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Katrina Fritts
September 13, 2012

Interview conducted by Cynthia Walton, Samantha Christine, Kristine Abu-Hantash, Ronnie Emory, and Jeremy Kaufman
Transcribed by Technitype Transcripts
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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

KATRINA FRITTS

September 13, 2012

Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

Transcribed by Technitype Transcripts

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Stephen T. Mather Training Center

[START OF INTERVIEW]

- Cynthia Walton: So, for the tape, this is the September 13, 2012 interview of Katrina Fritts by members of the Effective Oral History class at Mather Training Center. There will be four of us interviewing. I'll begin with your early background, and then we'll progress chronologically. Right now, we'll go around and introduce ourselves for the tape. So, I'm Cynthia Walton from the Southeast Regional Office in Atlanta.
- Samantha Christine: I'm Samantha Christine from Glen Echo Park, Clara Barton National Historic Site, and I'm an interpretive ranger there.
- Kristine Abu-Hantash: I'm Kristine Abu-Hantash. I'm an interpretive park guide at Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument and Lake Meredith National Recreation Area.
- Ronnie Emory: Hi, I'm Ronnie Emory. I'm with the American Indian Liaison Office in Washington, and I am a tribal liaison specialist.
- Jeremy Kaufman: And I'm Jeremy Kaufman, interpretive ranger at Arlington House, the Robert E. Lee Memorial.
- Cynthia Walton: Then also, before we get into the questions, we did want to confirm that you have had a chance to review the consent form, which you've already signed, and we've already signed it as well. But at the end of the interview, you can take it back, if you want. You'll have a chance at the end to make sure you're still okay with it.
- Katrina Fritts: Thanks.
- Cynthia Walton: So, I guess we'll start, and I'll start. So, I know from your background information that you gave us that you're originally from Lodi. I don't know if that's how you pronounce it.
- Katrina Fritts: It's actually pronounced "Low-dye."
- Cynthia Walton: California. And you're from a large family, so is that where you grew up?
- Katrina Fritts: No, actually, I was raised in a small town named Isleton, I-s-l-e-t-o-n, which is probably about a half hour outside of Lodi.
- Cynthia Walton: Where in the state of California are these towns? (laughs)
- Katrina Fritts: Well, I'm smack in the middle. So, it's located in the San Joaquin Delta, a lot of agricultural area. So, I actually lived on an island. The only way to get to another town was either by ferry or bridge.
- Cynthia Walton: Oh, wow.

- Katrina Fritts: It was kind of neat growing up.
- Cynthia Walton: So, I'm not too familiar with the geography of California. Are there national parks in the area that you knew of?
- Katrina Fritts: Yosemite, but it's a good bit a ways away, which is about three hours. That was the first park I worked in. But we lived a couple hours northeast of San Francisco. That gives you a little bit better idea of where, not too far away from Stockton and Sacramento, which is the state capital.
- Cynthia Walton: Okay. I know Sacramento. And you grew up in a big family of nine.
- Katrina Fritts: Yes. So, I was number seven; one brother, the rest were girls. But what happened was my mother had the set of five when she was younger, and then later on in life she had a set of four, four girls. So, I was the second one out of that second group of four.
- Cynthia Walton: So, a lot of girls, but then I notice from the info you gave us that your interest was in becoming a helicopter pilot, which seems [unclear].
- Katrina Fritts: Yes, in high school, I think I mentioned to you that at one point I was thinking of possibly going into the army and I skirted off to Sacramento with the recruiter to his office and sat me down, and we went over everything that would be involved in it, and it scared me. I didn't want to do that. I wasn't prepared for doing some of that sort of thing. I just was curious. But before I left high school, that's what I wanted to do was become a helicopter pilot, but then I was discouraged because helicopter pilots need really good eyesight, and I don't have that, although I have corrective vision with contact lenses.
- Katrina Fritts: So, when I entered college, I had so many different interests, and so I kind of was going this way and that way, and the helicopter pilot idea was dropped.
- Cynthia Walton: In college then, what were the interests that developed after?
- Katrina Fritts: Along the natural resources side of it, forestry. I really enjoyed taking some of those type of classes, and I thought that's the direction I would go into.

- Katrina Fritts: But, you know, it was really kind of interesting because I had a really bad counselor, and he discouraged me from going into that field because his statement, if I can remember correctly, was that there aren't a lot of opportunities for women. Ooh, I could have just killed him, now that I think about it.
- Katrina Fritts: So quickly I switched counselors. I didn't think that that was a very, very encouraging thing to say. So, I was still interested in natural resources, but I also liked the idea of administration, and, in particular, that was the early eighties, rather, where computers were coming into play, and so I went messing around with computers. That's why I got the AA degree.
- Katrina Fritts: But how I got started with Yosemite was through a Career Day at the college, and I guess you could say I actually followed in my older sister's footsteps. She also attended the same community college, and she got her foot in the door at Yosemite National Park in concessions management and she's still there today. So, she's thinking about retiring, I think, in 2013.
- Katrina Fritts: Anyway, so that attracted me to Yosemite, because the family, the six of us, took a trip, one-day trip, to Yosemite National Park, and, you know, like all visitors for the first time seeing Yosemite, it was just like, "Ooh! Ah! I want to work here."
- Katrina Fritts: So, I went to the Job Fair, the Career Fair, and I met up with an eighty-year-old interpretative ranger named Eileen Barry [phonetic], sweetest lady ever. She asked me a lot of questions, and I filled out an application, and she called me and offered me the job. Now, this was through a work-study program. That's what it was called back then. I think it's now SKIP or STEP. She offered me the position, which was with the Valley District Ranger Office. It wasn't through Interpretation, which was kind of strange.
- Katrina Fritts: So, I ended up there, and she told me, she said the reason why I was hired was because I was the only one out of the bunch of people that she had interviewed that day at the Job Fair, the Career Fair, was that I had sent her a thank-you letter. I thought, "Oh, my gosh, wow." Sent chills up my spine.
- Katrina Fritts: I was like, "Oh, yes," because I took a class in business administration there on campus, and that's one of the things that they taught us was that follow-up and to send that letter. It can make a difference, and it did in this case.

- Katrina Fritts: So, yes, my first stint with the National Park was Yosemite National Park. The first week I was there we spent in orientation. We took trips throughout the park. I felt like I was on vacation. It was just absolutely wonderful. But it was definitely a challenge working with the Valley District Ranger Office, because it was these big burly guys, there were few women and much older than myself, and, you know, just my first federal job, but it was a lot of fun. It opened up some other doors. As you could see, I worked in the Law Enforcement Office, the jail, detention facility they have there in the National Park, and Interpretation eventually. I spent two or three seasons with them.
- Cynthia Walton: So, did you eventually then work with Eileen?
- Katrina Fritts: I did. The following summer I was in my second year of a work-study program, and so I was there during the summer season. I was there at the Valley Visitors Center desk, basically providing information to the park visitors on what to do and what to see if I only have two hours. Okay! But it was wonderful because I got to interact with a lot of different people from different cultures and different countries. It was also a little challenging with the communications. If we had someone that spoke German or French or Spanish or something like that, then the communications was challenging. But that part I really enjoyed.
- Katrina Fritts: We worked at the Valley Visitors Center Desk. If you haven't been there before, it's fairly large, and on one side of the counter they had the Yosemite Natural History Association, so that side of it was the sales. So, they had that section where they sell their books and magazines and postcards and that sort of thing, posters.
- Katrina Fritts: I lost track of what I was going to say. But working with Eileen, wonderful lady. She eventually, a couple years after that, retired, and I still kind of kept in touch with her because she was in the area. So that's something I'll always remember that first time meeting with her and getting my first job with Yosemite National Park.
- Cynthia Walton: Would you consider like a mentor figure in your life, like really influencing your career?
- Katrina Fritts: As far as Eileen or just in general?
- Cynthia Walton: Yes. Did you have someone at Yosemite that maybe—

- Katrina Fritts: That's a good question. You know, I worked with so many great people in Interpretation. Mallory Smith, she was a co-worker of mine at the time, and then she actually took over Eileen's position as supervisor. I bumped into Mallory when I was in the Grand Canyon years ago. I'm not quite sure where she is today. She might be in Grand Teton. Anyway, her husband is also a Park Service employee. But, yes, she is very friendly and was very supportive of anything that I wanted to do and try.
- Katrina Fritts: She made me acting supervisor when she was gone, so I appreciated her giving me that type of experience. Then she also just – you know, in addition to just your typical orientation, your hello and welcome to the Yosemite National Park Visitors Center Desk, I was able to venture out to other places. We had the roving van where we took this van full of exhibits and we drove all over the valley, and then we just kind of set up stations and set up our exhibits and handed out handouts and maps and things like that. So, we took the Visitors Center out to the public, which I loved that. That was just fantastic. We went everywhere with that.
- Katrina Fritts: In addition, too, she let me work a little bit at the Happy Isles Nature Center, which was a lot of fun. That was close to the base of Vernal and Nevada Falls, and so a lot of people would come through there. We had a small exhibit, and I didn't really do any interpretation type of talks or walks there. I mostly stayed behind the counter and answered questions for people who were just coming in to visit.
- Katrina Fritts: Actually, I also ran the cash register, which was part of, again, the Yosemite Natural History Association. So, I actually did that part as well. So that was a lot of fun, although it's kind of interesting because it's in a secluded area. We would get a lot of nocturnal animals coming to try to get into the Center because we had these exhibits out there and there are animals. I can't remember what it was that was stolen. It was a small, small animal, but it got tore up, and, oh, goodness, we found it outside the Happy Isles Nature Center. Something was tearing it apart or whatever. It was awful. (laughs)
- Katrina Fritts: Back then, yes, Mallory Smith was certainly a big influence and, I think, one of my mentors back then with the park.
- Cynthia Walton: You mentioned arriving and having the orientation when you got there. Was there other sorts of formal training that you – or just tell us some about that.

- Katrina Fritts: Sure, absolutely. That was great because they drove us around everywhere, but they certainly did offer us to take some hikes and things like that. But, yes, one of the things, I mean, we actually went through a session where we sat there, and we were taught how to wear the uniform. I mean, we didn't have all these directives back then, what you're supposed to wear and that sort of thing. We went to R&R Uniforms. There was a store located in Merced, California, which was an hour and a half away, and we got fitted. We had them tailored with our slacks and our tops, and we purchased all of our clothing from that shop. It was the coolest thing, because you knew what you were getting was going to fit well.
- Katrina Fritts: So, anyway, that training session we had, where to put the badge and how to place it so it lay flat, or how far up the name badge is supposed to be from your pocket. What not to wear, dangling earrings or jewelry and things like that. So that and, obviously, of course, discussion about the visitors and that sort of thing. But, again, this was when I was hired for the Valley District ranger position, but it applied to everyone. As a matter of fact, there were other work-study students that were there along with me. There was a small group of others, maybe five, six of us, I think, something like that. So, we got in one big van and just traveled all over the place. Yes, it was great. It was wonderful. I don't think they do that now.
- Kristine Abu-Hantash: All right. This is Kristine Abu-Hantash. I'm going to be the next interviewer, and my portion will deal more with your move to Stephen T. Mather, but there were just a couple of quick questions I had about Yosemite that I thought was interesting. You, for a while, worked as a matron for the jail.
- Katrina Fritts: Yes.
- Kristine Abu-Hantash: So, could you talk just a little bit about that?
- Katrina Fritts: Sure. Sure. You know, Yosemite was so unique in that regard, and I did have somewhat of an interest in law enforcement. I think it was more of like the ride-alongs, the tag-alongs, or whatever you want to call them, because they're high-pursuit rides and things like that.

- Katrina Fritts: But working as a matron, that basically meant that I did strip searches for female prisoners that would come in. I remember one in particular where a young lady came in and she looked like she hadn't bathed for a while. She was in jeans and boots, cowboy boots, and the last thing she was taking off were her cowboy boots, and I found a knife. It was kind of scary, but she was pretty subdued, and she was in la-la land, so to speak. She was on something.
- Katrina Fritts: But so that involved strip searches. I also did some undercover work, which was really exciting. I portrayed a girlfriend of Bernie, one of the criminal investigators that went along with me. It was a van that was sighted in Curry Village, just the back of their van where these guys were selling things. So, we posed as girlfriend, boyfriend from Florida. I was kind of nervous, but then at the same time, actually, it was really cool to portray, pretend that you were someone else. It was like role-playing, and basically that's what it was.
- Katrina Fritts: We approached this van, and these – I guess I could say this – hippie-looking folks, you know, long hair and just kind of drugged out, sold us some uppers and downers, and, click, click, "You're going off to jail." So, they didn't resist. There wasn't a fight. There wasn't any cursing. They came along willingly.
- Katrina Fritts: I remember specifically, though, in the jail cell, the one guy, they gave him his Bible. I was thinking, "Oh, my god, he's got a Bible in his hand, but yet he's going out there selling this stuff to visitors, our visitors. What are the visitors thinking of that?" Oh, my gosh, it's terrible. A lot of shoplifting going on in the park. When there's a lot of people, you're going to get that.
- Katrina Fritts: I actually enjoyed working for the Law Enforcement Office. I actually learned from those experiences and others that that wasn't the career field I needed to go into. I just could not see myself wearing the gun and having to use it, and I'm thankful today that I didn't go in that direction just because of what's happening today in the parks, you know. It's really, really sad.
- Katrina Fritts: Yosemite's not far away from San Francisco, so it's easy access. Fresno's not too far. We have a lot of rockslides in Yosemite, mostly on the western side, 140, and in particular there was one rockslide where it uncovered a body. At one point, I think they linked it to some mob gangs in San Francisco. Quite interesting.

Kristine Abu-Hantash: So, I noticed you got your permanent status while you were still at Yosemite as a secretary and stenographer.

Katrina Fritts: Yes.

Kristine Abu-Hantash: And did that for a few years before coming to Mather, so maybe we could transition a little bit about that career area and then why you came to Mather.

Katrina Fritts: Yes. I had done my stint with Valley District Ranger and Interpretation. I did a little bit of training with the Resources Management people. I did prescribed burns and I learned about bear management. Then I went off to get my career conditional, went through the tests. I forgot the name of it but went through. Then worked with GSA.

Katrina Fritts: An opening came up in the Valley Superintendent's Office in Yosemite, and I applied for it and I was selected, and that was my permanent position, so I was just, oh, so happy. It was exciting.

Katrina Fritts: It was challenging working with the administrative officer. He was sometimes difficult to work with, and I say that now because he's passed away since, but he had a really tough time with diabetes, and you could tell basically if he was having a good day or a bad day when he stepped through that door in the morning. So, once I understood that, then I knew how to handle him. He appreciated me, I think, because I would tell him the truth. At that time in my career, it was just like, "Okay, if you're going to ask me a question, I'm going to tell you the truth." (laughs) And I was very vocal, so I'd say things like, "Now, be nicer. Don't say that. You're being mean," type of things, and I had that rapport with him. I felt there's an instant connection there with him, even though he could be mean and grumpy. But it was exciting to work with him. He's just a different personality, and that was okay, but also with the different divisions that were there, Personnel which is now referred to as Human Resources, and Fiscal Management. Quarters. We had a big Quarters Management Division there. Procurement. So, all those division chiefs at the time were called division chiefs. I'm not sure if they're called that still now or not. But now the parks [unclear].

Katrina Fritts: But all were great to get along with, and they would be able to confide in me when they had issues with the AO. I had served as the superintendent's backup secretary as well, because in Yosemite you go walk into one big room and there was myself, the superintendent's secretary, and then the next room was the assistant superintendent, and the next room from that was the AO. So, it was kind of an open concept there. Then in the corner office behind where I sat was the superintendent, which was the largest office in all of the Park Service, which was a beautiful office. Bob Binnewies, who was the superintendent at the time, Robert Binnewies, I'm not sure where he went to after Yosemite days.

Katrina Fritts: But I was married to a law enforcement ranger who actually worked in the Law Enforcement Office in the detention facility, and at the time he was struggling, and I felt I needed something. It was getting to the point where it was becoming more difficult to work with the AO. So, we thought this was a good opportunity to take, even though I totally forgot that I applied. (laughs) See, I was applying out all over the place, so I had like ten applications out, and I've said this before, so it's okay if it gets out to anybody out there. But I got a phone call from Harpers Ferry and said, "We've received your application and we're very impressed, and we'd like to set up a phone interview with you."

Katrina Fritts: I said, "Oh, great. That's wonderful." Click. "Where's Harpers Ferry? Oh, my gosh. Okay, I've got to look this up."

Katrina Fritts: So, it happened to be that my next-door neighbors were from Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, and so they invited me over as soon as they found out I was going to be talking with them and gave me the big scoop. It was amazing. I still remember to this day that on their walls they had pictures of Harpers Ferry and the Harpers Ferry National Historical Parks and those more popular type scenes from like Maryland Heights. So, it was pretty cool.

Katrina Fritts: So, I pondered it for a little bit. I decided that I would have the interview, and they offered it to me, and I took the position. So, yes, that's how that happened. I arrived here, and, of course, missed my family immensely, so cried for like the first six months. Even though it was new and different, and it was exciting, it was a good bit of distance away from the family. And that whole culture shock, the West Coast, East Coast. So, I'm cool with it now. I visit them every year, if not twice or sometimes three times, and sometimes they come out here, so it's all good. So that's kind of what happened there.

- Kristine Abu-Hantash: I see that you progressed from secretary to administrative technician.
- Katrina Fritts: Yes.
- Kristine Abu-Hantash: And this was under Martha Aikens, so can you tell us a little bit about what you did in that position, what some of the duties were, and what it was like working at Mather at that time?
- Katrina Fritts: Let's see. What year was that?
- Kristine Abu-Hantash: October '96, on your résumé.
- Katrina Fritts: Ninety-six, yes. Oh, yes. A lot of it was I was still doing stenography, a lot of your general operations of the training center. I was a maintenance liaison. I did maintenance inspections. I did all of the scheduling for the building. I have always been responsible for the official records management of the center. I did all the classroom setups.
- Katrina Fritts: If you could believe this or not – oh, my gosh, I can't believe we did this, but we had the computer lab upstairs, which is where it is now currently. It looks a little bit differently than it did back then. We used to have tables that were pushed up on either side, and we used the back of the room as the front. So, we would teach from actually the back of the room, which was really weird.
- Katrina Fritts: Anyway, if we had a class that needed computers, like downstairs in the lower classroom, I – I'm pointing to myself – I would be the one who would be moving all of those computers. And we didn't have an elevator then, and so it was a good physical workout for me. But I remember doing a good bit of that.
- Katrina Fritts: I was considered the AV coordinator, and when I took the position of stenographer, Mike Watson, former superintendent, he threw into that position description a lot of AV things to try to beef up the grade. It didn't work. So, I took the position, I learned a good bit, but I had some prior experience working with Interpretation and setting up slides and projectors and things like that, so it was a lot of fun.
- Katrina Fritts: I got to meet a lot of people and instructors, because my office actually sat right between where the Superintendent's Office is now located and the Partnership Office, which is Rich Fedorchak. So that little office with that one window was my office for many years.

- Katrina Fritts: Martha was not as supportive, I feel, of some of the things that I was interested in. I felt like I was not involved with the Women's Conference as much as I had hoped to be. We had some challenges with some travel, one particular trip to the West, and we had a heated discussion about it, and afterwards I was no longer taking care of her travel, and that was fine with me. So, it was kind of bumpy, that time. But I need to say that I was going through a very rough time with a divorce, but she wasn't very supportive of that either. She wanted me there every day during my tour of duty, scheduled tour of duty, and at that time I was having to take a lot of leave for different things for my child, who had had an awful problem with allergies and so she got a lot of infections. So, with little kids, you're taking sick leave. And then also appointments with lawyer and things like that.
- Katrina Fritts: Unfortunately, my husband at the time brought it to the workplace, and she did not appreciate that, nor did I, and I understood that completely. I remained as professional as I could. When he entered my office, I would just ask him to call me to set up a time when we could meet at another location. It just made it very difficult for me.
- Katrina Fritts: So, I wasn't there a lot of the times, and so I think that's why she maybe perhaps felt that because of my schedule I wouldn't be able to be as involved with the Women's Conference and some other projects maybe as well as other staff members, and I understood that as well.
- Kristine Abu-Hantash: You also worked under John Wade and Mike Watson?
- Katrina Fritts: Yes.
- Kristine Abu-Hantash: Can you recall anything particularly memorable about those times?
- Katrina Fritts: Yes, because that day in March 1986 when I arrived on a rainy day with my household goods and my three-and-a-half-year-old daughter, whom we traveled across the country with, I remember specifically her having me sing "Old MacDonald" all the way here, and "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain." Those two were her favorites.
- Katrina Fritts: But arriving at four o'clock in the afternoon and met with at that time Peggy Woodward, who was the admin person, who I always referred to as an AO because she did all of the things an AO would do in a park, and I always could never figure that out, because she should have been called an AO.

- Katrina Fritts: Anyway, she also dabbled in real estate then, so she became our realtor and helped us find a place.
- Katrina Fritts: But entering the building and first seeing the Training Center for the first time, physically – I mean, I’d seen it in pictures and things like that, but to actually arrive on sight and to see that large building, I thought, “Oh, gosh, there’s got to be a hundred people working in there.” But when you walked in, naturally, it’s taken up by classroom space and a few offices here and there.
- Katrina Fritts: But when I arrived, I opened the door and I saw this man walking down the hallway on the first floor, and he’s walking, his back was to me, long hair, about this long, and he had a cup of coffee in his hand, and turned around when I entered the door, and there was Peggy and there was Bill Wade. He was the one walking down the hall. He turned around and he approached me, and they both welcomed me, which I thought was nice that they were still there, that the place was still open, so I could meet somebody. That was really nice.
- Katrina Fritts: The first thing I thought was, “Hippie,” because he had the long hair, the full beard, but super, super nice. I’ll never forget Bill Wade because he was very supportive. He was my neighbor. At the time just over the hill here, we had the Mission 66 houses. We had three houses set up over here, and they were used primarily for the instructors or guest visitors. At this time when I arrived, Bill Wade and his family were living in one of the Mission 66 houses. He was my neighbor when we were still looking for a place. I spent a month in one of the houses.
- Katrina Fritts: But I will never forget the first time I traveled with him on an airplane. He’s the type of person that likes to cut it real close. He is just like cool, calm, and collected, but I’m just going [demonstrates]. I’m looking at my watch. I’m going, “Okay, we’ve got fifteen minutes, Bill,” and I was just sweating it. I mean, we literally were running to our gate, and he had no problem with that. I was just going nuts because I don’t work that way, but I learned that that was his way.
- Katrina Fritts: He’s just a lot of fun, like I said, very supportive. He traveled a good bit, whether it be to D.C. or on an airplane, meetings and things. So, there were a lot of acting superintendents while he was there as official superintendent. He was only there, I believe, a couple of years until finally he moved on.

- Katrina Fritts: Mike Watson, you know, I can't say enough about him. He was very, very supportive, and he opened up a lot of doors for me. After a certain amount of time, we clicked right away, obviously because when we were working together when he was an instructor, I got to know him a good bit, and I got to know him and his family and his daughter, and my daughter being near that same age as his, so it was a lot of fun. So, very, very supportive and let me be involved in a lot of different projects, ones that I just had a lot of fun with, the competencies, the business plan, and the Service White catalogs, all of those that I think I probably gave you some information on. I was involved in a lot of those types of projects, and they were all just wonderful because I got to meet so many different people. As I said, he's very supportive and encouraged me to push myself. So, did that answer your question?
- Kristine Abu-Hantash: Yes.
- Ronnie Emory: This is Ronnie Emory. You mentioned the Training and Development Service White catalogs. These were great.
- Katrina Fritts: Thank you.
- Ronnie Emory: When you were developing these, were you doing them in D.C. or were you still out here?
- Katrina Fritts: I was still out here, yes. At one point, I was actually under the Washington Office.
- Ronnie Emory: But you were stationed—
- Katrina Fritts: But I was duty stationed here, so physically I've been here the longest, but I still think I've been here the longest if you count Dave, because he was here, then left, and then came back.
- Katrina Fritts: I was actually part of a group of four. There's four of us: myself; Mary Robinson; Peggy Sandretzky, who's at NCTC; and a woman named Bert Hudson. Albertha was her first name, but we always called her Bert. She was out of the Washington office, so many times she would come out here to the meetings.
- Katrina Fritts: It was quite challenging, because we had to collect information from training managers about what classes they wanted to have, to host, and sometimes that was difficult to pull out from them because that meant that they had to do a lot of planning.

- Katrina Fritts: So, from collecting and consolidating the information from the training managers to finding photos, to working with a contractor, the graphic designer, on just something as simple as the cover, I mean, my goodness. When I did the business plan cover, this is what we picked. It was like, do you know how many different options we had?
- Katrina Fritts: So, it was fun. This looks like it's the same one we're holding up, the Service White Events catalog. So, people really liked this. They liked the fact that they could go to something and open it up and say, "Oh, yes, this is something I think I might be really interested in," and then plan and prepare themselves for the year.
- Ronnie Emory: Right. I loved mine, because it sat on my desk, and I could go to it whenever I wanted to.
- Katrina Fritts: Absolutely. Absolutely. Then we dropped it because computers became more popular and it was easier to get it out of a learning management system. I can't remember, to tell you the truth, at the time what we – I've been through so many, okay, like, four different reorganizations, different names of the Training Center, Employee Development Center, Training Center. Even in the Washington office we were called Training and Development. Then we changed it to Employee Development.
- Ronnie Emory: Yes, I was going to ask you about there being changes.
- Katrina Fritts: Oh, my gosh. So, every time we had a different leader, manager, the name seemed to change. But I've always worked with the Learning Place website.
- Katrina Fritts: But back to this, you know, computers came in to be more popular, and so everything was placed in a learning management system where you could just get online, although, you know, when the electricity goes out, which it does often here, you can't get to that information. So, there's still some folks who really would like to see this, I think, come back.
- Ronnie Emory: Exactly.
- Katrina Fritts: But I don't think it's going to, just because of what we have as far as technologies out there.
- Ronnie Emory: The Park Service has moved away from a lot of that. We used to produce a historic preservation laws book with all the laws printed out, and it was a shame when it went to computer. To me, it's not as easily accessible, just like this catalog was.

- Katrina Fritts: Well, I had a grand time, because I got to work with so many wonderful people again, different people that I wasn't used to working with day in and day out, you know, the graphic designer, the publisher, the publications office in Washington. I learned a lot about contracting and what you can and can't do and what you can and can't print, which I think you may have discussed this morning in class. But, yes, I had a great time with this. We had a couple years running with this, and then it kind of faded away.
- Katrina Fritts: But I have to say that before this, we did have someone doing something like this, and then it got axed for whatever reason. I never did find out or I just can't remember. But then it came back, but we only had like three or maybe even four of these.
- Ronnie Emory: Peggy Sandretzky's a big help at NCTC.
- Katrina Fritts: Yes, she is.
- Ronnie Emory: She's a very great contact for anybody who wants to do any work out of there, and Bert has always been helpful down on I Street.
- Katrina Fritts: Yes.
- Ronnie Emory: Another thing I was interested in is the Crystal Owl Awards. I didn't know what they were, so can you tell us about that?
- Katrina Fritts: Oh, yes, absolutely, Ronnie. And I apologize. You know, I got on the phone and I realized what time it was, so I had to skedaddle over here, and, believe me, I had the Crystal Owl Award on my screen ready to print, and I just walked away without it. And I've got one actually in my office.
- Katrina Fritts: The first person to receive the Crystal Owl Award was Anne Baugh, and she's from the Albright Training Center. She was the sort of me. She was my counterpart, and she spent many years in Grand Canyon, lovely woman, just absolutely wonderful.
- Katrina Fritts: The Crystal Owl Award was created, I believe, somewhere around 1977, somewhere in there, and it was designed in mind for individuals or teams to receive these awards for some significant project or event related to learning and development or training and development. Learning and development now; excuse me. Within five years or more, Mike Watson at the time, we were working with Fenton [Art] Glass Company, which is a famous glass company in West Virginia, and we purchased these crystal blocks and we had engraved on them "Owls," a single owl for an individual award, and then owlets for, say, the team award.

- Katrina Fritts: So, we announced this to the world. It went, of course, beyond training and development. Anybody out there could apply, and so we had a number of people nominate other employees, and it would go through like a rating panel, if you would. It was usually a superintendent of a training center, the chief of training in Washington, and then an EDO, or an employment development officer, for one of the regions, and we rotate the superintendents and the EDOs. So, there were three people on the panel, and depending on what they sent in, most all of them, I believe, were approved. I think there may have been maybe one or two that we just needed further justification and then they were sent through.
- Katrina Fritts: We have a number of individuals and teams that have received these awards, and copies of them, of the actual plaques or blocks, rather, crystal blocks, were sent to the training centers to be displayed. If you didn't see the ones here at Mather, they're on the first floor in front of the receptionist area, so it gives you an idea what they look like. Actually, you could probably poke your head into some people's offices and find them sitting there as well.
- Ronnie Emory: So, it still goes out today?
- Katrina Fritts: Yes, absolutely. The last one we gave was a couple months ago, maybe a month ago, to Jerry Simpson. He was our associate director for Human Resources, Workforce Management, and he received one. So, yes.
- Ronnie Emory: That's interesting. Also going through this training book, I started learning about the TEL [Technology Enhanced Learning], and I was wondering if you could tell us a bit about that. I didn't ever use it, so this is all new information for me.
- Katrina Fritts: Well, actually, before I moved over or during another reorganization, I was reassigned to TEL. I was actually a TEL POC, or point of contact, and so I was familiar with the equipment, which basically a TEL station is not that – and I'm pointing to a VTC, by the way. It's a cart, basically a TV cart with a large TV monitor on top, and then you have connected to it a DVD/VHS recorder player, and then this black box. We refer to it as a black box, which is basically a glorified telephone. It's all connected, and then connected to the black box is usually some microphones. So that's the TEL station. Many of the parks have them. Not all of the parks have them. You'll find at your regional office that you'll see all these, and some of the parks that have TEL stations are starting to move towards purchasing the VCs.

- Katrina Fritts: So, I was a little bit familiar with TEL, setting up the TEL equipment, but then when I got into being the – at the time I was the logistics coordinator when I moved over into TEL, and that was in April of 2007, but I didn't move over into the renovated Cook Hall dormitory facility until October of 2007. It was great. It was exciting. It was different. I spent a week out in the Grand Canyon because the position I was assigned to meant that Sue Benson, who was doing that job, had to be reassigned. So, I felt badly about that. I was very concerned about her and how she was dealing with it, and she seemed to come out of it just fine because it opened up some doors for her.
- Katrina Fritts: Having that position is very unique. It's a position that no other Park Service employee has, no one. So, I have been trying to change the title of this position, because "logistics coordinator" doesn't really fit. So, I basically refer to myself as the Distance Learning Center operations specialist. Sometimes I call myself chief. It just depends on the day. (laughter) But it's amazing. I work with TEL point of contacts out there all across the country, six different time zones. We're roughly about five hundred.
- Ronnie Emory: Really?
- Katrina Fritts: Yes. Because if you think about it – and the TEL POCs are basically the people who set up the TEL equipment, make sure it's working properly before a TEL broadcast. They could also be someone who's setting up the video conferencing equipment because the TEL programs could also come through the video conferencing.
- Ronnie Emory: So, I guess D.C. would have a few of them.
- Katrina Fritts: Yes. You know, at like main Interior?
- Ronnie Emory: Right.
- Katrina Fritts: They're probably in like some of the conference room areas, and they have to be set to a certain channel. I think it's like 25. But like on L Street, I Street—
- Ronnie Emory: I Street.
- Katrina Fritts: Excuse me, I Street. We used to have the training on L Street. Anyway, I Street. They moved a lot too.
- Ronnie Emory: Yes. We moved. They changed [unclear]. They changed us around.

- Katrina Fritts: Yes. I Street. And we have a way in which they can project up onto a large screen, and they also have, I think, a TEL station. Yes. They should have.
- Ronnie Emory: I'm going to hunt it down.
- Katrina Fritts: I was going to say Lonnie Lowe.
- Ronnie Emory: Lonnie Lowe, okay.
- Katrina Fritts: Lonnie Lowe, yes. So, I work with a lot of people, and as you can imagine, those TEL POCs, there's a lot of turnover. So, I train those TEL POCs, and usually it's a teleconference, but I'm in the process now of putting together a webinar.
- Katrina Fritts: We've had fewer classes. When I first arrived in '86, it wasn't unusual to have sixty to seventy classes in a year. We'd all get together like we are right now as a staff, and we had a staff of eight back then. We'd get the calendar out and we'd blow it up, and then throw it up onto the wall, and we'd say, "Okay, Chuck, what week do you want for your class?" And they each took their time. The instructors would take their turn putting their classes up there one-week or two-week. We did have two-week classes, Curatorial Methods, as a matter of fact.
- Ronnie Emory: Wow.
- Katrina Fritts: Yes. With that class, we had a lot of Native American students, and I got to do all of their travel. So, it was very challenging trying to reach them, because they would do a lot of traveling or they were on a reservation and they were difficult to communicate with.
- Ronnie Emory: Yes, getting a hold of people on the reservation is hard. Being a liaison, I understand that.
- Katrina Fritts: So that's how we used to do things is just say, "Okay. What week do you want and what week do you want?" But now it's a little different. We don't have as many classes right now, so I started doing webinars, and, oh, my gosh, I love them. I think it's a great way to train. We're using them more and more.
- Katrina Fritts: The first time we had used a webinar for three days, four days was in Interpretation, Interpretative Media, I think. And it worked well because the webinars that we host are the training centers, and they're very interactive. It means doing polls, asking questions, getting responses, breaking out into break-out sessions, and that's all done through webinars.

Katrina Fritts: I've got a slew of webinars that I've done since I've gotten the license. We do have three licensed now. I was one of the two that had a license here onsite, but we now have three licenses.

Ronnie Emory: That's amazing.

Katrina Fritts: So, we use them a good bit.

Ronnie Emory: [unclear] technology. (laughs)

Katrina Fritts: Yes, that's challenging in itself. So, I just finished helping host a webinar, an hour and a half, for the National Center [on] Accessibility in Indiana and Ray Bloomer, the director, and his staff. I had a great time. It was just absolutely wonderful. So, some of this technology is pretty fun, you know.

Katrina Fritts: Yes, TEL is wonderful. I have a great supervisor, Jim Boyd. Unfortunately, he's talking about the R-word. He is a joy to work with. He is so cool, calm, and collected. The first time I went out to NCTC, which is where we do most of our classes from because they have a full studio there, but we also have a studio on a smaller scale, actually located physically in Cook Hall dormitory. So, if you get a chance to come over, I'd love to show it to you. I mean, it's the lights, the camera, the stage, everything. So, it was different than just setting up the TEL station before I started working with TEL, and I love that. It's great.

Ronnie Emory: Well, thank you.

Katrina Fritts: You're welcome.

Ronnie Emory: I'll let Samantha continue.

Samantha Christine: Yes, we're going to kind of look at the then and now and the future.

Katrina Fritts: Oh, no, not that.

Samantha Christine: We'll start with current events. As logistics coordinator, it seems like you work with a lot of technology, and you have to kind of adapt to all the new technologies. Especially today it seems like a new technology comes out every single day. Do you feel like as opposed to the old days the way you used to reach out to people and conduct classes, do you feel like the technology is an asset?

Katrina Fritts: I think it is. I like technology. I like change. I like new. Comparing it to back then, I used to actually teach WordPerfect classes in our old computer lab, and it was kind of challenging because you didn't know where they were. It's like today, if you were to teach a Word class, people are at different levels of skill. But I enjoyed that.

Katrina Fritts: But it's really come a long way, and so I do enjoy the technology. I do see that it has improved immensely. If you think about it, when I was in college, I called it a toaster. We worked with it in law enforcement, and the disks were about the size of my steno pad, and that's what you would put into the slot, and it was really flimsy, right? And then to go to these three-and-a-half-inch floppies, which we used to – we had these long hallways in the building, and so whenever we were going to get rid of a disk because of it not working or something was wrong with it, we'd play Frisbee in the hallway, just toss those things [laughs]. They were difficult to break if you wanted to destroy them or whatever. To going to a thumb drive, which I have here in my hand, that holds gigabytes, I just find it amazing. So, I do like working with technology.

Samantha Christine: And you said you call yourself chief, how your job is so very unique. Is there something you would maybe change? If you had the power to maybe rework the organization of that, what would you, and what would you do?

Katrina Fritts: Well, I think I'm actually already doing it. I'm performing it, and so that's why I've – Jim's pretty much, "You can call yourself whatever you want to." (laughs) So, the operations part of it is from beginning to end, that entire piece of how TEL gets to become a solid broadcast, or maybe now that we have other technologies, maybe it should be a different delivery method, and that's what I'm mostly involved in right now is the various delivery methods. I help decide, okay, that should be TEL, or that needs to be maybe better off as an online.

Katrina Fritts: I'm working today with someone about an online class, and we're going to put it on a staging site and take a look at it today and tomorrow to see if that's going to actually fit that. So, I'm more involved in those types of things versus the logistics, the handling of the TEL PCs and [unclear] and some of those more administrative-type functions than in actual doing part of it, I think.

Katrina Fritts: So, I've served as a floor monitor, floor coordinator when we're at NCTC. There's someone that needs to be in the studio working with the instructor or instructors that has a headset, and you basically talk to the people in the control room, which usually consists of the studio crew, soundperson, those people who are pushing the buttons and turning the knobs to make sure everything is working properly, to [unclear] bridges and making sure that there isn't any – if you haven't attended or participated in any of these TEL sessions, sometimes it's kind of difficult, because someone might be echoing, and I'm the one behind the scenes making sure that that doesn't happen.

Katrina Fritts: So, there's all these little things that become part of a bigger puzzle, and so it's exciting that I could say that I'm unique. (laughs) But it's also challenging in that I look at other agencies like Fish and Wildlife. They don't do as many classes as we do. BLM. We could take advantage of all of their classes and vice versa, so we open it up to a lot of people. Fish and Wildlife has gone to online streaming, so their sessions are no longer solid broadcasting, so they're just doing the video streaming, and a lot of that's happening with DOI in general. The secretary, he'll have a session and he'll put it out there for people to watch right there at their computers, so they don't have to go anywhere.

Katrina Fritts: We don't have the training dollars to send people to training like we used [to] when we had those classes of sixty to seventy a year that was so common. We have travel ceilings now, and a lot of the money that was spent for individual employees are no longer there or spent on something else, which is really unfortunate. So, we have to go to these other technologies to try to reach people. So, they're always saying, "Oh, try to be creative." Okay. But that's one of our challenges, too, is that, okay, so we're trying to keep up with the rest of the world, and we're behind, and we know we're behind, and I think we'll always be behind, because until we get the money – isn't that the bottom line for everything? Everything, if you think of everything, if I think of everything with the Park Service, our challenge, our biggest hurdle is the money issue, the funding. How do we get the funding to do what we need to do to help the people out there in the field? And ourselves. Certainly, we have to go through some training as well.

Samantha Christine: You also talk a lot about Jim Boyd and how you feel like he lets you kind of be creative and do what you need to do, you're also working under David at the moment, who's the newest superintendent. Maybe talk a little bit about what it's like to work under both of them.

Katrina Fritts: Sure, yes, because I knew Dave from the previous time he was with Mather as an instructor, so I'm very familiar with his work ethics and how he works, how he operates. Jim is very supportive, as I mentioned, and within reason. I mean, there's twice now that when we've been a little slower, then I've been able to take advantage of some details to New Orleans and work with the BP staff, Fish and Wildlife, Coast Guard folks. So, I've had two details there, and so he's been very supportive of that.

Katrina Fritts: Jim involves me in a lot of things we are going through right now. We're working with the web portal, which everyone will be affected, so we're dealing a lot with contractors that aren't even onsite over in Denver and in Washington, various locations. That's also tied into what's going to be the new inside NPS, so that all is exciting. He asked for my input. He asked for a lot of people's input, but I think he respects me and respects what I have to offer, and he includes me.

Katrina Fritts: I think Dave Dahlen does the same thing because I've been around for a while. So, Dave likes to hold a lot of meetings, and I think that's what I really admire is that they both are very good communicators and so we do hold meetings so that we're all on the same page. If someone's not there to participate, then I'm the one with the notes, so I post them usually within a week. So, we put them on the P-drive so anybody that was absent for whatever reason could go there, talk to one of us or talk to the superintendent and say, "Okay, what happened? What kind of decisions did you make?" and things like that.

Katrina Fritts: It's great working with both of them, and because we've worked together for so long, we're very at ease with one another and we know each other personally, our families, and things like that, so very easy to work with.

Samantha Christine: Very good. Good. Now, you've been at Mather a very long time, and you've been able to see a lot of change here.

Katrina Fritts: I have, yes. (laughs)

Samantha Christine: Is there any point in time where you thought maybe there was a missed opportunity or maybe something you should have taken advantage of at the time?

Katrina Fritts: Oh, that's a good question. Hmm. That is a loaded question. I need to ponder that for a minute. Yes. I've been given so many opportunities over the years that I've been here that I think maybe I could think of something, which – I mentioned the detail to BP, but I never really did a detail other than that, like out to, say, administrative officer or maybe some of those types of details. I think at one time I was going to, and something fell through, and I can't remember what that was. I apologize about that. That's why I put everything on paper, because this old noggin of mine. (laughs)

Katrina Fritts: But I would say – and this is something that I could still do – one of the challenges with being unique is that no one else can do it. Someone could be trained to do it, absolutely, but then I'm in a position where am I marketable? I mentioned to you earlier on, or yesterday, I believe, that maybe getting back to a park site, I'm not too certain that's going to happen. I'm in a good spot. There's some major changes coming, and I'd like to be a part of that. So, I've been involved in a lot of different events and projects here at Mather that I feel very grateful for, for having to be part of it. So, I really can't think of a particular opportunity other than maybe some details.

Katrina Fritts: And, you know, because we're probably bigger than some of your smaller parks, but we grew quite a bit in staff, but if you take a look at our staff, we have very few admin people, and we're now moving – and I could see this happening over the years, is that we're asking managers and supervisors to do more, more than what they have been doing. You're doing your QuickTime. You're doing your own travel. You're doing your own this, your own that, and that takes up all the administrative work, but you also have that role of supervising and managing, and that's time-consuming.

Katrina Fritts: So, over the years here we've lost some administrative staff positions and they haven't been filled, and so I'm concerned about that, obviously, but, again, I'm eligible in three years, so who knows what might happen. We may grow.

- Katrina Fritts: We're talking about once the position at Albright Training Center, the Natural Resources stewardship training manager, Jeri Hall, retires, that that position probably will come here, and so our staff will grow. So, it will be interesting in the next two or three years to see what our staff does look like. Did that answer—
- Samantha Christine: Yes. No, that was great, and if there is no problem, that's good too. You were talking about you're not filling admin positions, and it's all about money and how we don't have as much of it as we'd like, but if you did and it was a perfect world, what would you do here or want to implement?
- Katrina Fritts: Well, with what I just said earlier, add some admin support staff, because if I look at it, the training managers have such a huge job and right now they have a little bit of support, but it would be good to see. And maybe consolidate, say, like if the Culture Resources teams up with Natural Resources, that they have a support person dedicated to that particular career field. Administration, I think, could use their own person, their own support.
- Katrina Fritts: We have Demi Vehill [phonetic], who came from Fundamentals, who is our new training manager for Visitor and Resource Protection. She's just starting off with that, but as soon as she takes off, it's going to be quite overwhelming. So, I could see where the positions I'm thinking of would be more of the role of support, administrative support, because, again, they're not supervisors per se, but they've just got so much on their plate. I mean, we all do. I understand that. We adjust.
- Katrina Fritts: We all work together, and I think we work together now as a team, but it would be nice to have, I think, even for TEL, as I roll up into this new position as operations specialist, and I'll tell you, too, though, that I haven't completely disconnected myself from Mather in that I still do the meeting minutes, I'm the VIP coordinator, I still play some roles there with the administrative part of the operations there. But I think TEL, in general, could use a dedicated support staff person very easily, every easily. We have plenty of work, so I think that's where I would see that type of change, some type of support for the training managers, as well as some of the programs that we have.
- Samantha Christine: And kind of as this big overarching question, you said your three years were coming up. What legacy do you want to leave here?

- Katrina Fritts: Oh, my. Legacy. Another loaded question. Oh, dear. Yes, three years, I'm eligible. Whether or not I leave is another question. Retirement might be totally different by the time I think about that. I don't know if it's just one thing, because I think over the years I've been supportive of so many different projects and opportunities that if someone were to look at the business plan and say, "Oh, yeah, Katrina Fritts, yeah, she did this," or, "She's a part of it." So, it's not one particular project or a particular person, but just, I think, a combination, sort of like Anne Baugh of Albright, where she was there for many years. It's, "Oh, Katrina Fritts." I mean, the name Katrina, of course, is going to be remembered, but in a nice way.
- Katrina Fritts: But in this regard, seriously, I hope people think back when we started the career fields. There were many a nights when I sat in Mike Watson's office after my tour of duty ended, and we would sit there and work together to come up with a description of a career field that may not have been represented as well as some of the others and putting together something like this that all the employees in the National Park Service start using and getting that into the website where people could go to click on a button and look at competencies. I didn't have that when I was back in Yosemite. What was that?
- Katrina Fritts: So, I think for something like this, which Mike was the mover and the shaker on this end, and so we held committee meetings, work groups, and things like that, so I think, again, it was a culmination of all these different projects and events.
- Katrina Fritts: I've been involved in a lot of historic college alumni. I used to host the meetings even when the superintendent was here. Dave Dahlen is very good about participating and being a part of those gatherings, which come once a year in August, the first Saturday of the month. The alumni is getting smaller, but they're still well, well attended, and so that's wonderful. So, yes. So, did that answer your question?
- Samantha Christine: Yes. [unclear] We are [unclear].
- Kristine Abu-Hantash: If it's okay, you led right into a question I really wanted to ask and didn't really have time. This is Kris Abu-Hantash again, by the way. It mentions that you helped coordinate the 90th and 100th anniversary of the Niagara Centennial celebration.
- Katrina Fritts: Oh, yes.

- Kristine Abu-Hantash: I think that's a big part of the legacy of Storer.
- Katrina Fritts: Oh, absolutely.
- Kristine Abu-Hantash: What was your role in helping with those celebrations?
- Katrina Fritts: It was mostly building and administrative, so I worked very closely with the Historical Park and most of the staff from them and just gathering information and setting up, that sort of thing. The second one – which one was it that you mentioned, the second one?
- Kristine Abu-Hantash: One is – well, there was the 90th and then there was the Centennial. So 90th, I think, was—
- Katrina Fritts: Was the Centennial in 2006?
- Kristine Abu-Hantash: In '96 and then 2006.
- Katrina Fritts: Okay. The 2006, I did a lot of the upfront work with the park, but I didn't get to attend. I know, so sad. So sad. I had become ill, and I actually had to have some surgery done, and it was something that I had to have done right away, and, as a result, I missed that one, which I felt badly about, but I felt my health was more important at that time. (laughs) It was kind of a do-or-die situation.
- Katrina Fritts: So, mainly it was working with the staff from the Historical Park, serving as the liaison between the Mather Training Center and the park and dealing with the staff, the instructors, or the guest speakers, some of the logistics that we talked about like where people were going to be staging, where the exhibits were going to be placed, the agenda, how that day was going to be laid out, the timing, that sort of thing, so mostly that type of work, which was really exciting. I had a lot of fun. That's the one I really felt badly I wasn't able to attend, but they still gave me a shirt with the logo and a couple other of items, which was very thoughtful of them, even though I wasn't able to participate.
- [Unidentified]: Have you received the Crystal Owl Award?
- Katrina Fritts: I have, yes, in August of 1999, and it was mostly for – actually I also received a second award for the same thing. It was EPFEA, and it stands for Eastern Panhandle Federal Executive Association, for short, FEA, Federal Executive Association. What that basically is, is a combination of all of the different federal agencies that are within the Eastern Panhandle here, such as Fish and Wildlife, USGS, USDA, Social Security, IRS, and many others.

Katrina Fritts: There are a number of employees that work here in the Eastern Panhandle, and it's growing, and so we've all come together and formed this association. What we do is we have meetings and guest speakers to talk about topics, and they have a chairman that they rotate amongst the agency every year. Well, that's with CFC, which actually runs out of FEA.

Katrina Fritts: So, when we established, when it was established, when it was created, FEA was created, Mike Watson became the chair for the Education Committee, which I served as a registrar, which was a lot of fun. We put on a lot of classes, and these classes were well attended by all the federal agency employees in the Eastern Panhandle, one of which was a retirement planning for employees, topnotch instructors. They, to this day, are with this in TEL, and they help us do the retirement classes for FERS [Federal Employees Retirement System] employees, which by the way I'm going to do a plug here. October, the beginning of October, we have a retirement class for FERS and a retirement class for SERS, so three-day class from twelve to four p.m. each day. And I apologize, your initial question?

[Unidentified]: No, I think you've—

Katrina Fritts: Did I answer it?

[Unidentified]: — covered the Niagara Movement, but there's one thing that I've been thinking about since yesterday when we had our pre-interview meeting. You mentioned some nicknames, "Radar" being one of them, and a couple of others, and a maintenance crew. I'd like to hear a little bit about the workplace culture here, and it sounds like there's a lot of lightness and lightheartedness and maybe this seems like a fun staff. What goes on here behind the scenes?

Katrina Fritts: (laughs) It is a fun staff. Food, that's the answer to all. [laughs] You have food there, and they will come. I think in all the years I've been here, all the staff that we've had, we've always been close-knit, like a family, and like in Park Service in general. I think that's part of the reason why I joined the Park Service is because it's so family oriented. I felt like I was part of this large family. And I think a lot of people to this day, even outside the agency who are with other agencies like Fish and Wildlife and BLM, you know, they're way different, way different. They all try to get jobs at the National Park Service. But we are very close-knit.

- Katrina Fritts: I think because with maintenance in general, because I was the maintenance coordinator, I did all the inspections, I had the monthly meetings with the chief, or now the facility manager, and so I had that rapport. But I also, if something went wrong in a bathroom, you know, I would call a plumber, or if something happened with the lights, I'd have to call the electrician, and so I got to know the staff very well. And I carried a radio, I still carry a radio, so in case I needed to get in touch with anyone. But with the maintenance folks, in particular, they just for some reason liked to give nicknames out, not to all the staff. But I was dubbed "Trouble," because I guess I was always using the radio and calling them for help, because I needed help all the time. Mather's an old building, and so some of these new features and renovations were challenging sometimes, and they are to this day as well, so what's new?
- Katrina Fritts: But I think it's just because they liked me, and, believe it or not, I was very shy. I didn't talk a whole lot. So, to throw me into like in front of a classroom was just like [demonstrates] scary as the dickens. But I learned to work with that a little bit. But, yes, so "Trouble" from the maintenance staff, and a little bit later on, "Big K," and I'm not exactly sure why.
- Ronnie Emory: I like that one. "Big K" is a good name.
- Katrina Fritts: But I guess because I dealt with so many different issues. I was the one who was answering to the fire alarms, the intrusion alarm. I was the one person that people would go to for any type of security or law enforcement or whatever, and so, yes, somehow "Big K" got in there.
- Katrina Fritts: Mike Watson and I worked together for such a long time that I was able to anticipate his needs, and so along the way someone threw out the name "Radar," and that seemed to stick a little bit as well. So once in a while he would call me "Radar." So, yes, that's how I got those names, those nicknames.
- Katrina Fritts: But, yes, very, very close-knit, you know, the park being right here all around us. You have the Harpers Ferry Center, which they deal with the publications and maps and things like that for the parks. But we also have the Appalachian Trail Project Office and the Museum Management, which is down in the basement. Actually, it's – you probably heard about this, right? I'm not telling you anything new – the bomb shelter. Oh, okay, very good.

- Katrina Fritts: We also, though, have Don Briggs. He's superintendent of the Potomac Heritage Trail, and his office is right across the way from me, and he basically deals with trails, walking trails, hiking trails, biking trails, and so he deals a lot – he's a one-man show. He does everything. He's the superintendent, he's the AO, he's the purchasing agent, you know, everything. But he does, I think, have some volunteers that help him with certain projects like maps, and he's developed a good many maps. So sometimes our own staff may not be aware that there's actually more people around here Park Service-wide than they realize. So, we're educating ourselves as well. So, did that answer it?
- [Unidentified]: Now, there was kind of an overall theme for our oral history project, which is a Legacy of Learning. We already asked a legacy question, but how do you think Mather would define that, if we said what is Stephen T. Mather Center's way of showing that they have had the Legacy of Learning, from your perspective and your role in it all?
- Katrina Fritts: Well, you know, in all these years I've been here, we've kept that tradition of learning and trying to reach as wide an audience as possible, and things have changed over the years with technology and that sort of thing, but I think we've been very successful in keeping in line with that. You know, when you say Mather Training Center, people know that this is where it started. It's one of the places that it started.
- Katrina Fritts: So, I'm sorry, I forgot what I was going to say. There's so many things I want to say, and it's all jumbled up here. So, I'm really glad to be a part of it. I'm sorry, I cannot—
- [Unidentified]: Was there any instructor or—
- Katrina Fritts: —I'm trying to form the words here.
- [Unidentified]: —person involved here with the training that made a big impression on you? We've talked about the staff and the superintendents.
- Katrina Fritts: Yes. They've all been wonderful to work with and they're all unique in their own way, and I think it's like the David Larsons and the Dave Dahlens and the Mike Watsons who really, I think, contributed a good bit to making that happen, to making this happen. I'm sorry, I just cannot find the words here. There's so much in my head right now, and I'm trying to articulate this, and I'm not doing a very good job.

- Katrina Fritts: So, those folks like that, and I don't know if you were aware of Dave Larson, just a phenomenal individual. But folks like them who – Interpretation, Katie Bliss, she's just such a dear to work with. These are folks who, I think, are doing a fantastic job of carrying on that learning and development. I apologize. I'm just not being able to form the words here and articulate.
- [Unidentified]: We are approaching our time when [unclear].
- Katrina Fritts: Oh, we are? (laughs)
- [Unidentified]: If I may just throw in one last question?
- Katrina Fritts: I apologize.
- [Unidentified]: You've talked about with such enthusiasm so many accomplishments over the years. Is there a proudest moment?
- Katrina Fritts: Oh, my. Well, you know, I think I go back to the kit, I think because I had so much more involvement in that from beginning to end, and the fact that it touches all employees of the National Park Service, I think that's why I feel so strongly about that. It was fun. It was a lot of fun to put together. It was a lot of fun to come up with descriptions. It was fun to put it into those little bubbles and work with the graphic designer. If you looked at this thing, it's awful now, but, I mean, goodness gracious, you know, it's something that we never had before.
- Katrina Fritts: We looked at other agencies' programs and decided that a graphic designer worked with these, and this is what we came up with these bubbles. So, when you hear "the bubbles," we know what they're talking about. But this was the beginning of these career fields and these competencies, and I think they've come a long way since. So, I feel very proud to have been a part of that where it affects all of the National Park Service employees.
- [Unidentified]: Well, thank you so much for your time.
- Katrina Fritts: Well, you're welcome. You are very welcome. Yes, I'm sorry, I apologize. I'm [unclear].
- [Unidentified]: No, it was very good.
- [END OF INTERVIEW]

