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Paul Fodor
October 24, 2014

Interview conducted by Lu Ann Jones
Transcribed by Teresa Bergen
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ANPR Oral History Project

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Final copy, corrected by Paul Fodor.

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[START OF TRACK 1]

Lu Ann Jones: So, I usually, I start off by asking, just saying this is Lu Ann Jones and I'm here with Paul Fodor, is that how you pronounce your last name?

Paul Fodor: Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: It's October the 24th, we're in Estes Park, Colorado, at the 2014 Ranger Rendezvous. And this is an interview that's part of the Association of National Park Rangers Oral History Project. So, will you give me permission to record this interview?

Paul Fodor: Absolutely.

Lu Ann Jones: Okay. Thank you very much. I usually ask people first just to give me their full names and when you were born and where you were born.

Paul Fodor: My full name is Paul Andrew Fodor. I was named after my dad and my middle name is after my grandfather.

Lu Ann Jones: How about that. Mm hmm.

Paul Fodor: I was born down in southern California, just right near East L.A. And that's where I grew up.

Lu Ann Jones: What kind of work did your parents do?

Paul Fodor: My mom, at first, she was a dental assistant. And my dad was a machinist. Made parts for airplanes.

Lu Ann Jones: So how did you get interested in the National Park Service?

Paul Fodor: By accident. When I was young, I was planning to be an architect. My sister and I were going to open our own shop. This was when I was like 10 and 11, we were planning ahead. One summer when I was 12, I got a job in the mountains in a summer camp for handicapped children. One summer in the mountains, and I said I had to get me a job to get me out of the city.

Paul Fodor: So, I went to the nearest Forest Service station and I asked them, what school do I need to go to and what degree do I need to get? And where did you do all that? They looked at me and they laughed. They had a height/weight requirement. You had to be so tall and you had to weigh so much and didn't even match any of them. So, they said, "Try something else."

Paul Fodor: So, the next closest thing I could think of was a wildlife biologist at Fish & Game. So, I did my college stuff. I did my first two years at a junior college, at East LA Junior College. Then I went to Long Beach State to do my last two years. They didn't have a degree plan for that, so I made up my own. My friend was already working for the Fish & Game. They had all these publications they hand out, and he sent me boxes and boxes for me to study.

- Paul Fodor: So, I graduated, and I went down to Fish & Game in L.A, and I took a written test. I went home and they called me back. Wanted to do an interview. So, I went down, and I did the interview. He talked to me and interviewed me about why do I want to do that and stuff.
- Paul Fodor: After the interview he says, or during the interview, “Well, you know, you aced the test. And after this interview, you’re going to the top of the list. The next game biologist position in California is yours.” So, I was in heaven.
- Paul Fodor: And then Ronald Reagan became governor of California, and he put a stop to all hiring of any position for the state. His objective was to reduce state government. So, I ended up working for my brother-in-law cleaning carpets and painting houses.
- Paul Fodor: Then one day I got a letter from the National Park Service. Would you be interested in a position in national parks? And my wife and I, we had spent all summer – she was a teacher, I was a student – and we spent all that time camping out all over the country.
- Paul Fodor: And I said, “Hey, Jan. You want to live in national parks?” She said, “You bet!” So, I wrote back to them I’d like to, and they just told me to show up at Albright Training Center.
- Lu Ann Jones: Well how had they gotten your name?
- Paul Fodor: Well, in those days, I don't know if they still do it, but when you get done with college, you would automatically send in an application to the federal government. And that’s what I did, and off of that, that’s where they got my name. So that’s what I did.
- Lu Ann Jones: So, what year was this that you got this letter and headed off to Albright?
- Paul Fodor: 1967.
- Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. So, what happened at Albright?
- Paul Fodor: Well, showed up at Albright. One of the funny things was that they want you in uniform right from the start. So, the first week, the uniform suppliers come up. Just Alvord and Ferguson and Gregory’s did. They had their big van full of uniforms. They’d measure you and then they’d take the uniform stuff of the shelf and hand it to you. And I got measured by Alvord and Ferguson. And they said, “We don’t have anything your size.” They said, “But wait, Gregory might. He’ll be here this week.”
- Paul Fodor: So, I wait for Gregory. He measured me. And he said, “We don’t have anything in your size.” I said, “Well, I have to have a uniform.” He says, “Well, we could probably custom make one for you.” So, they did. They measured me. They made it. But it took three weeks before I got my uniform. So, everybody else is in uniform in class and I’m in my civvies. Finally, after three weeks I got my uniform. Showed up in class in uniform. I was so proud.

- Paul Fodor: Dave Ames, one of the instructors, started the class the first morning that I had my uniform, he comes in, points to me, and he says, "Hey, look! A ranger doll." That's when the short jokes started.
- Lu Ann Jones: The what?
- Paul Fodor: The ranger doll.
- Lu Ann Jones: Doll. Oh, that's terrible!
- Paul Fodor: (laughs) I didn't mind. Yeah. So, went to Albright and did well there. At the end, they assigned you to a training park. You go interview with them, and then they tell you what the options are, what they have open for trainees. He said to me, he said, "Almost all the openings are in the southeast United States." I said, "Okay. We've never been to the Southeast."
- Paul Fodor: He said, "You don't understand. Mixed marriages," my wife was Japanese. He said, "Mixed marriages aren't legal in the Southern states." And I'd never heard of such a thing. Because I grew up in an interracial family in an interracial neighborhood. My mom called our house International House. So, I never heard of such a thing.
- Paul Fodor: So, I said, "Well, what are the options?" He said, "Well, we do have a position at Death Valley. But nobody wants to go there." I said, "I'll take it. We love the desert." We used to spend all the weekends. Because I was a biology major, and every class you take, you have to have a collection. So, we'd go out to the desert and we'd collect desert animals. So, I said, "We'll take it." So that's when I went to Death Valley.
- Lu Ann Jones: So, what was your position there?
- Paul Fodor: I was supposed to go as a trainee for one year, but I started it out as a park ranger. But there's one, two, three, four, there's the headquarters area, then there are four isolated ranger stations with one ranger in each one. So, when I got there, they put me into one of the outlying ranger stations. Ranger was leaving, so they put me in that position. To an isolated, just my wife and I, that's it, in one ranger house.
- Lu Ann Jones: What did that house look like?
- Paul Fodor: What?
- Lu Ann Jones: What did that house look like? Do you remember?
- Paul Fodor: Oh, it was an old-style house. It was a Mission, not it wasn't even, it was before Mission 66. And the front was the information station where the people would park, and they'd come to get their information. Then the back behind it was the residence. So. That's what we did.
- Lu Ann Jones: So, what was the ranger of your duties there as a ranger in that location?
- Paul Fodor: Well that location, when I first got there, it was road patrol, mostly. Yeah. Mostly road patrol. And then, one of the rangers at the north end, the same

kind of position, one ranger, one station, one ranger. And it was at the northern end of Death Valley. And road crew had been working on a dirt road. There was about 300 miles of dirt and four-wheel drive roads there. They left the road grader onsite for the weekend, and when they got back on Monday morning, their grader had been torched.

Paul Fodor: So, the chief ranger decided he was tired of this kind of activity, and he wanted to find out what happened, where they went. So, the ranger followed tracks and he went down a four-wheel drive road that went out of the park. It came out at one area. And he said, "It looks like they went down that road."

Paul Fodor: Well, I was about 30 minutes from where that road came out, from my ranger station. So, I drove over there. And there, there was a little restaurant, a store, and four cabins. Little motel kind of a thing. I went over there, and I knew the people there, because it was the closest place that I could get to, and I asked them if they saw any unusual dune buggy activity. They said, "Oh, yeah. A bunch of dune buggies went by here yesterday." I said, "Did you see where they went?" "Yeah. They went right down here to this stop sign and they made a right and went south."

Paul Fodor: So, I went south. This is out of the park now. I went south and the first dirt road, I drove up that and I parked, and I hiked in. I found a whole bunch of dune buggies that were covered with brush so you couldn't see them from the air, I assumed. There was about six or seven dune buggies like that. Well, I wasn't going to, what I did is I just wrote down the license numbers. I got out of the canyon to get my truck and the radio. I got to where I could get radio reception and I called them in, the license plates. It came back that they were all stolen. They were all stolen from L.A.

Paul Fodor: So that was, besides being a ranger, I was also a deputy sheriff for that county. So, I called for some backup. But nobody could get to me until the next day, because it was long distances.

Paul Fodor: So, one of the other rangers shows up and we go in together. All the dune buggies were gone. We followed their tracks and it looked like it came back out to the main highway and went south.

Paul Fodor: So, we went back home because his ranger station was about an hour and a half away. I started going to the different Jeep roads going south. And I was checking for them and checking for them, but I never found them again.

Paul Fodor: Then I got transferred from my isolated station to headquarters area. I told everybody if you see any strange dune buggy activity, let me know.

Paul Fodor: One of the rangers one day, he called me on the radio, and he said he was at the south end of the park. He said, "A bunch of dune buggies just went by and they went south." He told me which road they went on. They went on a dirt road. There was a little cabin down this little canyon. So, I went in there; I went down, picked him up and we went down in the canyon.

We found the dune buggies. But it was outside the park, so we went back, and we called for backup to go in the next morning. We had the highway patrol. We had a resident highway patrolman in the park. We had a resident sheriff's deputy. And they got some other rangers. And the next morning we went down to that place and there was all the dune buggies, you know.

Paul Fodor: So, we went in. And there was a bunch of women. There was about eight or nine women and two or three babies. But that was it. But there were the dune buggies, so the sheriff's deputy said, "We're going to take them." So, they got the sheriff's van. Brought it in. We took them all to jail. It was Lone Pine, California. They took them, not Lone Pine, Independence. So, they took them there. So, everything was done. Everybody left. Me and my partner stayed to make sure everything was okay. As we were leaving, there was a bedroom there and there was a kind of a front room with a kitchen sink and stuff and a cabinet. As we were leaving, I noticed there was, under the sink there was hair sticking out from the doors that were closed. And I grabbed him by the arm, and I went like this [finger to my lips].

Lu Ann Jones: Be quiet? Sssh?

Paul Fodor: Yeah. We didn't want to make any noise. And he goes [nods his head], so we drew our guns, and we opened it up and there's this wild-eyed little guy under there. We got him out. We didn't know anything about Manson at the time. So, we got him out and cleared the place. We took him to jail in Independence.

Paul Fodor: We took them on stolen vehicle charges. In a day or so the district attorney from L.A. shows up at my office. And he says, "Do you know who you have in jail?" I said, "I've got a bunch of people in possession of stolen dune buggies." He just said, "No. You have Charles Manson." And I said, "Who's that?"

Paul Fodor: At Death Valley then, we had no television. We had no radio. We had no newspapers. He explained about Charles Manson and the Family. So that's how I found out about that, though.

Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) Well, what an interesting end to that story. So, had he killed Sharon Tate at that point?

Paul Fodor: Oh, yeah. I found out later that—

Lu Ann Jones: Right. I mean, had went there to escape?

Paul Fodor: Apparently, he didn't do the killings himself. His family, the girls, did it. Yeah. But he's still in jail.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah. Well I mean, you had been at Albright for just a handful of weeks. I mean, did you feel confident being a protection ranger there with that amount of training?

Paul Fodor: Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: You did.

Paul Fodor: Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: Had you learned to handle guns and all that?

Paul Fodor: Yeah. Make arrests and take people to jail. We did all that.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, how did things evolve from there? (laughs)

Paul Fodor: Well, with my college training in biology, the park had a resident research scientist from the University of Las Vegas, and he lived in the park. So, because of my background, the superintendent thought 50 percent of my time should be working with him. So, I did law enforcement and emergency medicine. And then I was working with him part-time. Half time.

Lu Ann Jones: What kinds of things were you helping the scientist with?

Paul Fodor: Well, what we were doing, his expertise was in desert bighorn sheep. So, when I worked with him, we monitored the bighorn sheep population, and worked on the wild burro problem. Because bighorn sheep, they get water from springs. People don't realize, but Death Valley has a ton of springs, natural springs. But they're all up in the canyons and stuff. From a previous study years before by two people, they published a paper on the bighorn sheep. They have to get water every three days in the summertime. So, we'd go to all the district we have and inventory all the springs. And we'd go check the springs and see where there's a burro problem. Park policy then was to shoot any feral burros. I didn't think that was right, because I don't like killing animals.

Paul Fodor: I knew a bunch of cowboys that were in Nevada right outside the park, and they had horses and cows and stuff. And I went and talked to them. I talked to the superintendent. I said, "If these guys can catch them, just give them to them and let them have them." I started that program. Eventually they trapped and took all the burros, and we could restore all the springs for the bighorn sheep.

Paul Fodor: As part of that program, I also conducted annual bighorn sheep counts. I guess a bunch of people, a bunch of ranger people, each would be assigned a spring, and we'd sit on the spring. They'd build a blind, sit on the spring, and we'd record bighorn sheep for three days. Because they said they needed it every three days. The bighorn sheep, you could identify them by the number of rings on their horns and the different kind of colorings on their body. We'd make sketches. We had a page that, there was a bighorn sheep and we could see whether it was an ewe, or it was a male, and doodled that and the color. So, if it came back again, we'd know, so we could count them that way.

Lu Ann Jones: How many burros were there? What was that population?

Paul Fodor: Oh, gee, that was, probably, probably at least 100.

- Lu Ann Jones: Wow.
- Paul Fodor: Most of the springs were destroyed, really mucked up, by the burros.
- Lu Ann Jones: How long were you able to stay at that kind of dual position there?
- Paul Fodor: As long as I was there. Yeah. I was there five years. I was supposed to go there for one year. That was my training part. And we loved the desert. It was so diverse there. You know, the highest peak was 14,000 peak. And the lowest was below sea level, right? So, it was a good place to go. And that's why we stayed. Then we stayed, but then the park service came out with this policy. Because most of the people that come to national parks come from cities, and their policy was that you need to be able to relate to these people. So, you're going to have to do a stint in an urban park. I kept turning down going to an urban park.
- Paul Fodor: When Howard Chapman was the regional director, when he came to Death Valley, he visited all the parks once a year. Well, I would be assigned to him to take him wherever he wanted to go, whoever he wanted to talk to. I was driving him around one trip and he says, "I notice you've turned down a lot of transfer offers." I said, "Yeah. They're all for urban parks." He says, "Well, you know, that's the policy. So, you can relate to them." I said, "I grew up in East L.A. I already know how those idiots think!" (Lu Ann Jones laughs) He said, "Okay, well that makes sense."
- Paul Fodor: So, the next thing I know, I get offered a job to go to Saguaro National Monument. It's considered an urban park because the main street of Tucson begins at the park entrance.
- Paul Fodor: So, we went down there. We had two boys by then, two babies. And so, where we lived, we were assigned to a house. It was a government house. It was about 30 minutes outside of Tucson from park headquarters. It was a two-lane road and then off the two-lane road, we got a dirt road. The dirt road, we had to go through a locked gate. There was no public access behind the gate, because it was private property. So, we had to drive, ford a stream, to get to our one house. It's just one house. No other houses.
- Paul Fodor: We stayed there during the winter. I would work sometimes out of headquarters during the day. We had a string of horses, and they could be out in the winter pasture and I would haul hay to them.
- Lu Ann Jones: So, they were your horses. Or were they—
- Paul Fodor: They were the park horses.
- Lu Ann Jones: Park horses. Uh huh.
- Paul Fodor: Yeah. And we had a packer, because we had a fire camp on top of the mountain at eight thousand feet. In the summertime, I would be assigned to the cabin. I would have to supervise. We had a fire crew. The fire crew was fire trail. When there wasn't a fire, they were building trail. So, we did that.

- Paul Fodor: So, we'd go up in like March, and it was a six-hour horseback ride. At first, they told me that my wife could stay at our house in the desert while I'm on the mountain for six to eight months. I said, I'm not going to do that. So, they said, okay. Because I wanted to take my family with me. They said okay.
- Paul Fodor: So, my wife was from Hawaii, and never been on a horse. So, I had to teach her how to ride. I knew how to ride already. So, I had to teach her how to ride. And then we were going to have to take our boys with us. The youngest was two and a half and the oldest was three and a half. We were each going to have to hold one in front of the saddle, and it was a six hours ride. So, we practiced that.
- Paul Fodor: Then we had to practice handing off, getting the horses next to each other. So, if somebody had to pee, you could hand one of the kids off. They'd have to hold two on the saddle. (laughter) But hey, we went up and we lived in a one-room log cabin; it was a historic cabin built by a surveyor general of the Arizona Territory. He built it for his family. He only spent one summer in it, and nobody lived in it, except the supervisory ranger.
- Paul Fodor: Then we had a fire crew. And we didn't even have a toilet. So, the fire crew had a building, one of those Butler buildings. They had a big bunkroom, and they had a bathroom with the showers. We had a big spring, and we'd pump water out of the spring that went to the water system. Then they had a big dining room. So that was, all of our supplies, our food and everything we needed, was brought up once a week by pack mule.
- Lu Ann Jones: Well how did you know how to supervise a fire crew?
- Paul Fodor: Well, I had fire training at Albright. The fire crew, they were all experienced. I had two fire foremen, and they were real experienced. So, I just had to supervise the operation. It was fun.
- Lu Ann Jones: So, I assume your wife was game for spending her summer this way.
- Paul Fodor: She was game for anything. Yeah. She didn't mind that at all. But we would be up there six or eight months at a time. And then go down to the desert for the rest of the year, for the wintertime.
- Lu Ann Jones: How long did you stay at that park?
- Paul Fodor: Well, only two years. Because she finally told me, she said, "Well, this is getting very hard."
- Lu Ann Jones: I would imagine.
- Paul Fodor: We didn't have a bathroom. We had to use the fire crew's bathroom. But we played games. We waited until the fire crew was done for the night so we could use the shower. One night my wife's in the shower; the shower shutoff was in the kitchen, and all of a sudden, the water turns off and Kool-Aid, a package of Kool-Aid comes on her and turned her red. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) Did things like that. At night, I would dress up like

Super Ranger with a cape, and I'd have flour and I'd run through their living area and hit everybody with flour. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) And they would toilet paper our cabin at night. Oh, that was good.

Paul Fodor: But after a certain period, a certain amount of rain, because it rained, there was a rainy season.

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[START OF TRACK 2]

Paul Fodor: If it was a man-caused fire, we automatically put it out. After a certain period, if it was lightning caused, we let it burn. And it just crept along. So, we did that. And the trail crew and stuff like that. Trail maintenance. So, I told the regional office that it's too hard on the wife and the kids. What we'd do is usually the trail crew, they'd have a trail crew supervisor, there was two of them. During the day they would be in charge. But my wife and I liked to go hiking. So, we had a building, fire shed, that had chicken wire screening, so critters couldn't get into the equipment. And we'd leave the kids with one of the rangers that was on duty that day or the fire crew that was on duty.

Paul Fodor: And then we came back the first time and we asked the kids, "Did you have fun?" "Yeah! We played jail!" (laughter) The fire crew guy had locked them in the toolshed. (laughter) But anyway, that was fun. So, I needed, we needed to leave. So that's when they transferred us to Sequoia Kings Canyon.

Lu Ann Jones: What was your job there?

Paul Fodor: I was a sub district ranger. I had; I don't know if you've heard of Mineral King. It's a big private, it's a mountain community, all private cabin owners. Then I had some back country. And I had a horse ranger in the back country. And then Mineral King had all the cabins. There was a store with cabins up there. So, yeah. That was that assignment.

Paul Fodor: There was three of us back country rangers. I had one section of Sequoia. Another ranger had a section of Sequoia. And another ranger had the Kings Canyon back country. The Kern was one of the sub districts. My friend was there. When he moved on, they joined his sub district with mine. So, then I had a bunch of back country rangers and what was going on there. So, I did that.

Paul Fodor: Then after a couple of years the ranger that was in Kings Canyon sub district, he lived in Bishop, California. We had a joint agency visitor's center there that he was part of. So, I got that, I got the whole sub district of Sequoia. Then that Bishop job, that ranger was Dick Martin. And Dick Martin, he transferred.

Paul Fodor: So, the district ranger that was living at headquarters, he told the superintendent he'd like to have that job. And they said, "Why would you

go from a district ranger to a sub district ranger?" He says, "I don't want to put up with your bullshit." (laughter) "Okay, you can have it."

Paul Fodor: So, he went down to that Kings Canyon back country sub district. And they promoted me up to the district ranger. So, I was in charge of all the Sequoia and Kings Canyon back country.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow. Well what kinds of incidents did you handle there? That must have been a very interesting place to be.

Paul Fodor: Oh, yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: And there must have been a variety of incidents. Can you remember certain—

Paul Fodor: Yeah. Well, yeah. It was a big park. The two parks together were a big park. I had the majority of it in my wilderness part, the back country. So, you had all kinds of stuff. We had a number of light aircraft accidents in the mountains. From Fresno the Kings River, goes right up Kings Canyon, and the canyon of the Kings River. When you fly out of Fresno you start heading east, and it looks like the canyon's going to go all the way through the mountains. Then they get up there and all of a sudden there's a twelve thousand-foot wall in front of them and they can't climb out. So, I worked a number of airplane crashes. Some people survived. Most didn't. But I did that.

Paul Fodor: And I did a lot of emergency rescues, and a lot of Medevacs. My partner and I, we were EMTs, EMT 2s. And we thought what we needed--well at that time, the park service would send us to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Lu Ann Jones: I'm from North Carolina, so I know what that is.

Paul Fodor: And they put us through a medical training program where they taught how to do drugs and how to package people and how to do IVs and stuff. Then you were supposed to go back to your park and find a sponsor. So, we did that. We went down to our local hospital in Visalia, California. Went to the emergency room at Kaweah Delta and we made an appointment to talk to emergency room doctors. We met with them down at the hospital, and we explained our situation. There were no paramedics in the country then. So, we told them, you know, this was the kind of training we need, and because of our exclusive jurisdiction, no other agency has any authority over what we can do. We can do anything you say we can do.

Paul Fodor: So, they put together training standards and protocol for acting. The two doctors would come up to my house in the park and we'd get a whole classroom in my living room, and then we'd do our clinical training in the emergency room.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow.

- Paul Fodor: That worked out well. I did a number of helicopter Medevacs. Because Sequoia, they're 14,000 foot is what's common. It's 12, 13,000 is normal, in the back country there just cresting the Sierras. So, I got a lot of Medevacs. Since I was the smallest ranger. Weight is important. I had the most medical training. And I lived at headquarters then, so I got most of the calls because I knew the country. And I got most of the calls for Medevacs. So, I did a lot of those. I actually I recorded 3,000 lives saved in Medevacs and accidents, road accidents. So that was kind of neat. So.
- Lu Ann Jones: So, when you do a Medevac, are you flying in on a helicopter? What's the situation?
- Paul Fodor: Yeah. Flying in with the helicopter. We had a bunch of back country rangers, seasonals for the summer. They'd call something in, they'd tell us what it looks like. And then we'd fly into the location. I'd take my medical kit with me. Because we were trained then in drugs and IVs and everything. Defibrillators. We'd fly in and we'd get to the place. I'd do the patient assessment and whatever. Whatever had to be done. We'd radio into the hospital to get permission to do what we think we should do. If they said okay, do it, we'd do it. Then we'd fly them out to the heliport in the headquarters area where an ambulance would be waiting. We'd load them up and the ambulance would take them to the hospital emergency room. So did that kind of stuff. Hauled on a lot of dead bodies on different occasions.
- Lu Ann Jones: How did you get used to that, fatalities?
- Paul Fodor: Well, when I was going to college, I worked in the anatomy and physiology department. So, I was a lab tech for two professors. So, I was involved with – we had nursing classes and I was responsible for, we had cadavers. Part of my job was when they were going to work on a cadaver, we kept them, we had a cooler unit, refrigerated unit, and I'd have to take them down. They were in stainless steel boxes on wheels. And I'd take them down and roll them into the room, and then get them ready for class. I was working with a lot of dead bodies. So, I was kind of used to it.
- Lu Ann Jones: So those fatalities, were they people that were hiking and just took the wrong step, or what?
- Paul Fodor: Climbers that did something wrong and fell off the ropes or cliffs. And people that just injured themselves, broken legs and stuff like that. Yeah.
- Lu Ann Jones: How big a crew were you overseeing there?
- Paul Fodor: Oh, let's see. On the back country, I had about, let's see. I had about 10. No, 15 or 20 back country rangers. And I had two sub districts, and one of them was part of the sub district I started with there. So, there was probably about 20, 25 rangers under me.
- Lu Ann Jones: Well you said that one of the district rangers said he didn't want to put up with the BS anymore. So, what were some of the challenges just being a manager in a situation like that?

Paul Fodor: Well, he didn't like management. I mean, he was a hell of a ranger, hell of a nice guy. He was an old Yellowstone ranger. But he didn't like putting up with administration stuff.

Lu Ann Jones: Was that something that you were willing to put up with?

Paul Fodor: Yeah. Yeah. I often got around the administration. (laughs) So I did what I thought had to be done. One time, we had a bad bear problem in the back country. You know, the bears are really smart. The old thing about putting your food in a bag and throwing a rope over and counterbalancing it doesn't work. I've seen bears with cubs. They would come and go up the tree and climb out on the limb. And they'd play it like a banjo, the rope, until it fell apart, till the bag fell apart. So, I thought that was, I was afraid backpackers were going to get harmed by a bear.

Paul Fodor: So, we had put bear boxes in the campgrounds because the bears were breaking into all these cars. But they didn't put them in the park residential area. And I told them, we even had a bear in our house when I wasn't home one day. My wife was baking a pie and she had all these apple peelings in the trash can of the kitchen. She went to go do something in the living room. She came back in the kitchen, there was a bear with his head over the top of the garbage can, the trash can, and he's just eating all of the peelings out of the trash. She didn't know what to do. She went and got the kid's ball, a volleyball or something, and she rolled it into the kitchen. She heard the door slam. She said, "Uh oh. He's inside now."

Paul Fodor: So, she called me. She went out of the house and she called me, and I went in. The door had closed behind the bear. He went out through the window. (laughter) So he wasn't there.

Lu Ann Jones: Oh my gosh.

Paul Fodor: So, they put the storage canisters around the residential area. I started working on the bear situation in the back country. They had these bear box, food storage boxes. They had those in all the front country campgrounds. And each district had a supply of extra ones so if one broke down, if the hinges, they didn't fix it, they could take the broken one out and put in a new one, so they'd have them there. There was three locations in the front country where they kept those. And then at headquarters, it was just management had a big collection of them. So, they would have those.

Paul Fodor: I decided if we had bear boxes, those food storage boxes, at the really hot spots in the back country, I figured if we put them in there, maybe the bears would get used to not being able to get to any food or anything. So, I said, "Let's go," I said, "We're going to put bear boxes in the back country." I had all my rangers, when they came in the summer – they all had maps, I'd tell them, "Mark down where you have a real bad bear problem and give me the maps." So, they all did that. They knew the bear problems where all the campers would be concentrated at night. So many

trail miles, you'd just leave them at certain places, and they'd concentrate, that's where the bears would be.

Paul Fodor: So, my partner and I, we would drive to the parks, the different districts. We found out where their bear boxes were, and we'd steal from them. We'd steal their boxes. And then we'd take them to corral operations right next to the heliport. And we'd take them there and the bales of hay under a covered roof. We'd stack them, the bear boxes, with the bales of hay, and we'd cover them with canvas.

Paul Fodor: I gave the helicopter pilot the maps, the heli-tech crew, the maps of where we were going to put bear boxes. I said, "Each time you're going on a mission of some kind and if going by any of these places, I want you to sling a load of bear boxes," they're heavy, "I want you to sling a load of bear box and drop it off there. I'll let the rangers know that it's coming to them."

Paul Fodor: So that's what we did. So, I had them all [unclear] in the back country and got that all done. At the end of every season, the superintendent and staff would get together and everybody that had any responsibility in the back country, trail crew, foreman, resources manage personnel. You had the rangers. And they have a review at the end of the summer to see how things went. I would always participate in that, because I had the biggest part of the park.

Paul Fodor: One of those meetings after I put the bear boxes in, chief of resources management says, he says, "What are you doing about the bear problem?" I said, "I think I've taken care of that." He says, "What did you do?" I said, "I put bear boxes in the back country." At that time, you couldn't do that. I didn't have approval to do it. I just did it. I'm trying to save people.

Paul Fodor: The administrative officer says, "I don't remember any requisitions for you to buy bear boxes." I said, "I didn't buy any bear boxes." "Where did you get them from?" "I stole them from resource management and in other districts."

Paul Fodor: They said, "How did you get them in the back country?" Because the policy was, any use of a helicopter in the back country had to be approved by committee before you could do it. So, they said, "How did you get them in the back country?" I said, "I stole your helicopter." "Oh." (laughter)

Paul Fodor: So anyway, after I left there, because I figured that once the bears got used to being back in their natural way, we'd take them out. I was there four or five years after I came back from Hawaii. And went there. I asked them, I said, "How do those bear boxes work?" They said, "Oh, they're still there." So now they have a stockpile to replace the ones that get broken. So, they're still there."

Lu Ann Jones: It's interesting to think about being, well, in the park service at the time you joined it in those particular places. Because I guess I was just thinking

that this was a time where the back country was being used a lot. I mean, it's very popular, hiking, camping is all getting very, many people getting interested in that.

Paul Fodor: Right.

Lu Ann Jones: It was a busy time. It was a busy place.

Paul Fodor: I was busy all the time. One day I had three Medevacs in one day.

Lu Ann Jones: Oh, my gosh.

Paul Fodor: It was funny – it wasn't funny, but we got a call in the morning from the back-country rangers that there's an injured person. So, I go to the heliport and tell them where it's at. And I get in the helicopter with my medi-kit and I fly in. Take care of them. Take them out. Get to the heliport. There'd be an ambulance waiting. And load up, the ambulance would go.

Paul Fodor: This one day, we got the first person in, the ambulance has gone. I'm getting my medi-kit out of the helicopter and I get a tap on my shoulder. The foreman says, "Don't leave, you've got another one."

Paul Fodor: So, I go into the office there and I call to find out where it's at and what the situation is. And go back in. The helicopter flew back out to that location. I took care of the injured person in the helicopter. Back to heliport in the ambulance. Gone. I've taken my stuff out of the helicopter.

Paul Fodor: Tap on my shoulder. "Don't go. You've got another one." So, I find out where that's at. And get in the helicopter and we fly up the canyon. It was on the High Sierra Trail, which is the main one going across Sequoia to Mount Whitney. He was in a forested area. The injured guy had a broken leg. He was in the forested area next to the trail. But we couldn't land there because there was no landing space. So, we went back down the canyon and we found a big granite slab rock. Helicopter landed on that.

Paul Fodor: Before I got out of the helicopter, the pilot said, "You have 30 minutes to go get him and get him down here, because I'm running out of daylight." Well, because it was all through brush, and it took me 30 minutes to get to the guy.

Paul Fodor: So, I called the helicopter pilot and I said, "I'm going to need you back first thing in the morning. And I'm going to need five other guys and a litter to get this guy down to where you can land." I took care of him. I took care of the hiker and backpacker. He had all of his stuff, because he had full backpack. So, I got him in his sleeping bag. But I didn't have any overnight stuff with me. I only had my medi-kit.

Paul Fodor: So, what I did, I got myself back to that rock slab. I didn't have any sleeping bag or overnight stuff. So, I gathered up some branches, dead branches and stuff. I built a fire on the slab. And when it burnt down, I took a pine branch and brushed the ashes off, and I laid on the hot rock for the night.

- Paul Fodor: But the worst part about the whole thing was that we were having a party at our house that night. And I could see the lights of my living room from that hot rock. (laughter)
- Lu Ann Jones: Had you ever seen anybody heat a rock up like that before? Or was that something you thought up?
- Paul Fodor: That's something I thought up myself. I never know about that. Yeah.
- Lu Ann Jones: So, the helicopter came back the next morning.
- Paul Fodor: Yeah. With a crew. To get the guy out.
- Lu Ann Jones: Wow. I mean, when I interviewed Butch Farrabee, he told me about some of the rescues he was on. I can't imagine, I'll put it that way. I'm very much in admiration of people who are able to do that.
- Paul Fodor: Yeah. The hardest one I ever did was kind of, I was in a cave, it was called Lost Soldiers Cave, because the cavalry was running the park, the first three national parks were Sequoia, Yosemite and Yellowstone. Soldiers Cave had a little grate door that was locked. It had grate on it so the bats could get in and out. We had a policy that anybody who went into the cave had to have somebody leading the party who had been in there before. Usually it was about three people had brought parties up all the time. When they came up, I'd have to go there, meet with them, check all the equipment and make sure they had everything right. And then I'd open it up for them. And then if you go in there, you're usually in there for about eight or 12 hours. It's a real complicated cave system, but very narrow passages. And I kept doing that.
- Paul Fodor: Finally, one day, one of the guys that was a regular leader, he asked me had I ever been in the cave and I said no. He said, "Come on in."
- Paul Fodor: So, we went in. It's real technical in the cave. You go in and you have to go straight down about 100 feet on a rope. And then you have to crawl through these different passages and stuff like that.
- Paul Fodor: One day, one group was in there and one of the people on the tour, not the guide, but one of the people that were going in, he got in the cave and they were all moving around. And he got in a place where there was a high wall on one side, and he was climbing on that. And then on this side, came back, the rock came down horizontally kind of, the formation. And he slipped and he fell and hit his back and injured his back.
- Paul Fodor: So, the leader got out of the cave and he radioed to headquarters. We had a rescue, Soldiers Cave. So, I was having a party at my house with a bunch of other rangers. So, we went to the rescue cache and grabbed all of our cave rescue stuff. And I knew that a Stokes litter wouldn't fit through the opening. As we were leaving my yard to go to headquarters to leave, my kids were little kids then. And we had a plywood teeter totter on a rock in the front yard. And I grabbed that up, because I figured that would fit into

the cave. We took that in, and we went in and rescued the guy and got him out. So that was interesting.

Paul Fodor: The medical advisor at that time, we called ahead to call him to see what we should do. He said, "Leave him in there until he gets well." That's not going to work! (laughter) Anyway, we got him out. That was fun.

Lu Ann Jones: What happened to his back?

Paul Fodor: He had a broken back. But we had bundled him up real well. And got him out.

Lu Ann Jones: So, you mentioned there were, sort of shifting here, there were parties at your house. Were there a lot of people? Who lived around you? Would these have all been park people that would have been socializing together?

Paul Fodor: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It was all the local folks that lived in the headquarters area. Yeah. Mostly park staff and stuff.

Lu Ann Jones: So, did you all get together a lot?

Paul Fodor: Yeah. Yeah. Not as much as when we were in Death Valley. Because in Death Valley we had no TV and no radio. So, we socialized. We still get together every year.

Lu Ann Jones: Really?

Paul Fodor: Yeah. The ones that were there during that five-year period. Almost all of them ended up in Redding, California, for some reason. So, they hold it there. And I go to that.

Lu Ann Jones: Well so you stayed at Sequoia Kings Canyon did you say, for how long?

Paul Fodor: Seventeen years.

Lu Ann Jones: Seventeen years. Was there any thought that you would leave there before then? Or I mean, how were you sort of thinking about your—

Paul Fodor: I was having too good a time. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) I was doing a pretty good job. So, yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: Did you move up in your job title?

[END OF TRACK 2]

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Lu Ann Jones: Or duties change?

Paul Fodor: Well, I started out as a sub district ranger. Moved up to district ranger. And I was district ranger when I left. I was getting closer to my 30 years. My wife grew up in Hawaii, and I wanted to retire in Hawaii. So, I was getting close. I told her, I said, "I'm going to apply for the first thing that comes up that I can qualify for. And I'm going to take that." Because our good friend was chief ranger at Haleakala, and I knew he was going to retire. I wanted to get to Hawaii, and I wanted that job. So, the first thing

that opened up was chief ranger at the *Arizona* Memorial. I got that, and I got there six months before the fiftieth anniversary of Pearl Harbor.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow

Paul Fodor: So that was fun. When I got there, they had already hired a retired park service administrative officer to organize the commemoration. He hired a college student that was working for Natural History Association. He hired him. And they were doing the planning.

Paul Fodor: When I got there, they had, instead of just a day or two days, they had five days of commemoration ceremonies. All different kinds. Expecting thousands of people. They didn't have any idea how to pull it off. There was no room to do it, and what they were planning to do was, there's not much property there at the *Arizona* Memorial. There's a big front lawn. And they were planning to do stuff on the front lawn. The only thing else they have is the parking. You know, that's it. There's no more space.

Paul Fodor: So, I called Phil Ward in San Francisco and I told them, I said, "Hey, these guys have," and it was already committed by all the military branches, they were all committed already to the commemoration stuff. And of course, Honolulu Police Department. So, I told Phil, I said, "I don't have the staff to handle this."

Paul Fodor: So, he sent me Rick Gale and his incident management team. And they worked miracles. They just, yeah. They checked out where they were planning to do it. Brian Swift went to the rainfall records for December in Honolulu. He said, "It's wet in December in Honolulu. And if we're out on the grass here, it's going to be just a mud hole."

Paul Fodor: So, they said, "Okay. Well, we've got a big parking lot. During the day, it's always full." He said, "Okay. We'll do the commemoration ceremonies there in the parking lot." "What are you going to do with the cars?" Well, the navy had a big grass field that they never used for anything up off the main highway. And he says, "We'll ask the navy and see if we can use that field for parking and put them in there." "Well, how are you going to get them down from the parking lot, down to the ground level?" "We'll build stairs."

Paul Fodor: Okay. And it worked. They brought in the incident management team. They cleared out the parking lot. And they hired a guy who organizes concerts. And they brought in a big stage that was about four feet off the ground. Big stage covered on top and stuff. All the audio needed. He had handled all that kind of stuff. They brought in office trailers. And the staff was housed in hotels. I mean, the incident management teams, in hotels. And it worked great.

Lu Ann Jones: When you went there, did you know that that was going to be one of your first challenges? Were you aware of that?

Paul Fodor: Yeah. Yeah.

- Lu Ann Jones: And they were aware that you could help them pull it off.
- Paul Fodor: Well, they didn't care. They just, the superintendent was rarely there on site. He would come in in the morning, late, and he would leave early in the afternoon. The rest of the time, usually his door was closed. So, he wasn't involved in it at all. And so, yeah. Me, the administrative officer and the chief of maintenance – the three of us ran the park.
- Lu Ann Jones: Well was that, I guess sort of thinking about the different places that you were at, I mean, what were you looking for in the person you were reporting to? What was your ideal situation?
- Paul Fodor: Well, I needed to work for somebody who knew what they were doing. And I needed them to let me do what I thought was right. That worked out. Yeah. Blanca Stransky, she was working there at the *Arizona* at the time.
- Lu Ann Jones: I don't know who she is.
- Paul Fodor: Oh, she's one of the speakers here [at Ranger Rendezvous]. She's Perry's Victory superintendent.
- Lu Ann Jones: Oh. Mm hmm. In terms of being a supervisor of people, how would you describe your supervisory style?
- Paul Fodor: Well, if they needed training in something, I got them the training. If I needed training in something, I got my training. I let people do, handle things that were their responsibility. I never had to fire anybody. So, as I've always got along well with everybody that's worked for me.
- Lu Ann Jones: One of the things we ask is if you feel like there were people who were mentors to you who just helped you along your way in your career with the park service.
- Paul Fodor: No. I kind of felt my own way through it. If I thought I needed to know something, I figured out how to get that knowledge. When a ranger came on duty, usually a new ranger or a seasonal ranger, if they were law enforcement qualified, I had to qualify them on a pistol range when they showed up. So, I went to range master school, got certified. I was in charge of issuing the firearms. If a firearm broke, had problems, malfunctioned, then my responsibility to send it off to a gunsmith to have it fixed. Well, that was time money and it was expensive.
- Paul Fodor: So, I asked my boss, I said, "If I can find a gunsmithing school, would the park pay for me to go to one?" And he said, "Sure." I said, "It would save a lot of money." He said, "Sure."
- Paul Fodor: So, I found a gunsmith school by Smith and Wesson. And I got into it for three weeks. Their philosophy was the best way to know how to fix a gun is how to make a gun. So that's what we did for three weeks. We made guns from scratch with all the little parts and things.
- Lu Ann Jones: Where was that school?

- Paul Fodor: That was, let's see, I think it was in Fresno or something like that.
- Lu Ann Jones: How long were you in, did you retire in Hawaii?
- Paul Fodor: Yeah.
- Lu Ann Jones: How long were you there?
- Paul Fodor: I was only there two years. I had 33 years in. My wife was still teaching school. But I decided I was going to retire. We had our own crafting business, too, that we were doing.
- Lu Ann Jones: Oh. What was that?
- Paul Fodor: Well, my wife was Japanese. We made Japanese origami. She was making earrings and pins and different things out of origami. And we'd sell them at craft fairs. Instead of the regular paper you see at a Japanese store, origami paper, we bought special-made paper. It was handmade paper in Japan made out of mulberry tree bark. They'd take bark off of mulberry trees. They wouldn't take all the bark. They'd just take pieces off of different trees. And they'd boil it up, they'd crush it up, they'd make a mush. And they put it on a screen, a wire screen, and let it dry. And then they print the colored designs on. So, we used that paper. It was very sturdy paper. So, we were doing that on weekends. And I was playing golf. (laughter)
- Paul Fodor: One day she told me, she said, "You're having entirely too much fun and I'm working entirely too hard." I said, "So quit!" (laughter)
- Paul Fodor: So she quit. Then we started doing that. That's what we were doing is we'd sit at home in the living room and we had three different sizes of paper cutter. Because the sheets we would get were like two foot by three foot. So, I started with the little one for cutting little pieces. And then I had a medium-sized one and then I had a big thing to cut the paper with. So, we had the different sizes that we needed, the squares that we needed for the different sizes of earrings we were going to do. So, I'd do the cutting and I'd get them all cut. Then she'd sit in her easy chair and she'd fold a bunch. I went to the secondhand store. I got a bunch of cafeteria trays. So, she'd have a tray in her lap. She'd do the initial folds. Then she'd hand me the tray, then she'd start folding another bunch. And I would do the gluing. We'd glue it on the insides so it wouldn't unfold. And I'd get that done. And then when that was done, she'd give me another tray and she'd be folding. This is what we would do in the evenings. Then we'd lacquer the outside with a special lacquer for this paper. I'd do the lacquering. I'd brush on three coats. And then when I got done, she would put the findings on it, with beads and stuff. So that's what we did.
- Paul Fodor: When she died, all of our friends were crafters, and they were all Japanese. So, we would travel, we'd do craft shows together and we were real close. Three couples. After she died, she had a list of everything she folded. And we had about 100 origami books. This would say what she made and what book you could find it in, that model in.

- Paul Fodor: So, I took her list and I got all the origami books after she died, and I taught myself how to do it all. So, I started doing it by myself with my other four friends. And then we started doing, we'd do things, then we'd find maybe there would be a Japanese festival somewhere on the mainland and we'd all go together. Then I started getting calls from people, different cities in the states. Because most weekends I would work in Hawaii. We had a big park in Honolulu, and they'd hold craft fairs about once a month there. But with my friends and I, we'd hear about one and we'd go to that. All three of us would fly over and take all of our stuff with us and go for the weekend.
- Paul Fodor: Then I started getting calls, somebody called me, and they'd say, "We are doing a Japanese festival and we were told we could call the origami guy." That's what they called me. So, I got into a bunch on the mainland. So, I started going to the mainland about every two months. So that's what I did. Yeah.
- Lu Ann Jones: Well, what year had you retired?
- Paul Fodor: Hmm?
- Lu Ann Jones: What year did you retire?
- Paul Fodor: Uh, when did I retire? Let's see, '93, I think, 1993, I think.
- Lu Ann Jones: And what was your wife's name?
- Paul Fodor: Janet Tamiko.
- Lu Ann Jones: Janet?
- Paul Fodor: Tamiko.
- Lu Ann Jones: How do you spell that?
- Paul Fodor: T-a-m-i-k-o
- Lu Ann Jones: How had you met? How did you meet her?
- Paul Fodor: Oh. Did I tell you about the summer camp for the handicapped?
- Lu Ann Jones: Yes.
- Paul Fodor: Well, one of the counselors, he was a schoolteacher in Hawaii. He'd go to Hawaii for the winter to teach and then he'd come back to California. He worked at the summer camp for the summer. My wife taught at the same school that he was in. It was a small country school. I had known this guy for a number of years, and he told her, "You ought to come over." He said, "You won't make a lot of money. You'll make about enough money that you can pay for your flight. But you have a place to stay, the food. You have room and board. And it's a lot of fun because almost everybody there are either teachers or college students."
- Paul Fodor: So, she showed up one day. See, I started working as the naturalist there. And I was 12. And she showed up the year I was 14.

- Lu Ann Jones: How about that?
- Paul Fodor: So, she got off the bus and we'd bring the campers up by bus from L.A. They'd bring up a busload of campers, and then they'd offload them at the camp. Then they'd load them up with the group that had been there, and they'd leave. Then we'd start another two-week session. So, she walked off the bus one day. And the rest is history.
- Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) Well I think one of the last questions I have is when did you get started with ANPR?
- Paul Fodor: The first group. With Rick Gale and all those guys. I was part of that group that got together someplace every year. Yeah.
- Lu Ann Jones: What was attractive about the group?
- Paul Fodor: Well, we all knew each other from different parks. And it started out mostly guys in western parks that knew each other. So, yeah. We'd meet someplace every year after the season. One time we were together and said, "We ought to name our group something." Well, one of them came up with the old trappers, you know. They used to trap and everything all summer long, and then at the end of the season, they'd all rendezvous someplace. So that's why they started calling it the Ranger Rendezvous.
- Lu Ann Jones: Well you said you hadn't been here in about 20 years. Did you used to come pretty regularly?
- Paul Fodor: Oh, to these?
- Lu Ann Jones: To the Rendezvous.
- Paul Fodor: Oh, yeah. All the time. Yeah. I just come to one, I came to one like maybe 15 years ago. So, yeah, I remember that one because if you go to the Rendezvous, the first night is kind of a social gathering. And you meet and greet everybody that you hadn't seen for so long. I got introduced to one of these guys, one of the new rangers that was there. And they introduced me to him. "This is Paul Fodor."
- Paul Fodor: And the guy looks at me and he says, "You're Paul Fodor?" And I said, "I always have been." "You're Paul Fodor with the horse named Harry?" "Yeah." "And you fell off the horse into the stream?" "Yeah? How did you know about that?" What I did, that really happened. My horse had a bad foot, so I had to borrow another ranger's horse.
- Lu Ann Jones: Where was this? Was this in SEKI [Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Park].
- Paul Fodor: This was in SEKI, yes. And I was going by myself on hunting patrol, boundary patrol. We were going to walk through a stream. And I hadn't ridden this horse before, but I'd been around it before. And so, I'm approaching this stream and I'm thinking to myself, there's something about Harry that I can't remember.

Paul Fodor: And then as we got to the edge of the stream, I thought to myself, oh, no. Harry jumps streams. When I said that to myself, Harry jumped. I went off the back of the horse. Landed in the stream. And lost my gun in the stream. Never lost my hat. (laughter) I did find my gun later on. But I thought, I think this would be funny. So, I wrote up a 343. And what I just said, that's what I put down. I sent it in to the chief ranger. I figured he'd look at it, read it, and that he'd thrown it away. The day it went to his office, he wasn't in the park. The secretary didn't even look at it. She put it in the mail. It went in with all the other reports. And they were using it at Albright as an example of report writing. As an example of good report writing. (laughter)

Lu Ann Jones: Oh. Well, maybe that's a good place for us to stop. That's a great story there. I really appreciate you sharing your stories with us this afternoon.

Paul Fodor: Thank you. Thank you.

Lu Ann Jones: It's been a lot of fun. I hope it's been good for you, too.

Paul Fodor: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: Excellent. I am going to—

[END OF TRACK 3]

[END OF INTERVIEW]