or 150 research studies where people had looked at what was the value of open space. Okay? You know, if your house faces a park versus facing another house, it's worth more. If your street has shade trees versus the house right next door that doesn't, the house benefits. And we pulled this all out of academia. We worked with colleges and all kinds of sources. So, somebody could have this reference. They could look up the papers themselves. They could cite these things if there were discussions of Gee, do we really need a park? What will we do with a park? Why expand the park? Why maintain the park?

Ed Rizzotto: So, we did projects like that. It was a new group every year. Unfortunately, it was soft money. We got to the next administration. Actually, they started freezing these things and shutting them down. That was James Watt, if you knew, he was Secretary of the Interior. So, all these things started getting shut down. I think people valued them, but there was no hard money for them in the budget.

Alison Steiner: So, was that a permanent job?

Ed Rizzotto: It was a permanent job.

Alison Steiner: Okay.

Ed Rizzotto: Yeah. Yeah. It was a permanent job. I was a division chief. I was technically an assistant regional director. But they must have been handing those things out, too.

Ed Rizzotto: So, I went from doing that, I think I then became – I stayed in the same office, and I became the coordinator for the Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants. Which still kind of exist but was really a program then. There were monies taken from offshore oil well receipts. It was a tax on extraction, gas and oil. And it was approved for use in something called the Land and Water Conservation Fund. It doesn't get spent much now. Congress uses the money for other things. But what it was back then was half of it was used by the park service and the other federal agencies to buy in-holdings in additional acreage, okay? And the other half was used with partners like state parks and local governments.

Ed Rizzotto: There was an elaborate process, I shouldn't say elaborate, it was an open process where they would do open space planning in their states with public input. Do project selection with open input. We monitored that. So, they wouldn't all rig the list, so to speak. And then they would come in with their list saying, "Here's what we've ranked as needs of our state in open space and parks."

Ed Rizzotto: If it was going to be a state project, it was a 50/50 match with federal monies. If it was a municipal project, it was 50/25/25. The towns would come up with 25, the state would come up with 25, and the federal government would take 50 percent of the project out of, and it was for the acquisition of land and the development of open space.

Ed Rizzotto: You can go online and there are literally tens of thousands of these projects. Some were land and water, and there's a sub-program called the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program, which was similar stuff but geared toward cities. Municipalities of a certain statistical significance.

Ed Rizzotto: So, I did that my second part of being in Philadelphia. At the very end, I was the regional chief ranger there for a little while. I worked for Maureen Finnerty, who a lot of people know her because she was an officer in ANPR [Association of National Park Rangers]. I worked there, again, with Rick Smith, who was an ANPR officer. So that was all good stuff. And again, I mentioned before, I got to do a lot of different things.

Ed Rizzotto: One of the things that's interesting about those programs that's still important, even though they aren't getting money, because the money is coming in but it's paying somebody else's bills. Its parks were all signed as contracts in perpetuity. I'm still involved with that. We've got a project in Boston that we were involved in. Some agencies, the city has talked about turning part of the park into a nightclub. And we're reminding them

that we have a contract that has no expiration date. This is to always be a park and open space project. Okay? And again, they exist all over. So that legacy goes on.

Ed Rizzotto: The office in Philadelphia that at one point with the two programs had over 20 people, I think has two persons and part-time clerical help. But they're out there hopefully watching these properties. Because every day today, if somebody walks outside on one of these properties, goes on a hike, has a picnic, goes to camp, whatever, it's one more, it's more payback to that investment we made. We only paid 50 percent of those things. A lot of people enjoy it.

Ed Rizzotto: I remember one of the directors getting up and defending the program and saying, "You know, you've always faced pressure to take on projects that maybe didn't quite meet the standards of the National Park Service. And the external programs are helpful. One, they get a lot of work done. They get it done on 50 percent on the dollar."

Ed Rizzotto: Maybe flipping the viewpoint, we would have had to maybe pay for some of those 100 percent. But now we're getting the state to pay half of it. Okay? And they're being locally maintained and managed. That means we don't have to take on all the priorities. We can focus on just some of the priorities.

Ed Rizzotto: So, it was important in and of itself, and it had a nice effect on the park service being able to do other things. Worked with a lot of good people in the state governments.

Ed Rizzotto: I think it was Mather-Albright started the National Conference of the State Parks. Which was back in the '20s or maybe '30s, I don't know, I can't remember quite when it started. It's now part of the NRPA. But it was people who were in conservation parks state and federally. So, they worked with them for many, many years. The Park Practice Program was one of theirs. This was one of those programs.

Ed Rizzotto: We've often had partners who were in the state park systems doing very similar things to what we were doing. And this was one of those programs that involved both of us helping each other out a little bit. You know, trainings, consultations, just lots of stuff like that. And anybody can go online and look up, these are those programs, and go, "Oh, the park I went to as a kid. That's a Land and Water Conservation Fund project." And hopefully if people remember the contracts, they'll always be there to use.

Ed Rizzotto: So, it was fun doing that. That's when I was doing accessibility coordination. Because not only did the federal lands have to adapt those resources, but the states did, too. If the states were accused of discriminating. We would come in and try to resolve it. A lot of times it's just an educational process, didn't realize what the requirements were. And so, we would work through those things.

Ed Rizzotto: And like I say, before I left Philadelphia, I get back into park park work, if you want to call it that. I was regional chief ranger. And then I got an offer to go up to Gateway, out of Philadelphia.

Ed Rizzotto: I learned about, I was there the last night in the regional office, the Merchants' Exchange then. The protection rangers from Independence would come through on shift. I would work late a lot, and so I'd see people. And I was there, I was filling up boxes. Back then we had the franking privilege, and so you could put anything in a cardboard box, tape it, put a label on it and a stamp, and it would get mailed first class for free. The Postal Service does not do that anymore.

Ed Rizzotto: So, I was moving 28 crates of references and books that I'd accumulated and files of my own for my next job. And I'm doing this at like 10 o'clock at night. And this fellow comes through on protection, second shift or whatever it was. He said, "What are you doing?"

Ed Rizzotto: I said, "I'm packing for my next job." He said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm going to Gateway." And he says, "I used to work at Gateway." I said, "Oh, yeah. Yeah." So, we talked about it a little bit.

Ed Rizzotto: The thing I remember he said to me was, he says, "You know, there's a right way," everybody's heard this, "the wrong way, and there's the Gateway." And I said, "What does that mean?" And he said, "You'll find out."

Ed Rizzotto: And Gateway was a unique experience. It was trying to do park service stuff for people in a big urban area who are never going to see the park service any other way. Maybe. I mean, there's people in New York who never leave the city. Never drive. And sometime in that experience, I was at lunch with a guy named Bob Barbee, who you probably should have a history of if you haven't. He was at Yellowstone and we were schmoozing, and I was remembering all the fun I had there. And I was saying, "Well, you have this great job. What a terrific job. I would love to have a job like that." Or something like that. You know, I was sucking up. He was a senior superintendent.

Ed Rizzotto: He said, "You know, you're really doing a more important job in some ways because—" And I learned this while I was at Yellowstone. I don't know if it's still true. The average visitor to Yellowstone had to travel more than 800 miles to get there. Which meant lots and lots of people were never going to get there. It was too far and too expensive. So, they weren't going to see the mother park or the premier sites that we all know about and we've been at. We've worked at. You worked at one. And his point was, they had to see the green and gray in New York City.

Ed Rizzotto: Because then, when their congressman came home for a town hall meeting and said, "Do we need more jails? We need more highways? We need to build a sewer plant?" Someone might put up their hand and go, "The park service has taught my eighth grader environmental science. The only time

we camped out was at Gateway. It was a memorable—" I'm putting words in their mouth.

Ed Rizzotto: But they would, in a small way, they would see the park service there. The urban parks, I think, were doing school curricular interactions before the wilderness parks. You know, my interpreters and educators would sit down with schoolteachers and educators and we would plan programs. Some of which would happen in the schools. Some of which would happen in Ecology Village. We called our little campground at Floyd Bennett Field Ecology Village.

Ed Rizzotto: I remember people who came to me, the program had gone on for a while, who would be like adults and talk about, "You know, I've only camped out once. It was great. I did it at Floyd Bennett Field at Gateway."

Ed Rizzotto: So, they were getting this nice experience. And they'd do some test tubey, labby, blackboard stuff. And then they'd come out for three days and they'd, you know, net organisms out of the marsh. They'd learn about habitats and just all kinds of stuff in various workshops. It was really kind of an exposure that focused on a lot of out in nature stuff.

Ed Rizzotto: There's a lot of things you can do in New York only at Gateway. Like camping. Like horseback riding in a natural area. A lot of the saltwater beaches. The park meant a lot to people.

Ed Rizzotto: Kind of a sad thing we would do. Not sad. I don't know the right word for this. Riis Park is a big ocean beach that the park service runs down there. It's a historic structure, all restored, but a big waterfront. It's had piping plover, which is kind of interesting, because it's in New York City. It's had a civil rights event. You can smile at this, but it's true.

Ed Rizzotto: A group of women came to the park and were topless, and were arrested by city police, not our people, and went to court. They said if men can go topless, women can. And they won their court case. It was a little civil rights thing that happened on one of our little beaches.

Ed Rizzotto: But the thing I was trying to think about was when it was very hot, a lot of people would come down from what we would call tenements. The upper part of the city had old, old, nasty housing that typically didn't have any air conditioning. You were living in little boxes, not necessarily even with the air shafts. They'd come down to the park for the day, you know, normally closing at sunset. But we let them stay. Now I'm not in the park service. I can talk about this, right?

Ed Rizzotto: We put a few extra rangers on. And they'd bring their blankets and their picnic gear and they'd kind of roll up in their blankets. We'd let them sleep on the beach because it was so much better than forcing them back up into their probably what you'd call slums.

Ed Rizzotto: We had a wonderful national wildlife refuge there, which you can reach on a subway line. If you take, if you know, well, you probably don't. There's a jazz musician named Count Basie, wrote a song, famous song

back then called "Take The A Train." The A Train goes to Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge, which is part of the park. If you're a birder, you can go there and build your life list like crazy.

Ed Rizzotto: And we are in the guidebooks in Europe. We have people come to nearest international airport, which is JFK. And part of their reason for being in New York, they come over by taxi. Now they weren't there for that, for all I know, they were going to UN meetings. I don't know. Whatever. And they'd come over and they, in a good year, we might have 400 species of birds in the park. Some of which were there all the time. And some of which were just there because on the flyway, the so-called Atlantic Flyway, if you're flying south to Florida, you're looking for a place to rest, you've got the Atlantic Ocean, not good enough. Over there, Newark. And then, oh! Jamaica Bay. So, if you're a birder, you can be very successful there in that way. It's still a great site to visit in the city.

Ed Rizzotto: So, we had some wonderful programs going on. Dealing with a lot of people. Dealing with a lot of politicians who can't support the park service, I believe.

Ed Rizzotto: One of the things I did there besides, I was a young superintendent. When I first came there, they had sort of successor to what was called the Civilian Conservation Corps. The park service and the Department of Labor put their money together to run a training school that was within the park. We had about 128 kids at any given moment. They lived with us. It was a 24/7 service. We literally had people who were homeless, which is a sad idea if you're 16-years-old and homeless. These kids had all, one thing they'd all done, they were all poor and they'd all dropped out of high school.

Ed Rizzotto: And we would find them and bring them back in. Sometimes we'd find them in unemployment offices. We'd kind of put posters up there. They'd want a second chance. They'd realize that McDonald's wasn't the career they'd dreamed of. And we'd get them through high school. We'd get them clothing. I mean, they literally came with the clothes on their back.

Ed Rizzotto: I mean, I learned a new word there. A new use of a word. When I was first there, one of the staff referred to one of the students as emancipated. And I thought it was a racial pejorative. Because the only time I'd heard "emancipated" it was in terms of slaves after the Civil War. It turns out it's quite a specific term. Maybe you know this. I didn't. I'd never run into this sort of thing before. These were kids who'd been picked up and been brought into court at the age of 16 or 17. They weren't legally adults. But the judges had looked around and their parents were in jail, dead, drugs, whatever. They declared these kids at 16 or 17 legally responsible for themselves because they had no one else in the world. I had not grown up that way. I talked about my parents, my family. This was something really new to me.

Ed Rizzotto: So, these kids just had us most of the time. Sometimes that was sad.

Ed Rizzotto: We always had a longer break around Christmas and New Year's. And part of the program, we didn't spend a lot of money, but part of the program was we would get you home to your family for the holidays, even if we were flying you to California. I don't mean we had a kid from California, but we had them from other places. We used their Labor Department help to recruit. And their area for New York included the US Virgin Islands. So, we had kids from far away. And so, we would make plans. We'd load them on buses and planes and these kids would go home.

Ed Rizzotto: Except every year, there would be 12 or 15 kids who even when we said to them, "We will arrange transportation to anyplace you want to go for the holiday," didn't have parents, didn't have friends, didn't have relatives, didn't have nada to go to. And even given that chance to travel and visit family, no place to go.

Ed Rizzotto: So, on our own, the staff would create programs for them. We'd take them to our Christmas dinners and stuff like that. But the sad thing was, again, I had never, I still have never in my own life had that experience. That someone says, "We'll get you a ride home," and you'd say, essentially, "I have none." Except for there.

Ed Rizzotto: And I remember when I was there, sometimes we'd have movies, we had 24/7 program. We had social activities we had concerts, we had athletics, we had the whole thing. [Comment: On one trip, we took the students to, for many, if not all, their first Broadway musical called "Seraphina" then being presented by the original cast of black South African teenagers. Many of our students were black, they were elated by the performance and actually got up and danced in the aisles of a Broadway theater!] We had Planned Parenthood came in as one of our counselors. But I remember at certain times we would watch movies. Somebody came to us and wanted us to pay for a license, because we were showing these movies that were leased for home use to somebody else.

Ed Rizzotto: I went toe to toe with those people. I said, "I can show you kids here. This is their home. This isn't an excursion. This isn't away at whatever they'd be away at. They have no other home." I mean, I always refused to pay that license fee. And nobody ever challenged us on it. Because we could show, unfortunately we could pick out kids and say, "This kid does not have another address."

Ed Rizzotto: I remember one time I was counseling one of our tough kids. He had heard some rumors, and he was upset. He thought he was going to be expelled. He wasn't expelled. But he started crying. I wasn't being tough with him. He just was sad. He had come in sad. But you saw kids, these were out of the Bronx. These were tough kids.

Ed Rizzotto: And I said, "Gee, what's going on?" He said, "Are you going to expel me?"

Ed Rizzotto: I said, "No, but why are you so upset?" and he explained. Here was a kid who was homeless. His mother and baby sister were homeless, too. They were living in a shelter somewhere. And the three of them were counting on him graduating, getting a job, and then they would have an apartment. They would all be off the street and could live as a family again. He was like 17 years old. And I really felt lucky and grateful. And identified with these kids.

Ed Rizzotto: The school worked well. It didn't work well from the park service standpoint. We were training restoration technicians – carpenters, bricklayers, and people who are in restoration masonry. And the way I describe that is, if you had an old house, they should have had four gargoyles. Do you know what a gargoyle is? And your old house only had three gargoyles, my kids and their instructors could copy one of the gargoyles and make you the fourth corner of the house.

Ed Rizzotto: So, they did very high trade stuff. We had great instructors. And the original intent of the program was, they would become preservation people in the park service.

Ed Rizzotto: Now a little flaw in the program, not a true flaw, but from the park service standpoint, is when we would start those people out working at the time, they would be making 23, 24 [thousand dollars a year]. In New York City, if you're union, journeyman, not even at the top of the trade, like we would have these kids come back and talk at graduation. They weren't great speakers. But they would let the next group of kids know, "I'm out there working. It's great! Stick with it." They'd be making 75, 80 thousand. And on the trades. So, it really worked out for the kids. And it worked out for the people who hired them. But it didn't exactly add up park service-wise. They don't have the school anymore. I think the Labor Department money has gone someplace else, but the park service doesn't do it. But it was rewarding. It was pretty interesting. And we kind of saved lives.

Ed Rizzotto: People would criticize us. That's why I mentioned, it wasn't that expensive. The whole deal, including clothes for these kids, work clothes and relaxing clothes, was almost $15,000 a year. Not quite. But at the same moment, across town, their peers were at a place called Rikers Island. You know what that is? It's a juvenile facility, and that was costing the city 42 grand a year. So, I just said, just in the taxes we're saving you, and then when they get jobs, they're paying it back. This is a no brainer. Because people thought like, what are you doing? This is a social thing. We were doing good things for lots of people. You know, lives and the whole rest of it that way. And it was a program I felt really, I felt good about a lot of things in the park service, but I felt good about that. Even though it was a little bit different, you know. And those kids are probably still out restoring buildings, for all I know. Maybe they're contracting. Ellis Island is being fixed now, maybe they're there. They're old enough

so they'd probably be training other people. Maybe other kids are there. I don't know, but it was a pretty cool thing. So, I did that.

Ed Rizzotto: I was a unit superintendent at Gateway. I was the Staten Island unit superintendent, which is obviously in Staten Island. That's a no brainer. We went through a big development program there. We renovated the marina. We built new bath houses. We built new concessions. A horse stable for the Park Police. They loved us. We had a mounted horse patrol. We did a lot of concerts and activities there.

Ed Rizzotto: It's a little-known secret, not really secret, the park service works with – we were the original home for the Big Apple Circus. They're now a pretty substantial private circus that travels in the east. It's a one-ring circus. But it's a European tradition. They started as a partner in and on Gateway. I arrived in the winter. I remember looking out, seeing this little tent colony, trailer colony, excuse me. I said, "Who are those people?"

Ed Rizzotto: They said, "That's the circus." I said, "What do you mean, the circus?"

Ed Rizzotto: They didn't go to Florida. They went to New York City. We had some old aircraft hangars which we hadn't restored at that point. The old hangar row? The airfield at Floyd Bennett Field is very historic. John Glenn, Amelia Earhart, Howard Hughes. The first flight across the Atlantic Ocean. All that stuff happened out of Floyd Bennett Field. It had the longest runways in the world. And they were also, because they were at the ocean, if you were going to set one of these records, you could stuff gasoline or fuel into every piece of your airplane, make it as heavy as it possibly could be. And then it could go down the runway and it didn't have to climb, because the ocean's flat, too. You just had to come up a little at a time, then you had the fuel to go around. Whatever.

Ed Rizzotto: So, we had these old hangars. They're restored now. We have volunteers there now. Old military and commissioned flight people who have retired and they come in and they restore antique airplanes there. But this is before that. And the circus used one of those as their winter grounds. In the springtime, when things were just getting going, you could take a lunch break and you could go over and you could watch their, there were acrobats and just all the things you see in the circus. But you see them, it would be like professional entertainment, their practicing. So that was there then. That was one of the other things that happened there then.

Ed Rizzotto: But the other thing we did was, we had an agreement with the New York Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera. They had a desire to share with the city besides their own concert hall. And the concert spaces they would use, in many cases, Gateway property.

Ed Rizzotto: Now if you are from Manhattan, you would know that if you went to Central Park to see the symphony, there'd be 95,000 people there. What people actually do is they hire kids who go early in the day, spread blankets and watch them, so that when you come at night with your

family, there's actually a place to sit, because the whole park is covered. You can't get anywhere close to it.

Ed Rizzotto: We had those concerts at Staten Island. For some reason, it didn't catch on the same way there. So, you could see the identical symphony, opera, whatever the performance was, with a much smaller crowd. And we had the ocean. So, when the symphony was there, they didn't do it up in the park. But part of, we were fundraising, I think, part of it, too, was we had a barge. And at the end of the symphony we had fireworks because the harbor was right there. So, it was even better than going – and you didn't have to worry about getting in. You could show up, it was maybe three thousand people. It was like one of these, do you know, if you took the bus to Staten Island, you can see the same concert?

Ed Rizzotto: Anyway, fun programs there. Good interaction. I enjoyed being superintendent. We did a lot of development planning. We took over a number of military facilities that became part of the property, had always been in our legislation. Early planning people talked about enabling legislation. The military had some very historic properties right at the Verrazano-Narrows. They were originally thinking of selling them. We went back to the 1972 Gateway legislation and said, "Congress has already decided this." They'd written up what was the original park properties. But they'd foreseen the fact that the military might not always be there. And they said, "If the military decides to exit these properties, they will automatically become part of Gateway." So, I was there for that, too.

Ed Rizzotto: So that was a fun time. Adding to the park. Adding some valuable property. Some beautiful properties.

Ed Rizzotto: I don't know if you've been to the Verrazano-Narrows. But on the Staten Island side, it's very high. So, you look down on the inner and outer harbor.

Ed Rizzotto: And I was superintendent, and I was briefing the regional director one day about the changes happening with the fort. And the QE2 went by. And we're up high, and the QE2 is just going below us. And it was Marie Rust. And Marie said, "Gee, what a coincidence that we should be here." Because the QE2 wasn't here very often.

Ed Rizzotto: I said, "Marie, it's not a coincidence. We worked scheduled to make sure this moment happened just exactly as it did." And just for a second, she looked at me. See, I'm not actually sure. She may have actually believed me. But you know superintendents. Dramatic moment take advantage of it. Sell your park; believe in your park. Do the right thing. Right?

Ed Rizzotto: That spot, I mentioned it's historic, was the oldest and longest defended site in America at that time. The Native Americans had used it as their lookout point. It's kind of prominent, so you could see people coming down the Hudson. So, if the bad guys from another Indian team, Native

American team, are coming in canoes, you can defend from there. And they did. Then the Dutch built a fort there, and then the British built a fort there. And of course, you know, when the British evacuated, we got the fort.

Ed Rizzotto: And then, every few years, and you could see in some of the architecture there, they would redesign the forts, because the bullets and canons and things would get better. So, these bricks aren't thick enough, or these granite blocks aren't the right angle. So, you could see the whole history of modern warfare on the waterfront at the Verrazano-Narrows there. And then we get it, and we have all that history.

Ed Rizzotto: One of the things that's interesting there is the New York Marathon is a big marathon. The road race? Thirty thousand, I guess? And they run it through every borough. [Comment: New York City is divided into five boroughs: Staten Island, Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, and the Bronx.] The start, the piece they do in Staten Island starts at Gateway. We set up all the Porta Potties and drink stations and places to leave your stuff and all that. We're the staging area. And then we start, we had a back gate to the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, an emergency exit. So in about 2/10 of a mile they're leaving Staten Island. But technically, we were that part of the race. And we were a nice part of getting people organized and getting going. So that still happens. You can look it up.

Ed Rizzotto: So, we had our fun there. We hopefully exposed people to the park service. We now have an adult campground. We've gone from Ecology Village, where just the eighth graders would come, now we have a family campground. I think it's the third year. It's really popular. And you're getting some people who've never had a chance to go. You know, they haven't been to Rocky Mountain yet. They haven't been to the Two Ocean Plateau in Yellowstone. They haven't been to King's Canyon. Great place to go camping, by the way. You know that. They're still getting those values and exposure. There was the Gateway, but it's not a bad way. [Comment: Something completely serendipitous happened while I was Superintendent and attending a regional meeting. My counterpart at Acadia National Park announced that they were starting a new General Management Plan from scratch because all copies of the 1938 plan had been lost. I politely surprised and corrected him. I had been to a meeting with Connecticut state park officials in Hartford years before, probably in the mid 1980's, and, late in the day, was walking down the hall there with one of their managers and chanced upon rolls of blue prints in a large pile of trash outside their planning office. I asked what was going on and he explained they were cleaning out space and that it would all be in an incinerator by the morning. I noticed one roll with an old brown oilskin cover and asked, "What about this?" He said I could have it as it was no use to them and so I took what I discovered to be an original hand drawn and colored copy of the 1938 Acadia GMP to mount the original sheets as artwork. I, therefore, much later, was able to copy the sheets (which

included the original Rockefeller plans for their unfinished carriage road system) for my colleague in Maine. He and his staff were able to incorporate the original designs into the new GMP. The carriage road system was ultimately finished as planned, it is a popular park feature at Acadia now and I still have "my" artwork.]

Alison Steiner: Something I'm really struck by is exactly what you're talking about. The importance of – listening to you it's clear that you believe very strongly that these urban parks are critical not only to the populations that use them but also really to the park service in accomplishing its mission. And I know that it seems like you grew up with, your career also kind of traces the life of these urban parks. They haven't always been around. They actually are fairly new.

Ed Rizzotto: Yeah. Yeah.

Alison Steiner: I mean, I realize that they came around in the early '60s and '70s. And I'm wondering if being so involved in these urban places, did you, how did you feel? I mean, did you always feel a part of the park service community? Or were these areas treated differently than the Yellowstones and Yosemites?

Ed Rizzotto: The common sense is that they're a little bit different. But I have to tell you, I recruited people to work in the parks who came from almost anyplace else. And were challenged and saw opportunities there. The educational programs are much different, I think. All the parks have junior ranger programs; someone comes through and does a little thing and goes on. But we really had linkages to powerful school systems, and so our educational programs were something to really be proud of.

Ed Rizzotto: The other thing is, the Bob Barbie story, okay? Like a little fact check. Here I'm talking to a guy who's maybe one of the most revered field managers ever in the park service. Superintendent at Yellowstone. Regional director in Alaska. You know, some other really, I mean, I don't know if it's that way anymore. All superintendents – obviously because I was one – are not created equal. What I'm saying is I was the youngest junior lesser superintendent. When you go to superintendents' conferences, people there, they don't quite have an aura, but that's John Cooks, Bob Barbees, Rick Smiths. They're seeing people who, through their accomplishments, their stature, their leadership, stand out. Okay?

Ed Rizzotto: So here I'm having lunch with Bob Barbie. And <u>he</u> explains to me what I kind of knew. But he brought it up. Why the Gateways are important. Okay? And I believe him. I always did. It didn't mean that they were more important. They may have been less important. But they were part of creating a national picture for a citizenry. We had just gone through a very difficult time. The unfortunate shutdown. And the reaction of people.

Ed Rizzotto: We need to educate as many people as we can about the lessons the park service holds. The resources we hold in trust for them. The lessons will be

there to teach their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The physical fitness, the exercise, the stories, the difference between – when I was in Boston, this is like later in my story, but it's an example. You'd go to the regional offices and maybe you'd walk down to Faneuil Hall for lunch.

Ed Rizzotto: We used to stop at a corner, it was a little traffic island with still the old cobblestones. You'd be standing there, and you'd say to people who'd never been to Boston, "You know where you're at?" And they'd say, "Boston." Or whatever they would say. "No, right where you are." And, they'd look down. "Well, lots of cobblestones." And I'd say, "You remember back to high school? American history?" I said, "You remember the Boston Massacre?" "Yeah. Where did it happen?" I said, "You're standing on it."

Ed Rizzotto: Almost all the parks can do something like that. Some explorer. Some battleground. Some native tribe. Maybe they haven't heard all the stories. So maybe they hear them for the first time in the park. But you can tell them those stories in the situation where they happened, and those lessons sink in better. Or maybe you've heard the story before, and now you get to stand where the Boston Massacre. "Oh, now I can picture it." I don't know if you can picture it.

Ed Rizzotto: But I think the park service has a vital role, and I think the urban parks are included in that. Because they're going to reach lots and lots of people who are never going to get to the other places.

Ed Rizzotto: When you look at how the balance is in Congress, we need people valuing us, understanding us, supporting us, from everyplace. They can't be just rich white kids who went to prep school and had the summer to travel out west. It's got to be kids from the city. And kids from poor families. Most of the urban parks don't have entry fees. Okay? I know the annual pass is a great bargain. I'm not complaining about that. But if you're having a hard time with food and you're living off McDonald's, and a park is 20 dollars a year to get into, then you wouldn't go. But you can go to Gateway and you can remember that they took you in at night when it was too hot and uncomfortable to go home.

Ed Rizzotto: I mean, people would die in those places. I don't mean everybody. But older people who are under stress. No air conditioning. Maybe nobody watching them. It was shelter, okay? I mean, I ran into people, what did they call them? Hot bedding? Some of my students did that when they went home. They had too many people for the number of beds, so they'd sleep in shifts. People in New York would sleep in shifts. You're in a big family? We've only got two beds? So, you sleep until eleven o'clock. Then you get up and you hang out. And I sleep from midnight to six. Because there just aren't enough places to put us. Okay? And those people get to come through the parks, get the experiences. It's a hot day. Don't worry. The parks are open. Everything will be fine. Rangers are here to watch you. I'm proud of what we did. [getting emotional] Sorry.

Alison Steiner: Do you want to take a minute?

Ed Rizzotto: No, I'm good. I'm sorry. I apologize.

Alison Steiner: Oh, there's nothing to apologize about. I'm wondering, you said that you had a really long history with ANPR. And I'm curious how that fits into everything you've been talking about. When did you become a member? And how has that played into your career and your perspective on—

Ed Rizzotto: I became a member in the '80s. I went to my first rendezvous at Acadia. That's when we were still counting kegs. We were younger then. We were drinking a lot more. There were still serious things that went on. One of the big issues of that rendezvous was physical fitness standards. Dan Sholly as the Chief Ranger in WASO, and he led the discussion. [Comment: At the time of this interview, Dan's son Cam had replaced him as the Service's Chief Ranger, and more recently Cam became the Superintendent at Yellowstone National Park.] They were working on physical standards that would be fair to everybody, women included. And that was a bigger issue there. There was a lot of discussion of that then. So that was important.

Ed Rizzotto: I remember a panel. Four regional directors came and talked about their careers. John Cook, Jim Coleman and Jim Tobin. They were all quite traditional. These were people whose dads or moms had been in the park service. So, before they were working for the park service, before they were volunteering for the park service, before they were seasonals, they were like kids in the park service. They had traveled around and seen places. They'd done different jobs and worked their way up through.

Ed Rizzotto: And then Herb Cables was the fourth regional director, and he was a very different person. First of all, he was African American, so he looked a little different than these white guys. But he had come from the city park system. When they were putting together Gateway, they weren't then automatically getting volunteers. So, he got recruited out of a city park program to be the public affairs person at this new sort of emerging, Golden Gate on the west coast, Gateway on the east coast. It was a new thing that was happening.

Ed Rizzotto: Cables was funny. He told a quite different story. He said, "As soon as they hired me, that was their mistake." And he reeled off, "I was automatically working with six federal senators and 23 congressmen." It spans – like, Connecticut's influenced by Gateway. New York obviously is. New Jersey is, too. He said, "And that was just wonderful for me, because I had good political skills." He had some park background, but he was a politician and moves in those ways. Different from the other three regional directors.

Ed Rizzotto: Coleman, I knew Coleman. Coleman, because he was like rolling his eyes a little bit about this, right? I think maybe I was still working for Coleman at one point. But anyway, and Cables went on to explain how then he

became the superintendent of the park. And then when the regional director's job opened up, "I was the logical choice," you know. And he made the point of politics. Some people pooh pooh that. But it's really, the superintendents, the regional directors, they really have to operate in two different worlds. They have to operate with the field professionals, resources, the biologists, the planners, what are law enforcement issues, what are the things that happen in the parks. And then they have to operate in another way to represent the park service, work with these other elected officials, and the unelected officials. And maintain the park service's standing among all these competing needs. You know that New York City's Gateway National Recreation Area, even at 27,000 acres, isn't the biggest "apple" in the Big Apple.

Ed Rizzotto: So, some people didn't necessarily like Cable's speech. But there was truth about it when you thought about it. I think if you talked to these other guys, they would begrudgingly say, "You know, there's some sense to that."

Ed Rizzotto: So that was my first [Ranger] Rendezvous. And I essentially have come to everyone since then, with two exceptions. I've also gone to six of the seven international meetings. I may have explained to you, I registered for the first one, it was the inaugural event in the mountains of Poland. And I thought something was coming up at work and I canceled. Because I just thought, I've got to be here for this. And whatever it was didn't materialize to be important at all. And then people came back from Poland from the first international congress and said, "It was really good. You should have gone." And I've gone ever since.

Ed Rizzotto: So, I was coming back from an international congress, World Congress, in Costa Rica. I'd already been away from the park for a week and a half, whatever it was. I was coming back on like Thursday. And that Saturday or Sunday, the Fort Myers rendezvous was going to happen. And by the time I got back to Boston, I hadn't thought of this ahead of time, I didn't think I could turn around right away and leave the office. So, I skipped that one because it was too close. I mean, I could have parachuted into it on the way over.

Ed Rizzotto: And then the Bend, Oregon one, my dad was sick. He'd gone into hospice care. And we thought we were going to lose him right away. So, I registered for that, too, but I didn't go. Turned out I could have, because, I don't know if you know what hospice care is. You know what hospice care is. The doctors, he'd had his workup, like a big physical. Good people. They said, "You know, your dad, he may not even last two weeks. He's not going to last two months."

Ed Rizzotto: So, my brothers and I and family all scrambled around trying to just get everything right for Dad. He went to hospice care. Two weeks. Two months. Next birthday. Birthday party. Year later. Another birthday party. He lasted like, I don't know, two years and ten months of hospice, which

is crazy. Because normally they won't keep you that long. He had issues, but he kept on conquering them.

Ed Rizzotto: My stepmother, my mother died when I was relatively young. From cancer. That's why they didn't build on Cape Cod. Dad had gone through a slow time, and then he got back up dancing again. He and my mother would dance four or five nights a week. They square danced, they round danced and they ballroom danced.

Ed Rizzotto: The square dance buddies twisted his arm. I think they literally did. Because he was very, he was always big on helping people. He was a first responder when he was 92. You know those emergency buttons that let people call for help when they've fallen? Crazy story.

Ed Rizzotto: My brothers and I had decided to get my stepmother and father a washer/dryer. They had a washer upstairs for clothes, and then carried the basket down these narrow stairs to the dryer in the basement. We thought, this is an opportunity. They're going to crack their skulls down there.

Ed Rizzotto: So, I was at the house in the bathroom next to the kitchen. And I'm doing the installation, I'm pretty handy, of the stacked washer and dryer. It will go in the same space as the washer. And my father comes back in, I didn't realize he was gone. My mother's chastising him, my stepmother's chastising him, "Where have you gone?" He said, "Oh, it was an emergency." "What do you mean?" "Well, I got an alarm. I had to respond to Mrs. Halliday." And my stepmother said, "Do you really have to do that?" He said, "Honey, you've got to be sympathetic. She's elderly." Now my dad's 92. My stepmother's 89. And Mrs. Halliday's like 94.

Ed Rizzotto: But the way, when I'm getting back to the big picture, I'm thinking they're all kind of elderly.

Ed Rizzotto: But anyway, my father was always really responsible and caring. And when my time came, I did some of that, too. I think. I sort of got off the track. I apologize.

Alison Steiner: Let me check the time really quickly, just to see.

Ed Rizzotto: Yeah, I booked that lunch, I don't know. We need to get down to the meeting. Do you need to be down there ahead of time?

Alison Steiner: Not really. I'm wondering if you think you might have another hour, hour and a half block in the next couple of days that we could talk? Because I don't want to rush through the rest of your career in the next 30 minutes.

Ed Rizzotto: We could do whatever you want. I've rambled, and I—

Alison Steiner: No, this has been great. And I don't want to—

Ed Rizzotto: Yeah. I want to go to the meeting, too. That's why I come. That's why I've always come. That was part of your question, I guess. Anyway, I missed that because of Dad, I thought being sick. I've been to all the rest

of them. I've been to three or four mini rendezvous. And I've been to six or seven internationals.

Ed Rizzotto: Up until recently, you'll see even now if I can pull it out, I have notes at every session I went to. I have questions. I sit up front because the army accident left me with one bad ear. So, I sit up front and I pay attention. I sometimes write an article or two for Teresa [Ford, then the editor of *Ranger*]. So, I've learned stuff, I've met people, I've networked. I've had people who have helped me. I've helped people out. I may have mentored a few folks. I've been on the board. Taking stuff to the meetings, bringing stuff back, sharing with people. I almost always would find out about things here. I sometimes like to do this, okay? Work on the leading edge. It's a very competitive thing. It's all for good reason. So, you come here, and you see a director, or sometimes even the Secretary of the Interior. And they let the cat out of the bag on something. That might not get really announced in the field for six or eight months. That they were just talking about, thinking about. And you could get prepared for that. You could say, "Oh, how could we do that?"

Ed Rizzotto: I mean, I met people. I was at a training session at a Rendezvous one time. And the guy next to me looked familiar. It was a coffee break. I said, "You know, you look familiar."

Ed Rizzotto: I said, "Were we in superintendents training together?" I thought I'd seen him in a certain class.

Ed Rizzotto: He said, "Well, no, actually. My name is George Frampton." He was the Assistant Secretary of the Interior and had been the President of the Wilderness Society. I had seen him in something, but here he was out of context in Levis and I just thought he was one of the crew. So, there are opportunities like that.

Ed Rizzotto: Secretary Babbitt used to come. So, you meet people. You get a chance to suggest things. There's dozens of reasons to come to a Rendezvous. There used to be more beer drinking. But you see the country. You meet people. People hear your ideas. You test your ideas. Some people become leaders here. Some people can network with people who've helped them for the rest of their life. And vice versa. So. You're asking about Rendezvous. Once I came, I was convinced that that was the thing to do.

Ed Rizzotto: I always came on my own dime and time, which always surprises at least some of my taxpaying friends on the outside. I remember when I was working in the office, I was heading home late one night, and I ran into somebody I knew who was a stockbroker. A very successful one, by the way. A millionaire who counts among his clients Ned and Abigail Johnson. Do you know who they are? They own Fidelity. The two of them own Fidelity. You know what Fidelity is? Yeah. Okay. So, he was their personal stockbroker.

Ed Rizzotto: Anyway, I'm riding home with him one night. And he said, "You must make a nice check. Overtime and all that." I said, "I've never made overtime in my life." He says, "But you work late all the time."

Ed Rizzotto: I said, "Yeah, but we don't get overtime. We just have work we need to do." And he looked at me like I had three heads and four eyes. It was like, "What?" You know, but we know that we all do that. Not everybody, but you know, a lot of us do that because it's great stuff. I don't know how I got on that thing. But don't you want to go downstairs? So anyway. Take a break and whatever and—

Alison Steiner: So, let's do part one and two.

Ed Rizzotto: You can rip out half of it and go, "Let's start over again. Make it simpler."

[END OF TRACK 1]

[START OF TRACK 2]

Alison Steiner: It's October 30, 2013. I'm interviewing Ed Rizzotto. How do you say it?

Ed Rizzotto: Rizzotto. Very close.

Alison Steiner: Rizzotto. (laughs) And the interviewer is Alison Steiner with the ANPR Ranger Rendezvous number 36 in Saint Louis, Missouri. So, I think when we left off, you were beginning to talk about your involvement with ANPR and why you stuck with the organization so long. Why you got involved to begin with. Maybe we could pick up there?

Ed Rizzotto: Okay. I always had an interest beyond work in parks and park activities and conservation. I had been a seasonal roommate with Rick Smith, and we stayed friends. We still are good friends. He came to Mid-Atlantic while I was there. Mid-Atlantic regional office in Philadelphia. He encouraged me to join ANPR, at least to try it out and see what I thought.

Ed Rizzotto: So, I went off to Acadia National Park. That was my first Rendezvous in 1984. And I've essentially gone to almost all of them since then. There have been a couple of exceptions. I was coming back from the Costa Rica international meeting, and Fort Myers was very close. So, I didn't make the double trip, south and north and north again. So, I skipped that one. I probably could have gone. And I registered for Bend, and my dad wasn't very well, and so I didn't go to that. But otherwise, I've been to all of them since then. Never been disappointed. Always enjoyed seeing friends, but always enjoyed learning new stuff. I guess I'm a slow learner. It's taken me a long time. But I'm still finding things that are interesting, and I want to learn, and I want to be able to share. So, I've enjoyed it.

Ed Rizzotto: Networking with people. I always found if I listened really carefully to the director's talk or people from Washington or things like that, I might hear things just a little bit sooner than they hit the field. And sometimes quite a bit. It might be something that – we used to have attendees come from the Department of the Interior. Secretary Babbitt, he was the Secretary of the Interior, he would come to these meetings or send a chief of staff. So,

we'd really get an inkling about what's going to be the next little emphasis of direction. And those were always good things. Because I had to go back to my park, we could start thinking about that stuff before it actually officially happened. It's just always been important to me.

Ed Rizzotto: And then, of course, more recently, it's been going to show support for an organization that supported me. And seeing younger people. In fact, almost everybody's younger. You're smiling. She knows what I'm saying. Coming along and getting involved and getting, hopefully, as enthusiastic. Seeing all the possibilities. It's a neat thing. It's one of the few groups I can think of that is so purely individual and professional in terms of, even other groups in the park service. It's mostly people who took their limited vacation time and their very limited personal funds and would spend it every year trying to be better at their job.

Ed Rizzotto: I've got friends on the outside, meaning people who aren't in the park service. They don't understand the concept. They're kind of pleased that it happens. But they have a vision of government. The ANPR and the park rangers and the park service, that culture, is just very surprising to them. I'm glad it's different from what – but you know, the old, was it the Albright saying, let's not make it just one bureaucracy. It's not been that way, and people continue to keep it from being just another bureaucracy. Which is, to me, very nice and important. That's why, despite the shutdown, a lot of people still think a lot of what we do and think it's important.

Alison Steiner: And you mentioned that you had been on the board of ANPR at one point.

Ed Rizzotto: That's right. A couple of times, actually.

Alison Steiner: Can you talk a little bit about when that might have been and your experience? Which positions you held?

Ed Rizzotto: Yeah. The first time I can't remember much of it because I was filling in, somebody else had left. The second time, I did four years. Actually, I got reelected as strategic planner.

Alison Steiner: And what would be the timeframe on that? What year?

Ed Rizzotto: Cindy Ott-Jones and Ken Mabery were presidents, so maybe it was like six or eight years ago. I'm not sure. The way you could tell, one way you could tell is look at the *Ranger Magazine* covers. They have a slogan on them: "Stewards for Parks, Visitors, and Each Other." And that was a motion of mine. People asked about, do we want to reword it? I said, "No, I think it sounds really good." I'm being maybe egotistical, I don't know. It just hit. And then people said, you know, it does sound okay. It kind of covers a lot of bases. We are, obviously, for parks. We all show ourselves to be for the visitors every day of work and even when the visitors aren't there. And then we all care for each other. You know, you can call somebody, ask advice, find a mentor, work for the committee. I've never called somebody who was a member, even when I didn't know them,

explain that I was, you know, the ANPR, I knew they were, too, and asked their advice or something, and they didn't say, sure. You know? So, I think, anyway, that's the timeframe. But you can look it up. I don't remember.

Ed Rizzotto: The strategic plan thing was something that not everybody wanted to do. Not only did we develop a plan and revise it, but we used it. The president used me and it as a little kind of checklist. We'd come to meetings and we actually physically met more than just at the Rendezvous. And of course, we met on the telephone. And part of the meetings, I would go down through the strategic plan to get feedback. So, people anticipated my little calls for reports. Sometimes just the month before our board meeting, whenever it was, just have a little burst of energy. So, they could come into the meeting and say, "You know, I've been working on things. But I thought about us meeting here. I've wrapped some of the details up. We can say we've done this, we haven't done that, here's what I need help on." So, it was a little progress measuring device that we completed some things, we added things to it, and we had it as like a little checklist of at least some of the things we wanted to do. There's obviously always opportunities that aren't in a plan and present themselves. You have to have some energy for that. But it also meant there were things we'd committed to the membership doing long term and in fact we remembered probably without me, how to do them and get them done.

Alison Steiner: Great. And it sounds like that actually, so we had, in terms of your career, I think we had kind of talked about up through your experience at Gateway. It sounds like being on the board of ANPR comes maybe 10 or 12 years after you left Gateway. So maybe we can back up now and go and fill in these parts.

Ed Rizzotto: Yeah. Gateway was great fun. I think I told you the Bob Barbee story. It was a lot of work, but it was exciting time there. We were getting 30 million dollars in new appropriations to revise, physically revise, my part of the park. A military group was leaving a chunk of land right at the Verrazano-Narrows that was a particularly interesting place to me because it had this great history. It was an area that had been an Indian, a Native American headquarters. It's right where the narrowest part of the harbor is. And it's a high site. The Brooklyn side is much lower. So, natives had seen it as an important space to be. And then the Dutch fortified it, and then the British and the Americans. So, it had an interesting history that way.

Ed Rizzotto: The military and maybe GSA were thinking about how we're going to make some money, we're going to sell it, because it would have been prime for development. We were able to remind them that when Gateway was formed, somebody was clairvoyant or, somebody who was forethoughtful had written into the federal legislation not only was this going to become the park, with this mission, but if the military land, da,

da, da, da, ever was to be excess, it would only come by free transfer to the National Park Service.

Ed Rizzotto: So, we got a nice piece of the property. And if you've ever been there, it's a wonderful location that you can see into the city, you know, and out to the ocean. And that happened when I was there. [Comment: The information here ties back to earlier discussions of Gateway. To recap: when the 1972 Gateway NRA enabling legislation was enacted, someone cleverly included a provision that, if any land within the proposed boundaries of the park were excessed by the military, those acres would automatically become part of the park. When the Army's Fort Wadsworth was being excessed in the early 1990's, the General Services Administration (GSA) was hoping to sell the property for income. It is one of the area's most dramatic properties and would have commanded a high price. We opposed the GSA, cited the old legislation and were able to acquire the property at no charge. The location is now a favorite for photographers and military historians and also the starting place of the annual New York City Marathon.]

Ed Rizzotto: But what also happened was that my father, who's quite a bit older, had some health issues. I'm the oldest son. And I thought, you know, being, in our own way we're caregivers, right? We care for the parks; we care for each other. That's what I was talking. I thought it was time to be closer to home with a more flexible schedule. You know, when you're in a park, a superintendent, whatever, you have meetings you scheduled and events on weekends and emergencies.

Ed Rizzotto: I was in New York, and I was the superintendent on duty when the *Golden Venture* landed. I don't know if you remember what that was. It was a freighter that beached in the park with, it was loaded with illegal Asian immigrants. Chinese immigrants. The freighter had broken down several times. So rather than being at sea for several weeks, they'd been at sea for several months. People had died on it. It was a holy mess.

Ed Rizzotto: What they had done is they had pledged themselves, almost indentured themselves, I guess, is the word, to people in New York who paid their passage. And then this illegal venture brought them, the *Golden Venture* ship brought them, smuggling them in. And a lot of them were dead or dying on the beaches at Gateway. It was a big event. It was a sad event, too, because people had paid this price to help them get there. But then they had to spend so many years working in undesirable situations in the city.

Ed Rizzotto: The ship itself was terrible. It didn't have adequate – first of all, it wasn't a ship meant to carry people. They had trouble with food, sanitation, people getting sick, getting ill. None of it was legit or appropriate. And that also happened when I was there.

Ed Rizzotto: But back to what I was saying. I was just remembering all these things that kind of happened. Because I didn't do notes for you. I apologize. I didn't think this would happen.

Ed Rizzotto: I went to my regional director, and I explained what my situation was with Dad. I wanted to be able to help him more. So, I volunteered to go to the regional office in Boston. And she asked me, "Well, what do you want to do?"

Ed Rizzotto: Unlike some other people, who I think are pretty clever, I said, "Marie, I'd like to move as soon as possible. I'll do whatever you need me to do." Kind of a tactical error, in hindsight. Not that I regret it, per se, because I really am glad, I was able to help my dad. But maybe I should have said, "Gee, I want to be deputy regional director." She wouldn't have said yes, but you know, it would have been fun asking.

Ed Rizzotto: So, I went up to Boston. And the first thing I did was I took over the annual budget program in something called capabilities statements. I don't even know if they exist anymore. What that would be is we would get feedback from the congressional hearings in Washington that either a representative or a senator was working, thinking about some aspect of a certain park. It was going to come up in a day or two at the budget hearings. We would often get these things like at 4:00, 4:30 in the afternoon. I don't know if you know what a Rolodex is. It's an old-fashioned way of looking up telephone numbers. I had a Rolodex number for – this was like pre-cell phone, right? I had every superintendent and chief rangers. I had lots of home phone numbers. I was known to call, on those occasions, up until 11:30, sometimes. Because you had to respond by the next morning.

Ed Rizzotto: What you needed to do, you had to make an assessment of where plans might be, what was possible. Did we have the capability, if the money was given to us, to carry off this project? Could we build this new bridge? Could we put in this new visitor center? Was this program feasible if we got funding for it?

Ed Rizzotto: We had a nightly crisis during the season. Meaning, you know, we'd get these little leading indicators at, again, late in the day. We'd work as much of the night as we needed to. We'd get them back in the next morning for the hearings so that people could say, when this question came up, "Well, we've prepared a paper on that." They were really short papers. "And here's our status. Planning is here. Environmental reviews there. We've done, if this is about GMP, it's one of our own objectives. This is how much money it would take to really do it. Here's why." We explain it all.

Ed Rizzotto: We were wildly successful that year. And David Harrington, I don't know if he's still in the budget office in Washington, he loved us. Because my predecessor had a lot of other things going on in his life and wasn't quite as responsive. The friendship is one of the things I remember.

Ed Rizzotto: And as far as I know, the only tall ship that the park service has ever built from scratch is the *Friendship* merchant ship at Salem Maritime. Which is always an interesting sight with, Salem Maritime was the beginning of merchant activity in the colonies. Before that, the only place the colonies traded was with England. They would ship raw materials to England. And we had to buy their manufactured goods. It was actually illegal to manufacture in the States.

Ed Rizzotto: I remember being at a visitor center one time in another park. And we had something called a spinning jenny. And somebody explained to me it was illegal. A spinning jenny is like a spinning wheel if you know what that is. Makes a little thread. A spinning jenny will make like eight or nine threads at the same time.

Ed Rizzotto: When the British found them – if they did – they smashed them up. It was okay to like mend your own clothes with your own thread, but you could not manufacture more than that.

Ed Rizzotto: So, after we were becoming a nation, Salem was where we started our trade with everyone else. We had the waterfront, we had the old customs building, we had some of the old buildings along the shore. We had all the old stories. But you'd come to Salem Maritime, you'd go down to the wharf – no boats! So, what we now have is a replica sailing ship, built from scratch. And that was one of the results of that particular budget going up. It went very well. So that was one of the things I did.

Ed Rizzotto: Another task I took on was I was the – and you'll get the sense of this after, I did a lot of things, because I didn't have a personalized career strategy, that people didn't necessarily want to do. But sometimes helped people. I sincerely hope they always helped people. I was the regional agreements and cooperative relationships person. So, when we would negotiate and finalize. I worked with Tony Conte, the solicitor, who's still a great old friend, to get the agreements in place so we could work, so parks could work with their partners, so the region could work with researchers. So, everybody who was in GSA [General Services Administration], who worked with supervisors, those things, was happy with us. So, I did agreements and cooperative relationships for a while.

Ed Rizzotto: I guess the next thing I did, as you see, I was always trying out different things, because maybe I wasn't quite as good as I hoped to be, I was the regional housing coordinator. That was very interesting, because I'd lived in park housing and I'd been a superintendent with park housing. I knew a lot about it. It had been important, and it was important to a lot of the parks. At the time, there was kind of an effort to go on to saying, boy, we need to cut corners financially. We only have so much budget. Maybe we should somehow eliminate or drastically reduce the housing program.

Ed Rizzotto: I was a little bit of a different mind. I was a little bit more, I think, of a field person than a Washington person. Not to say I didn't have great admiration for some of the people I worked with in Washington.

Ed Rizzotto: So, we worked with the superintendents, for whom some of them, housing was absolutely critical. I'll give you an example. Cape Cod has a big summer seasonal program. Cape Cod National Seashore. If you go down there as a tourist, and I welcome everybody to do it, it's a great place to visit, it is not unusual if you want a week's lodging, like a cottage, to pay twelve or fourteen hundred. And a week's lodging can be as high, I actually know people who pay eight thousand a week to stay on Cape Cod in the summertime. I don't mean our people, I just mean people with, maybe too much money. But they go down and enjoy it.

Ed Rizzotto: Well, it wouldn't be possible for the Cape to put on their programs, to have lifeguards, interpreters, summer maintenance people, all the staff that are critical. I mean, the visitation in summer there goes nuts. So, they have to have these people to serve the public, to protect the park, to provide for all these activities. They need housing. No way around it.

Ed Rizzotto: I used to clip articles about the private people on the cape. The restaurant owners and the other businesses, and they were providing housing in many cases to their employees because they couldn't hire people, either. You couldn't have paid or made enough money in your financial plan to come up with a two thousand dollar rent a week, a twenty thousand dollar rent for the summer. It was impossible. So, I was a big defender of that program. Enjoyed working with other people.

Ed Rizzotto: We had over 500 units in that part of the country, in our region. The other thing was that more than half of them were National Register structures. They were places we were charged with caring for. They were houses on battlefields. They were houses where important things had happened. Some of them were museums. But a lot of them were there because they were part of the historic scene, and we had to care for them. But we had no obvious way of doing it. It isn't, you know, there's lots of budgets that are thin around the park service and housing was right in with that. But what happens with housing is that you can put people into it. They pay a fair market rent. People sometimes think they pay free rent. Not true. You can't reduce rent for services given. It's absolute. The law says it, black and white. We might be tempted to because people do a lot of work, sometimes, from a house.

Ed Rizzotto: So, we were getting rent, which is dedicated to maintenance. That's the other thing people don't always know. That rent doesn't go in the general treasury like almost everything else does. It stays right in the park to maintain those structures. They pay utilities.

Ed Rizzotto: Randy Biallas used to be the park service's chief historic architect. He gave me a great lesson one time explaining to me if you shut down a historic building, you know, seal it up, what happens inside – you get leaks, you get mold, the trim goes away. It just kind of mooshes down to nothing. And he says, that's the absolute worst thing. They were always ventilated. People built fires. They dried them out. They were there to care

for them. If a leak started, you went up on the roof and patched it. I don't mean our people did.

Ed Rizzotto: He said, "Don't do that to your buildings," meaning don't 'mothball' them.

Ed Rizzotto: We actually had a timeframe when I was on, the regional reps end up being on the national committee. It happens in every program.

Ed Rizzotto: I remember going to a meeting. They had a couple of wild ideas. Some of the people in Washington – boy, this is taped, too, huh? – were a little out of touch. They had this idea that where we could eliminate the housing program – and this sounds crazy, but I swear to God this is true – and they drafted a letter that was to go to the director that was going to prohibit anything but local hiring. So, anybody who wanted to staff their park would have to find people in the commuter area not needing housing.

Ed Rizzotto: And I remember people saying, "What a great idea!"

Ed Rizzotto: And some of us said, "Wait a second. Have you ever heard of OPM [Office of Personnel Management]? We don't make those rules. Have you ever heard of veteran's preference? Have you ever realized how much new and important lifeblood comes to a park when you hire somebody from another place who says, "You know, we did it a different way."

Ed Rizzotto: Then you start thinking about well there might be a different way. There might be a better way. And I don't mean just for the housing program's sake. I mean for the team and the fabric of the park.

Ed Rizzotto: And so, when we pointed certain things out, that effort, which had been a legit effort – what I mean is, it was a serious effort – went away.

Ed Rizzotto: But then we had another one where, same thing, came to a national meeting and somebody had drafted up the idea that we would transfer all the National Register housing units – in my region, it was more than half – to cultural resources. We'll make them pay for them. And it was like, no, I said. I had worked with Kate Stevenson in the old Mid-Atlantic regional office. Kate was the associate with Cultural Resources in WASO. She and I were still in touch, and I said, "Kate doesn't have the money. We don't have a lot of money, but she has even less. She doesn't have rent. She doesn't have utilities." People are living there helping, doing what we used to call incidental maintenance. And they're a protection for us, just because of their presence. I said, "She can't do any of those things. This will be terrible!"

Ed Rizzotto: And I can admit this now, I guess. I'm retired, right? I made a private trip to Washington on my own. And I met Kate in a cafeteria at Main Interior, and we talked about this. She worked in Washington and I worked out in the field. We took that idea that they would dump the cultural analysis on the street, so to speak, to be readopted. And we rewrote housing policy that said if there's no other way to preserve a registered structure, a housing register structure, then that is a reason all by itself to put

somebody in there as a tenant. It doesn't have to be local market availability. If we have a house and we can't clearly save it some other way, then you can put a tenant in there. So, housing became a preservation strategy. Okay? [Comment: The verbal re-telling seems a little muddled, but this was a major controversy and I want to be hopefully clearer. Maintenance budgets were already very short, and the facility management/housing managers saw a potential opportunity to shift the National Register housing structures to cultural resources who they falsely believed had more resources to care for them. That was not the case and, if the structures had been transferred, they would be uninhabited, unheated and unventilated, less monitored and without rental income and utilities (as compared to having housing tenants who paid utilities and fair-market rent toward maintenance costs as well as also doing incidental maintenance themselves and discouraging vandalism simply by their occupancy). After significant discussions, which I believe Kate and I initiated, the Service approved an important new policy. Even if housing was not otherwise justified, historic structures could be occupied for housing simply as a preservation strategy.]

Ed Rizzotto: I also had funny moments in that program. I had a lawyer call one time. And his customer, client of his is the right word, was a woman who was married to a required occupant park ranger. He wanted us to know that they were going to proceed with eviction papers as part of the divorce that they were going through. They weren't a very happy couple. Which is sad. You know, it happens to people. Sometimes it gets better, but the process is not fun.

Ed Rizzotto: Anyway, I said, "Oh! Required occupant. Do you know what that means?" He hadn't actually picked up on the term. I said, "As a condition of his employment, her husband has to stay in the house and do his work. There's probably no legal way that he could be evicted by you. But if he were evicted, he would lose his job. And can you spell the word 'alimony' to your client?" Meaning the means of support that she probably is owed would be terminated. And afterwards, I thought, what a strange story. And still a strange story.

Ed Rizzotto: So being in the housing program had its good moments and it's kind of very odd moments, you know. But I enjoyed doing it.

Ed Rizzotto: I think I eventually was seen as too much of a defender of parks, the superintendents and people living in housing. So, I moved on to other things. I think in my whole career at the park service was trying to find new opportunities for other challenges I always enjoyed them, you know?

Ed Rizzotto: So, I became the region's personal property, real property coordinator. I was the regional fleet manager. I was the bulldozer guy. Meaning I ran the equipment replacement program.

Ed Rizzotto: I think it's the same in every region. In my region I figured out, we had about a hundred million dollars in replacement value in everything from

patrol vehicles, the boats, to heavy equipment. Whatever. And we were getting like a million and a half from Washington. And it's pretty simple math. That suggests that you have to keep everything for about a hundred years in order to get a replacement. We had some really good mechanics. I have to tell you, some magicians. But you can't keep a vehicle running for 100 years.

Ed Rizzotto: The oldest vehicle I had was a World War Two jeep. So, it was many, many years old. It was 70 years old. And it was running, but it wasn't like we took it on the highway a lot to test it out. It was more used for historic reenactment. At the Navy Yard in the Boston Historical Park.

Ed Rizzotto: So, we had to find other ways to keep people rolling. We did some of that by being prepared. A lot of things you can buy every year of consequence. After the contracting officer screams at you that contract deadline has stopped, I can't take anymore – we've all heard this. We all went somewhere in September and realized, a certain seasonal left early, I've got a few dollars left. And the contracting officer's saying, "You weren't on the contracting plan. It's too late anyway. The contracts are shutting down."

Ed Rizzotto: The contracts for vehicles, for GSA, are all in place and all pre-competed. So, you can go there and make an obligation in an hour and spend money. You just have to, by the 23rd or 24th of September. So, we would have all our stuff ready. The superintendents would come in and say, "I've got a little bit of this, a little bit of that. This project didn't really go. I've got something for you." We'd click off a lot of our vehicles.

Ed Rizzotto: We worked with GSA. They would sell us motor pool vehicles. Like three years old, which is when they usually take them back and take them to auction. They would sell them to us for sometimes 75 percent off the new price. So, we got to be regular customers of theirs. We did it with the motor pool people because some of GSA didn't like that, because some of GSA was trying to sell us new cars. But we had friends in motor pool, and their responsibility was to get rid of cars. And it was legal to do it with us. They never got to the other people in the organization, and the other people in the organization were still selling us some cars, just not as many.

Ed Rizzotto: So, we had different things like that. We didn't rebuild the fleet, but we found some clever ways to do it. One of the things we did, which was a little extra work, but it made sense – we got money, we talked the regional director into giving us extra money here and there. Like we had a green vehicle program where we were emphasizing hybrids. We were – oh, I know. When vehicles were replaced, because I also had the property records, we could go back in and see if the old vehicle we replaced was still on inventory. Sometimes parks before that were dead lining them and just never getting around to selling them. And so, something that was worth some money is just rusting in the back lot until it was a pile of junk.

Ed Rizzotto: First of all, that's technically illegal. The EPA does not allow dead-lined vehicles on federal property because they're a source of hazardous waste. They leak battery acid. They leak grease and oil. And goodness knows what else. Okay?

Ed Rizzotto: So, the EPA actually, on audits of sites, criticized parks for having, what is all that stuff behind your maintenance building? When was the last time you drove it? It doesn't look like it's running to us. So, they were a little ally. And the property program was an ally.

Ed Rizzotto: So, somebody would come in. and we had a very objective, I thought, point system for what we picked. You know, critical to the mission, mileage, hours of use. We had an aboveboard selection process for what we picked for projects.

Ed Rizzotto: And then we picked the ones that were most critical, that sort of thing. I think all the regions tried to.

Ed Rizzotto: But then we would say another criteria is, you got a vehicle last year. Did you sell it? And you couldn't qualify for another replacement till you sold – we gave them a little time in between – sold the last one. And we took all of that money. Again, we could keep it. And we plowed that back into more awards.

Ed Rizzotto: So, we kind of grew that program. We took that million and a half and, with the secondhand stuff and whatever, we really jumped it up to how we could replace vehicles.

Ed Rizzotto: Now, there wasn't always a new vehicle. But you know if our average vehicle is around 11 years old. So, when you could provide somebody a two year-old vehicle with less than 65,000 miles, that was actually a pretty big jump up. So, we had fun with that program.

Ed Rizzotto: Inventory and security of real personal property wasn't quite so much fun, but we did some interesting things. We ran the single Service wide collection point for all the service's excess weapons when they were being turned in to the Springfield Armory, which was one of the parks in our region; overall my program had 80 parks. Springfield Armory was looking for collections of unusual firearms. So, we processed disposal for everyone else – We don't do it anymore. I'm not working anymore – for all the firearms. And they would find the neatest stuff. Sometimes in old park collections that weren't used. Or sometimes in confiscated weapons. And they were able to build their collection that way before things went to meltdown and that sort of stuff. So that was an interesting part of personal property. The inventories weren't quite so much fun. But they were a responsibility we had. We found ways to get the inventories done.

Ed Rizzotto: The real property involved an inventory of the condition and types of buildings we had. That was part of justifying the maintenance backlog and demonstrating what was going on there.

Ed Rizzotto: The space program. And you think they finally found the right thing for me, right? I was regional space program manager. At one point, one of my committees was called the Space Cadets. But the space program became more important as we went along. There's a big backlog in building. One, we didn't have money, and the Service Center only could do so much at a time.

Ed Rizzotto: So, we would acquire new parks and we weren't able to create the infrastructure we wanted to. But we had to start operating them right away. And so, people would come to the space program. And one thing is leasing of real property. We would go out and help set up the new parks in rental facilities. Or we might have a project where a rehab was going on, and we would lease secure curatorial storage facilities. So, what we were doing was, we were that patchwork link between what we wanted to do and what we were able to do. And when we couldn't do it, we would rent something. And that was another thing that I did.

Ed Rizzotto: So, I had fun doing a lot of, I mean, as you go back through your notes, you'll see there's a lot of strange stuff here.

Ed Rizzotto: But there was always, and even though in some ways it was very far from my ranger imagination when I was an eighth grader. You know, little "r." I don't know if this analogy is going to work. It was there in the big "R" picture. Because it was helping parks accomplish their mission. And I had had my fun. I was still having fun in my own way. And then people out in the field where, as they say, the rubber meets the road, were able to do a little bit more, had a little bit more help, could call the region, call me, either for – here's another admission. They would call me for things I was supposed to be doing. And they would sometimes, because I was a little bit older hand at that point, they'd call me about other things. I would just whisper in their ear, "Call so and so. Ask about this. Tell them you know about this program. Tell them you think you qualify." That kind of thing.

Ed Rizzotto: Because I ended up doing a lot of different things. And I mentioned that I was friends with the regional solicitor? And he suffered for a while from the lack of resources. There was, you know, the Indian tribal legacy issue. This was a long-term court case where another part of the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, was supposed to be holding in trust all these land resources. And it wasn't going well. So, there's a court case essentially froze the regional solicitor's records. The resource solicitor didn't even have access to the Internet, okay? I can't explain all the legal reasons for this. It was nuts, though.

Ed Rizzotto: And I knew our regional solicitor, Tony Conte, he just retired. And so, he would call me for stuff, too. This is kind of a scary concept. But we worked together for a long time. I collected all this stuff. And he said, you know, "I can't get into files. Can you Fax me something?" Or, "Do you know the answer to this?"

Ed Rizzotto: And I said, because I'd been kind of nitty gritty – when we were in, when I was in Philadelphia, before I left the Land and Water Conservation Fund program, that matching grant thing, I realized we were reinventing the wheel sometimes. We'd have a tough case and we'd have to kind of go back and research it again.

Ed Rizzotto: I went to Tony and said, "This program has been around for 20 years." I said, "Haven't you written some solicitor opinions previously?" He said, "Yeah." And he said, "I don't have them here." He said, "Nobody ever asks for them."

Ed Rizzotto: So, I started a little campaign. We went to Washington, we went to all the other regional solicitors, all the other regional offices. We went back through all the files and we collected in one place all of the legal and solicitor opinions that existed for this program. So that they existed – and we copied them. We didn't just do it for ourselves. We gave it to Washington. It was like a little library. So, then they could go in and they had Land and Water Conservation Fund reference material all in one place without having to look at it. I kind of had a history with Tony. And when he was incommunicado, he would sometimes call us for help. I was spending a lot of hours in the regional office. Some of it, a lot of it, was with the programs I was obviously doing. And sometimes it was just helping other people.

Ed Rizzotto: Near the end, it was funny. I used to take the ferry boat into work and back. It's a nice way to go to work. Not all of us can do it. You can get a coffee on the way in. And if you really want to, you can get a beer on the way back. It was on salt water. No traffic. Always make it to work on time. You pass the Boston Harbor islands, which are a wonderful project we have going in the harbor. Thirty islands where if all you have is a subway pass, you can go to the Aquarium Station and camp overnight with a backpack and a tent. And go out there and see the seals breeding. You can go to the only lighthouse in the country that still has a lighthouse operator. All the rest of them have been replaced by automation. You can go to beaches out there, old forts. Anyway, I pass through the harbor islands every day on my ferry ride. And then I take it back often the 8:30 run. That's the last run. When I needed to work late, I had another way to get back through public transportation.

Ed Rizzotto: The last run back was the 12:30 run, the half hour after midnight. Not a lot of people on that bus, okay? And one night, relatively near retirement, and I'm sitting up front, just talking to the driver, because it's kind of just him and me.

Ed Rizzotto: He said, "You're going back to the ferry terminal. I'll take you to your car." They had a drop-off point, but they had a huge parking lot, maybe 1500 cars. So, he was going to go through the parking lot, just take me to my car. He said, "Where are you?" And I said to him, "Well, I'm right next to the dock." He says, "You are?"

Ed Rizzotto: And the human nature thing is, if you came in early and you're taking the ferry boat, you didn't park in the back end of the parking lot. Maybe if you wanted exercise. But if you could park up front, and you're one of the first runs of the morning, you'd park right next to the dock. And the people who came in at 10:30, the stockbrokers or whatever they were, they would park at the other end and they'd have to walk.

Ed Rizzotto: He said, "You came in really early." He said, "Boy, you work a really long day. What do you do?"

Ed Rizzotto: I remember thinking, he was kind of feeling sorry for me. He was seeing me working 12-hour, I was in at 7:30. It was way, it was more like 15 or 18 hours some days. I thought, what a revelation. The bus driver's actually having sympathy for my situation. But I loved doing it.

Ed Rizzotto: And I did it, a lot of good people. I was very lucky. People were helpful to me when I was working that housing program. Some of the Washington folks were a little critical. They actually got to somebody who was my chain of command. And I was getting called in for a little discussion, little counseling session. And Marie Rust, the regional director, heard about it and she went to the person. And she stopped it. She backed me up.

Ed Rizzotto: She said, "He's doing what we need. I don't care if we don't agree with Washington. If this is right, if the parks need it, if the superintendents are pushing for this, if there's the rationale, Ed's doing the right thing. Back him up."

Ed Rizzotto: She was a funny regional director. She's retired now. You'd see her at meetings. She had a bouffant light hair color. You know, blonde thing. Dressed a little bit differently than people. She would be in a uniform sometimes, but I mean, she had a hard time getting the, well, not a hard time, but the flat hat was riding pretty high when she was wearing it. And usually she was in some very nice clothes. She'd come out of New York City.

Ed Rizzotto: But one of the things she did was she really believed in the field. She would listen to field people. And she would get, she was a great representative to Washington. It wasn't that she was technically at the peak of her career. She was very bright. She had a law degree, I think, as well as some other stuff. But she wasn't thinking about some political move or becoming a director. Maybe she was. I don't actually know. But she would take somebody like me, who was kind of trying to do the right thing, and people were saying, "It doesn't make sense." And she would carry those flags to Washington for us. And it was a good thing. I worked for lots of people who either taught me – I needed a lot of that—or helped me or worked with me or believed in what we were doing.

Ed Rizzotto: Even doing the odd jobs in regional office was a pretty good thing. Parks are so important. You know, other people maybe gave them more help, but we gave them the help we could.

Alison Steiner: I'd like to go back briefly. You had been talking about the *Golden Venture*?

Ed Rizzotto: Yeah. Yeah.

Alison Steiner: I wanted for you to kind of finish that story about how the park and you made decisions as to what to do when that happened. And what was the outcome.

Ed Rizzotto: Well, it wasn't just us. Immigration, probably half the search and rescue police departments in the city responded. The boat beached. It grounded offshore. It wasn't technically above the high tide line. People were jumping overboard. They were in the harbor. They were drowning. I don't think we lost a lot of people that way. It had tried to sneak into the harbor at night. I don't know what their plan was. They struck a sandbar off the beach.

Ed Rizzotto: So, they were out in the water, coming ashore, lying on the ground. We had ambulances and we had, at Floyd Bennett Field, which is part of the park, there's an interesting story about that. Floyd Bennett Field was the site of the first ever helicopter rescue in the country. Now as old as I was, I wasn't there then. It was a long time ago. But we still had helicopter rescue services there. They were flying people to hospitals. These people hadn't eaten. They were sick. Dysentery. Dehydration. Real diseases.

Ed Rizzotto: It was a rescue effort at first. And then afterwards it became a legal thing with immigration. The people who were running this crazy – there's a term, coyote that is used for the people who run these programs, who smuggle illegal aliens in. They were getting, as I remember, up to 20, this was 20 years ago, give or take, maybe more. They were getting about twenty thousand dollars a head from people to make this creepy trip. There are examples of the immigration discussion we have now, these were people who really wanted to come to America. And sacrificed their lives to get their families there. In order to do it, they indentured themselves – you know what indentured is? – to other people in the city who paid for that. But then were going to have free workers in the back room of a Chinese restaurant.

Ed Rizzotto: This exposed a great industry. Not just the people who came off these boats, but people who had come on the boats before them, who were actually locked in at night after work in I guess you'd call them dormitories, but there's a worse name for that. Packed into these places. I mean, if you go back and pull up the *New York Times,* it exposed a nasty, nasty business that was going on in America. And in New York City. These people were signing up for it because they really wanted to be here, and they really wanted to bring their families here. It cost them a lot.

Ed Rizzotto: We did a little bit of a rescue there. It was too late for a number of people.

Ed Rizzotto: But the story evolved to a legal immigration tragedy that still has ramifications today. Because as we speak now, immigration is still a big

issue. It looked like there was going to be some resolution of it this spring. It's locked up in Congress. As we talk, Congress is not the most functional thing in the country. But it was a sad – it was a busy moment. We were able to help people and rescue them. But the residue intellectually and emotionally is a sad one. Because those people – if you'd been able to go on the boats and see them. They didn't have toilets for them. They didn't have ways to get rid of waste. They had dead bodies, people who died on the trip.

Ed Rizzotto: It had come around Africa and broken down there. So, they spent, they lost six weeks right there that hadn't been planned. That was more than the whole trip was planned. And it wasn't a very good freighter to start with. I mean, it was kind of, it was probably a tramp steamer. I don't know what you would have called it. I don't know that vernacular very well. But I know there's a book about it. Literally you can go read about it. And we were right there on the front lines rescuing those people. Just a coincidental thing.

Ed Rizzotto: Here's something that people don't always get. I mean, we get it. That visitors don't get. Particularly if they're on one coast or the other. They often see the parks they visit as limited, small places. I mentioned Kosciuszko being a tenth of an acre. One of the parks I had, that I worked with in Philadelphia, is the smallest unit in the park service.

Ed Rizzotto: So, people see that. And if that's their experience with the park service, they imagine that's what the park service is. And we know, particularly go west, into Alaska, the parks are total municipalities. Yellowstone, one example, it's one and a half times the size of the state of Rhode Island. When I was there, the main workforce was 110 rangers. Now if the government of Rhode Island had 110 people to run the state, it wouldn't go very well. And granted, we didn't have as many people most times. But the parks are very comprehensive.

Ed Rizzotto: When I talked to my, not visitor, but maybe civilian friends. People who haven't worked or maybe necessarily haven't visited the park service much. They're surprised to find that almost anything they do, except for maybe stockbroker – maybe we have some of those, maybe our finance center has stockbrokers or people like that – but almost anything anybody dreams of doing or serving or using like as a function to perform—is done somewhere in the park service. Because we have villages. We have states. We have infrastructures. We have schools. A little bit of everything.

Ed Rizzotto: My career is a little bit like that. All these little things that I did with my dream of the ranger ended up being more than I imagined. The parks are kind of like that when the people really know about them. The opportunities, the places, the things that have to go on in the background so that the resources are there, the visitors can come. It's a very complex thing. It makes it all that much more interesting for people – me and you, I

hope – to be involved in that. You know, part of that great adventure. So, yeah.

Ed Rizzotto: I don't know if I'm answering these questions. I get on these little stories and I wander.

Alison Steiner: No, that's great. (laughs) And I think what you're saying kind of answers the question I'm about to ask. But maybe there's more to say. What I'm struck by as you talk, as I think a lot of visitors also probably a lot of park service employees see the park service as resources. And different types of resources. Maybe it's natural resources, cultural resources. What strikes me about the stories you tell is it's about people. You talk about the school that you had at Gateway. Or you talk about the *Golden Venture* and the effects on the people. Or the story of folks from tenements coming and needing a place to sleep so they weren't caught in the hot summer in their houses. And I guess I wonder, as you found yourself in a position to make decisions, what did you feel the mission or purpose of parks? What was that mission? Or what kind of framed the decisions you made of how to handle these situations? How to move forward?

Ed Rizzotto: Boy. Well, there were lots of things. Obviously, my studies. You know, I mentioned I went to the same school as Connie Wirth. I didn't learn as much as him, I guess. He became director. I learned things from visiting parks. I learned things from my scout masters. I was assistant scout master right through college. After school I sponsored Eagle Scouts, and I often give them memberships in ANPR.

Ed Rizzotto: But I learned from all these people I worked with. The Rick Smith example. He and I were seasonals. He was the superintendent of Yellowstone later in his career. He was working with the World Bank founding new parks in South America. I worked with people who were always ready to teach me and adjust and learn with me and talk about stuff.

Ed Rizzotto: The hospitality room [at Ranger Rendezvous], we know what that is, we don't have to define it. I went to the hospitality room every year. And I didn't just kill brain cells if you know what I'm talking about. I grew some. And you probably think, not enough. But a few. And you could go there, and you could bring an issue – it happens at the international meetings, too – you come in with something on your mind. And you sit down, you talk with people who have all these other experiences and all these other connections. You say, you can tell a good story about, "Here's an idea I have, I want to share it with you." But more often it's like, you know, "We've done a little of that." Or, "We're working on that, too." And then you sit there with somebody you maybe knew. Or maybe you never knew before. Maybe they're from another country. Like the rangers from Africa. And then you can go back and say, "You know what?" And if you're honest, you'll say to the crew, your colleagues at the park, this isn't my idea, but I'm bringing it back.

Ed Rizzotto: I used to always come back with notes and a briefing to my park about what I learned at Rendezvous. I'd share it with them. Then we'd have like new ways to go forward. So, I live within the culture of parks and being concerned about parks. And we talk about parks, people have to hopefully remember that the park service did a lot of things that weren't obviously parks but were part of park service. The National Register, which recognizes and identifies all of our historic properties is managed by the National Park Service.

Ed Rizzotto: The Tax Act, I got involved with the Tax Act a little bit when I was in Philadelphia. I'll explain. The Tax Act is a Reagan-era program which said if you were invested commercially in the preservation of historic properties--like took an old building and made it into a bed and breakfast. Or restored, like a Lit Brothers, it's an old, famous department store in Philadelphia, with a cast iron façade, which was a very unusual piece of architecture. If you invested in those things, we would give you tax benefits. Okay? And they're significant tax benefits. Whereas you can depreciate your investment. You can return profits quickly. But it saves things that wouldn't be saved.

Ed Rizzotto: When I was in Philadelphia one day, I saw a bunch of Asian men. They ended up being Hawaiian men. With a group coming through the office. You know, in our office, I don't recognize them. Who's that? What are they doing here? And they were there to get Tax Act advice.

Ed Rizzotto: A critical part of the Tax Act is if you're doing one of these restorations and applying for these tax benefits you have to do it according to the Secretary's Standards for Historic Preservation. And the people who know about that are park service people. We had a group that we'd consult with these developers. And basically say, "Here's the first lesson. Save the windows." Any of us who have worked in historic architecture know that the windows are often critical to the design of the building. And you know, I didn't learn a lot. That's one lesson I learned.

Ed Rizzotto: So, they were there. What had happened is they wanted to invest. They heard about this way to preserve historic architecture. There wasn't enough of it in Hawaii. They had come to the east coast looking for things to preserve and invest. Now they were there, obviously, somewhat because they wanted to make a profit. But it was another way to save our resources. It didn't depend on the park service doing it. Just us giving a little advice to that stuff.

Ed Rizzotto: The national trail programs. Our advice to state parks, which we still do. Which started back in the Mather-Albright era. On the links we have to those people.

Ed Rizzotto: The park service does a lot of things. People don't always understand the park properties in the national park system. They don't always understand all of the other things that are going on. I challenge anybody to go online to look up UPARR (Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery) and Land and

Water Conservation Fund stateside projects. And almost every community, or someplace nearby, they will find, "The park service did that?" [Comment: The former public online NPS reference program called Crystal Reports has ceased to exist. This means that the recreating public and preservation activists have no means to look up the tens of thousands of existing local park projects nationwide (in at least 97 percent of US counties and worth untold billions of dollars). This will hopefully be corrected when the new Great American Outdoors Act programs get implemented in 2021 but, in the meantime, it puts those parks at great risk of conversion to other uses. See the next page for a couple of examples of this vulnerability].

Ed Rizzotto: One unfortunate thing, our partners often wanted to take total credit for those things. So, they would not post the notices that it was supposed to post, that this program was partially funded by the National Park Service.

Ed Rizzotto: As a sad consequence, there wasn't recognition of what those programs were region-wide, countrywide. They weren't able to get enough congressional support to go on. So, I think it was a shame that those signs weren't posted. But the properties are still there. And as I started to explain the other day, they're there in perpetuity.

Ed Rizzotto: I'm working with a couple of projects now in Boston where the mayor wants to turn a waterfront park into a nightclub. But it was a Land and Water project back in the '70s. And the contract still exists. The map of the boundary still exists. If they pursue this, the requirements are that they will have to work with the federal government to find a property of equal use and value. So, it's not the money we invested; in some cases, we invested very little. We may have gone to an existing park and invested in a new supply of picnic tables at a very small cost. That would have dedicated the entire park under the 6F Land and Water process. That park's protected forever. What would happen now is if they wanted to undo that. Sometimes there's a reason for it. A highway has to go someplace. It has to be appraised for the current real estate value. Not the money we gave them. Not the money 30, 40 years ago. What it would go on the market for now. And it has to be equal recreational preservation function.

Ed Rizzotto: So, a waterfront property in Boston is a rare thing. This property is probably worth multiple millions now. It's not a huge property, but it's a key location. So, if they go through the conversion, they will have to come up with another waterfront property, equal recreational preservation use. And it will be expensive because land's expensive. So, they'll probably keep the park and they'll probably do something else.

Ed Rizzotto: We had another one like that a few years ago. It was before we were finding all this gas and oil kind of problem here in the States, we were importing lots of it. And somebody wanted to add a new gas import terminal in Boston Harbor. And just have it in Boston, okay? And he saw

one of the Harbor Islands as the ideal place to create a docking and loading storage facility for liquefied natural gas. And there were congressional people up there who thought, wow, this is great for economic development. They weren't clearly the environmentalists we would all hope for.

Ed Rizzotto: And we went back into our files and said, "See this contract? That was a Land and Water project. It may look to you like an opportunity in Boston Harbor. It looks like an opportunity for us, too. But we see it as a place to learn about the outdoors. For city kids who never have more than subway fees to camp outside. For people to see results of the clean-up of the harbor. Seals have come back, they're breeding there. We have unusual birds living there. That's the opportunity we see. We don't see your vision. We think your vision can go someplace else."

Ed Rizzotto: And they dropped the project. When we said to them, "You'd have to find another island for us." We'd taken then already. They were already in the park. "With this amount of money. The environmental review is going to cost you gazillions for years." Because it's a decision process. Alternatives, what's the effect of--all the things we do whenever we do a federal undertaking. That change will be a federal undertaking.

Ed Rizzotto: They all got their little lesson in civics and the environment and in parks. And in these little projects that most people don't know the park service is involved in. And they went someplace else.

Ed Rizzotto: Maybe they're fracking more. Maybe I should apologize for that. But, you know, the park service has touched a lot of lives.

Ed Rizzotto: And I mentioned the perpetuity thing. Okay. I'll be around for a bit longer. You're going to be around for a lot longer. But when we're gone, I don't wish you any harm. Live long. Somebody told me if you live 20 more years, with medicine you might live another hundred. That's great. I hope, Alison, you're here.

Ed Rizzotto: But maybe hundreds of years from now, somebody else will come along with a goofy idea for a Boston Harbor island. And somewhere – it will be digitalized – somebody will pull out this little agreement that the governor signed with the director of the National Park Service. And they'll go, "Don't want to do that. This land used to be worth a thousand dollars. In 2015, it was worth two million. It's worth a gazillion now. So, you can't afford that, and you have no alternatives." Let's talk about something else. Let's do a little civics environmental lesson. We won't be here. But our parks, the ones we know about, that are national parks. These other ones that people actually don't identify with the park service, the long-distance trails, the little piece of the Appalachian Trail I worked on and everybody else worked on, all those partners of ours, they'll have been rebuilt with new people, new blood. But they'll have our work to stand on. Yeah.

Ed Rizzotto: I don't know if I answered your question. I feel myself going into these stories and anecdotes and stuff.

Alison Steiner: That's great. I think I only have one more question for you.

Ed Rizzotto: You've been very patient.

Alison Steiner: (laughs) I know that you said you've gone to all of the World Ranger Congresses except for the first one—

Ed Rizzotto: And I registered for the first one. And I thought I needed— I registered, and then something came up that year in my park job. And so, I registered for all of them, but I didn't go to the first one. But everyone who did came back and said first of all it was a great adventure. And a wonderful boost.

Ed Rizzotto: We used to have a thing, I was looking for it the other day, at the meeting. I don't know where it is. Just like having the ANPR symbol up there at the podium. And we used to always post, it was a similar thing. It was a round red circle with a slash in it. And it was no sniveling. But we know privately we sometimes do. There was a seasonal here at the meeting who has stood up a couple of times. He's kind of discouraged. His first name is David. And I thought, you'd be more attractive if you were more optimistic. And he has some great skills. I don't pick on him, okay? But this sniveling thing is not great.

Ed Rizzotto: But you would go to the international meetings and you would see people who had even less than us. And so, you'd come back saying, "Boy. Remember you thought that meeting with Washington was really tough last week and budget hearings were going really badly? When George W. came in and you mentioned the service maintenance backlog, it actually made one of the State of the Union messages. President George W. mentioned, this was a 2.3 billion dollar backlog in the national park system in preservation and maintenance. And he was going to take care of it. And you probably know what happened. When he left, it was up to 4.7 billion. And I don't even know what it is now.

Ed Rizzotto: So, there are times when maybe the edge of your optimism is a little dull. And then you go to these international meetings and there are people there who have a lot less than us, who are doing equal things or similar things, who bring in new ideas, new aspects of it, who are encouraged the park service will work with them. And you get all charged up again.

Ed Rizzotto: And finally, talk about justice. After going to these seven other places, we're getting to host one here. It looks like it will be the Rocky Mountains. It will probably be at the YMCA of the Rockies, which is a facility that is relatively flexible in terms of accommodations. Everything from kind of nicer high-end apartments to bunkhouses and cabins for people. And therefore, a little bit less expensive. It's not going to go to the top hotel in New York City on the park. But it will be a great adventure. It's a real park to visit. There's a lot of other parks that we'll be able to do things within terms of field trips and adventures. So, it's going to be nice

to sort of pay our dues again in another way and celebrate our own centennial.

Ed Rizzotto: The people coming will be aware of that. So, it's us hosting a party with the other people. I don't know the current superintendent now. I used to. We all know that Yellowstone is the oldest national park in the world. That also means that we in the National Park Service are the original rangers and keepers of those flames. And we have gone out, somebody should check on this. But I know at one point we could take a hand in the founding of over, there's at least 108, this is a while ago, national park systems in other countries. We were here first. And so, we were able to go out and still the department does it and we still do it – advise other park systems on how to get going. It's a thing that takes opportunity. And a thing that takes resources. You can't set aside a park unless you have a generous spirit. When you go back to the stories of the fires, the campfires out west, where people sat down and said, "Are you going to stake a mining claim?" Or, "Could we get the lumber here? Could I have the rights to all the fur trade?" Whatever that discussion was. And it very quickly, as we know, turned to – why don't we save this for everybody else?

Ed Rizzotto: It seems pretty given now, but it wasn't. These people had gone at great expense to explore the West. And were sitting there around the fire. Everybody before them, I guess everywhere in the world, had figured what can I do for myself out of this? You know. I'm here first. It's an opportunity. I should take advantage of it.

Ed Rizzotto: And we learned that lesson before anyone else on earth. And we've taught that lesson to a lot of other people. If you can find a way to afford it, and if you can find people to go along with you, this will be a great investment in your new country.

Ed Rizzotto: One of the things that Rick Smith, my former seasonal roommate, later superintendent of Yellowstone, president of ANPR, a president of the IRF, got to do after he retired, was he was a consultant for the World Bank. People come to the World Bank for all kinds of investments, including new national parks. Because it's tough to do that.

Ed Rizzotto: So, Rick would go to places with an application from a country. Costa Rica is an example. If you ever get there, they have some wonderful parks. Rick was there before – Rick, our Rick – was there before most of them were national parks. He had an application made to the World Bank saying, we have an idea. We don't know if we can pull it off. But we'd like to do this. We need advice. We need help financially.

Ed Rizzotto: Rick would get sent out by – get paid for this, this is really cool, getting paid for this – and he'd run those rapids, hike those mountains, visit those places, before really any other visitors. With the local people and the local guides. The people in the Costa Rican government, in that example. To see what could be done, was it feasible, did it seem realistic, what would

need to come together, what was their commitment and resources. If the money was sent, would they use it carefully? He was like doing capability statements. I never thought of that before. He was kind of doing what I did in my job. But he was doing it for these new places.

Ed Rizzotto: And then he'd come back. Write up a report. You know, like a little trip report after what we would consider a great vacation into a national park that nobody's ever been to before, that nobody knows about. That I'm the first visitor? You know, we're going to do what? We're going to go up into the trees and see the birds and the monkeys. And then he'd come back after getting paid for all of that, write out a thoughtful report – Rick's a very skilled guy – turn it in to World Bank. And most of the time they'd say, "Here are the conditions. We think it is feasible. You're capable of doing this. We'll loan you the money." Bingo. A new national park.

Ed Rizzotto: He came in one time. He said, "I should have done this a long time ago. It's great."

Ed Rizzotto: We've been able to share, as new a country as we see ourselves, we've been able to share with almost everybody else and spread this idea.

Ed Rizzotto: In those countries, you know, in a hundred years or 200 years, when they look back, they'll see their parks. They won't necessarily know where they came from. I did not mean they came from there, amongst their resources and amongst their history. But they won't necessarily know who helped them.

Ed Rizzotto: [getting emotional, crying] I've been an army officer. I've been a state policeman. I've been a superintendent. I'm pretty wimpy. I'm sorry. This has been pretty important to me. Not so much the interview, but the life. And you're making me think of it. I'm sorry.

Ed Rizzotto: If you'd see me at work as the superintendent, I was in a pickup truck one day with somebody. I still had a badge. Somebody had come in with some motorcycles, and I caught them. Whatever I was doing, I excused myself. And I got out. They were kids. Little kids. Like 14 or 15. I read them the riot act. We took control of their motorcycles. We got them home, but the deal was their parents had to come in and sit with me and talk about it. We didn't cite them.

Ed Rizzotto: But anyway, I got out of the truck to do this. Then I got back in later. And whoever it was, whatever we were doing, said, "Boy, Ed! I didn't even recognize you." I put on this other façade. And most of my career in the park service, I was a superintendent, a chief ranger, you know, a ranger who helped people. I was kind of somebody's rock, you know. They could count on Ed. And I've been a little wimpy today. So. Anyway. It is what it is, right? I'm retired, I can – I'm sorry. I apologize.

Alison Steiner: There's no need.

Ed Rizzotto: It's really important to me. Not so much, the interview's important, I don't mean that. I just mean, as I think of the work, it's still very important to me. It's not really work, you know.

Alison Steiner: Well, thank you. Maybe we'll end there.

Ed Rizzotto: Mm hmm.

[END OF TRACK 2]

[END OF INTERVIEW]