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Richard Martin
September 23, 2013

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

NPS History Collection
Harpers Ferry Center
PO Box 50
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
HFC_Archivist@nps.gov

ANPR Oral History Project

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The narrator has reviewed and corrected this transcript.

Audiofile: MARTIN Richard 23 Sept 2013

[START OF TRACK 1]

Alison Steiner: It's September 23, 2013. This is part three of a three-part interview with Richard Martin for the Association of National Park Rangers Oral History Project. The interviewer is Alison Steiner. And we're at Ash Mountain in Sequoia National Park. Do we have permission to record this interview?

Richard Martin: Yes.

Alison Steiner: All right. So, I think that where we left off last fall was with your superintendency at Wrangell-St. Elias. And I didn't know if you had anything else you wanted to talk about based on that experience. It looks like you moved to Washington, DC after that.

Richard Martin: Right. I'm not sure. Did we get into Yosemite at all last fall?

Alison Steiner: Your experience before moving to Wrangell?

Richard Martin: Yeah.

Alison Steiner: We did.

Richard Martin: Did we? Okay.

Alison Steiner: I think we covered that in depth.

Richard Martin: Okay. Okay, great. Well, yes. The situation at Wrangell-St. Elias, it's a new park, five years old. At the time, I was the second superintendent. And the staff there was about, as I recall, eight permanents and maybe 15 or 20 seasonals in the summertime. The place was hugely controversial. I think it was certainly one of the most controversial parks in the system at the time, even though there were several new parks or expanded parks in Alaska right then as a result of the Alaska National Lands Interest Act of 1980.

Richard Martin: Why**?** Wrangell was of course the largest park in the system then by far, and the largest in Alaska. Thirteen million acres. So, it was essentially the size of the state of West Virginia. And there were a lot of ongoing uses out there that had been allowed prior to the establishment of the park.

Richard Martin: One of the big ones, of course, was sport hunting. But there was also mining under BLM management. There were folks that lived in the park, sometimes under permit but more often not. Just living out there. So, there were a lot of ongoing things which made it very controversial. Two communities in the park, two towns. McCarthy and then the little town of Nabesna. Two roads, both maintained by the state of Alaska. Both dirt roads.

Richard Martin: So, there was an awful lot going on there. And when the park was established, the park was actually in two different designations.

The official name is Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. So, a portion of the quote "park" is a national preserve where state regulation of sport hunting was allowed. And then a portion of it, a larger portion, actually, was a traditional national park. The actual traditional park was eight, about eight million acres. And the preserve was about five million acres where sport hunting was allowed.

Richard Martin: Prior to the park establishment, of course, though, that other eight million acres which was now a traditional national park, there had been ongoing sport hunting. And the most intense hunting in that part of Alaska was for Dall sheep. Which are beautiful species. White sheep. Coveted as trophies by all manner of hunters. But particularly among trophy hunters for what is known as the grand slam of North American mountain sheep. If one is able to kill a Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, a Dall sheep, a stone sheep, which actually are primarily in Canada, and I think the other species is a desert bighorn. Because at that time, the Sierra bighorn were protected. So, if you can kill those four species, you then have a grand slam of North American mountain sheep. This is very coveted (laughs) among sport hunters and trophy hunters and particularly those that like big heads on their walls.

Richard Martin: Well, the establishment of the park meant eight million acres was now no longer open to sport hunting, including Dall sheep. The other hunting activities there were primarily for moose and caribou. Caribou for a lot of sport hunting. But that wasn't such a big controversy because there was other areas for sport hunting in or around the park. And most, of course, were more for subsistence uses and activities that were less sport hunting and more for food.

Richard Martin: The second big controversy was mining. When the park was established, there were 15 active mining claims under BLM authorization. And the park service for the first four or five years renewed those permits under a prior existing right provision in the Alaska National Interest Conservation Act, ANILCA, for short. The park service was sued by a conservation organization for failure to conduct national environmental act reviews of these mining claims. And this was upheld by the Federal District Court judge in Alaska. So, the park service had to start doing environmental assessments, EAs, on these 15 claims. And until those assessments were done, 15 miners were put out of work. Well, this was a significant controversy.

Richard Martin: A third controversy revolved around the use of aircraft for sport hunting. Aircraft, whether legal or not, had been traditionally used for hunting of many species in and around the park and preserve. The state of Alaska, I don't remember whether they actually authorized it or not, but it certainly was habitually done. And the

park service position was that aircraft is not authorized for hunting of animal species within the park and preserve, and particularly within the preserve.

Richard Martin: A small portion of people that lived locally had special authorization to hunt in the park if they were local residents for subsistence purposes. Not for sport hunting, but for subsistence purposes. Because they lived in and around there and supposedly lived a subsistence lifestyle. And many of them did. The controversy was can subsistence users use airplanes to hunt animals within the park? And the park service position initially was that yes, that was authorized. My feeling was, after looking at the law and the regulations, and the policy was that it was not authorized. So, it fell to me to tell people that you could no longer use aircraft for subsistence hunting in the park. So that was a third controversy.

Richard Martin: The subsistence uses was an additional one. Who was authorized for subsistence purposes? Who qualified? Who did not? And that fell to the National Park Service again to determine who was eligible and who was not.

Richard Martin: So, we could go on and on about quite a few controversies. But the ones that are most noticeable, I believe, today, revolve around land management issues within the park and the preserve. There are many hundreds of thousands of acres of land within the park and preserve that are not owned or managed by the National Park Service. Many of these are lands managed by the state of Alaska. Many of them are lands owned and managed by the local native corporation, Ahtna. Ahtna Native Corporation. Many of them are mining claims left over from pre-park days. Some of them are private properties that are fee simple, owned by, that are former mining claims or homesteads or under other acts and authorizations that allowed people to get title to properties within the park.

Richard Martin: And of course, as with any private or other property designations, all of these organizations have their own missions, their own desires for how their property should and could be used to best advantage for their organization and for the people they represent. As well as our long-held desires in the United States for private property rights. So various difficulties and challenges revolve day-to-day around the uses of lands within and around the park.

Richard Martin: One of the big land issues at the time when I was there was the Kennicott mining property. This was a property owned in fee simple title by the Kennicott copper corporation, a subsidiary of Rio Tinto, the international mining company, based, I believe, in the United Kingdom.

Richard Martin: The park service in the late '30s had done a review of the Kennicott property to see if it could be designated as a national park. This was right after the mine shut down in 1938 and at the request of the territorial governor, a gentleman named Ernest Gruening, territorial governor again, not the elected governor. The park service did a review of the Kennicott property and determined that it was not eligible for national park designation. For a variety of reasons.

Richard Martin: Well, the Kennicott property was now right in the middle of the park. Right at the end of one of the dirt roads. Arguably the most identifiable location in the park or preserve. The most well-known. The greatest history written about it. Where most of the money came from in that part of Alaska. In fact, maybe in all of Alaska during the period of operation from 1908 to 1938.

Richard Martin: It's a spectacular facility. And the history surrounding it and the story of Kennicott is classic American mining pioneering history. So, my feeling was that Kennicott should be part of the park. The issue was this 1938 report that said oh, no, it shouldn't be a national park. And the other issue was, at least within National Park Service, internal difficulties was kind of the unspoken message that Wrangell's got enough problems, all it needs is another problem (laughs) managing the Kennicott property. Well my view was, hey, it ought to be part of the park.

Richard Martin: So, I went and met with the Kennicott leadership in Salt Lake City. And asked them how they felt about their property being part of the park. They said, "No problem! We'll donate it. We'll donate it without any strings attached. We'll be happy to do that." For whatever their purposes were, they basically said they had no interest in the property.

Richard Martin: So, I said, "Well, you know, there's going to be some environmental cleanup you're going to have to do." Because there was a lot of asbestos and other hazardous materials left over from mining days. So, they basically agreed to do that. And spent a lot of money. Millions, many millions of dollars, cleaning up the Kennicott site.

Richard Martin: And ultimately, it was after I transferred away from Wrangells, but ultimately Kennicott came into the park as part of the national park. Which I think is a great addition and a long-term benefit for the park and for the public.

Richard Martin: One of the reasons, aside from mining, for that, my feeling it should be part of the park, was the issue of sport hunting on private lands within the park. Because, of course there was a challenging difference of opinion about whether one could sport hunt on private lands within the park. Not the preserve, but within the park.

In other words, did the National Park Service have the authority to regulate hunting on private property in the park. We, of course, interpreted that we could. But there was a question, particularly with the Alaska Fish and Game Department. So, I felt, aside from the history interpretative value and the preservation of cultural resources, I felt it was important to get Kennicott into the park for the sport hunting issue as well.

Richard Martin: The challenges in any new park have a lot of similarities. Particularly large parks that take over lands formerly managed by another organization vastly differently than the National Park Service manages the lands. Some of these are very, there's a lot of commonality here. Uses that have become maybe legal or authorized or in some cases tolerated on public lands that are contrary to the park service mission are one of the big issues. Whether these issues are mining or grazing or living on without authorization. Hunting. Whatever the use might be that is different than National Park Service management is always going to lead to a challenging public discussion. Often acrimonious, certainly controversial. Many times, political. And there's much to be learned among managers both within parks as well managers at the regional and Washington office level about dealing with new parks where many of the uses that preceded the park are contrary to the park service mission.

Richard Martin: I felt in my particular case, I was poorly prepared (laughs) for, to put it mildly, to prepare for the level of controversy, acrimony and in some cases downright hostility to National Park Service management. Having been a ranger for **23** years at that time, I'd dealt with a lot of unhappy people and a lot of, what in some cases were maybe even dangerous situations, and SARs or law enforcement. Dealing with a room full of unhappy local people was something I was poorly prepared for. And it became obvious to me that there were few people I could go to in the National Park Service to provide me with advice on how to deal with this issue productively. Productively again being how do we move the park forward, how do we establish NPS principles in management, and do this in a way that does not result in a mushroom-shaped cloud of acrimony, hostility and political repercussions.

Richard Martin: The adoption and approach I finally, that finally evolved in my mind, after going to a few very unhappy locals meetings was that my role was to listen. My role was to be sympathetic and understanding. To assure I understood what folks' concerns were. To explain what NPS was actually doing and proposed to do, to assure folks that their concerns would be listened to and considered and also to explain that the people have, in fact, spoken. That it is a national park. And that the national park program will, in fact, be

established and will be followed. And that we would mitigate that to the extent we could when folks had a legitimate concern.

Richard Martin: So, and the corollary to that was I decided, and I actually, for lack of a good alternative, (laughs) to hold regular meetings, to talk to anybody that would talk, to listen to anybody that had anything to say, to get back with folks that had questions, to promise that we would always be available to hear their concerns and that we would respond with what we knew to be correct and what we believed would be going on.

Richard Martin: So, the first year I was there, we had 39 public meetings. Which was more than, which was almost one a week, all over that part of Alaska. Never turned down an invitation to go to a meeting, even if it was in a bar. You know, after people had had a couple of beers. Went and listened. Responded as best I could. And I always got back with people regarding their concerns and their thoughts and their worries.

Richard Martin: And many of their concerns were concerns that were fed to them by organizations that were not supportive of conservation programs like national parks. Organizations that did not believe in conservation or the NPS missions in many cases were providing extreme statements designed to strike fear into the hearts of many of the local people. Many of whom were, you know, were not familiar with national parks or with conservation. And were, given what they were hearing, might have been rightfully concerned about what NPS was going to do.

Richard Martin: And this was true in very, very many cases of things I was hearing from people. Things that were really extreme. One of the examples was a person that stood up in one of the meetings and expressed to me – this is not a quote, a paraphrase – that they didn't want their neighborhood to become another Yosemite Valley. Because that's what they'd heard was going to happen from, you know, wherever. So, I answered that question as reasonably as I could.

Richard Martin: Another concern that was expressed to me was well, you don't allow hunting in the park anymore. And pretty soon, you're not going to allow hunting in the preserve, either. And I answered that question as well.

Richard Martin: So in many cases, these concerns were concerns that people legitimately had that they had heard from a source or sources that were not comfortable with the conservation ethic or with National Park Service approaches to land management. And over the course of a year, of 39 meetings, a significant number of these extreme concerns began to be, I'd hear less and less of. For one thing, of course, we had more experience in the park and people were seeing that some of the horror stories weren't actually happening. I

believe that we, the park staff, were gaining credibility with people because we were speaking facts, not fantasy. We weren't making promises we couldn't keep. And we were not saying things that were not true. We were speaking facts and we were responding sympathetically, understandingly, but factually.

Richard Martin: So, another thing we started was having monthly little seminars in our headquarters building or sometimes in the school, local school, where people would, people of known reputation would come and give a talk about some resource issue in the park. Whether it was wildlife management or geology or mountaineering, we had a great talk about mountaineering from one of the climbing guides who climbed and led climbing expeditions all over the Wrangells and other parks. He had actually climbed or at least been on an expedition to Everest.

Richard Martin: We had a phenomenal talk by a guy that lived in McCarthy. One of my personal heroes, a guy named De La Chapelle, who was one of the world's authorities on glaciology and on avalanches. Since passed away. But he gave a great seminar in Glennallen to a group of people one evening. And we had other activities like that.

Richard Martin: We adopted an artist in the park, the local artist, a wonderful woman named Gail Niebrugge, of whom I have several of her paintings hanging on the wall of my house today, who did painting of local historical buildings and facilities and activities.

Richard Martin: So, we started a variety of activities that were designed to support conservation and national park purposes. But also, we hoped would add to a relaxation factor among folks that had been really concerned that the National Park Service was going to have horrible impacts on their lives, which we were not going to have. (laughs)

Richard Martin: And gradually, the second year I was there we had fewer meetings, although still plenty. And then by the third year, some amazing things began to happen. Myself and the park staff, we began to get invited to give talks at things around the state of Alaska, various conferences and things. We became friends with many of the people in the local native corporation, the Ahtna corporation. Even though they, I mean, they owned many acres, hundreds of acres, maybe hundreds of thousands of acres within the park and preserve. But we got to know them very well as our neighbors.

Richard Martin: The town of Glennallen formed a chamber of commerce, which the park became a founding member of. And we always had a representative at their meetings and a board member. The Friends of Kennicott got established by a group in McCarthy, and we were founding members of the Friends of Kennicott and on their early board.

Richard Martin: So over time, many of the concerns that had been expressed began to be relaxed a little bit. Totally, no. But I began to feel like I was more welcome when I went to the grocery store and the gas station in the towns around there.

Richard Martin: Discussions about the park evolved slowly. More toward, "What's the park going to do about the McCarthy Road? Are you going to upgrade the road? We heard you want to pave the road." "Well, no, we don't want to pave the road." "Well, are you going to put a campground in at the end of the road?" "Well, we'd like to." "What are you going to do about the programs revolving around Kennicott?" "Well, we're working, you know, to get the property. And then we're going to preserve it as National Park Service facility. And we're going to interpret it."

Richard Martin: So many of the discussions, I found myself being invited occasionally to have dinner with somebody. I even got invited to the chamber of commerce to give a talk about the park. So over the course of the five years, the lesson to me and, I hope, to NPSers that get involved in a new park of significant controversy, here's some things, you know, to consider about how to deal with a new park that has many controversies surrounding it. Some of these things might be of help to future managers.

Richard Martin: I felt it was one of the most learning experiences for me in my career. Was it different than being a ranger? Dramatically. In some cases, not quite as much fun. More going to meetings than going out in the park to monitor and check on park resources and park visitors. But very rewarding long term.

Richard Martin: We did the general management plan. We did a wilderness proposal plan. Many of which are still in force today, and that I believe are documents that National Park Service can be proud of. Perfect documents, not at all. But darn good for their time and good long term. Some of them are a little long in the tooth now. It's over 20 years. Might be a good time to revisit some of those. But all in all, I believe we laid a good foundation for Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

Richard Martin: Some of my best friends, you know, just from a personal standpoint, some of my best friends came out of my working relationships at Wrangell-St. Elias. Just this summer, 2013, I was on a long-term trip with one of my work associates from Wrangell-St. Elias. We're the best of friends. So, from a personal standpoint also, within a park staff, for the park staff is small, and the park staff feels we've got some problems here trying to get this park going. And we're going to have to work closely together. We're going to have to support each other. We're going to have to be on the same sheet of music. And we're going to have to understand

each other and where we're coming from personally as well as professionally in order to make this work. And less regard for what each of our professional and personal areas of expertise and interest are. This is no time for specialization. This is a time for us to work closely together as a team to make sure that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Richard Martin: I believe we were successful at that. And one of the great benefits of a working relationship like that is it forges lifetime friendships.

Alison Steiner: So, you mentioned that you weren't prepared for that position at Wrangell. Do you think that that position and your time there prepared you for the next job that you took? Or how did that transition, it looks like you went to be the deputy chief ranger in DC?

Richard Martin: I think it helped a lot. You know, I love being a ranger. And as a ranger, you know, to be successful I always felt it's a team situation. Even though you might be out there alone, you're not really alone. You have the park service behind you. And if need be, you can always get, or usually get help. And as a manager in a situation like this, that is also true. But it's somewhat different because in a situation like this, you realize that in many cases, it's the relationships that you develop that are much more critical than your technical and professional expertise. Because it's working together and working with others that's going to make it work. Or else it ain't going to work.

Richard Martin: In many places in the National Park Service, and my feeling was WASO was one of these, you could be the most brilliant person on the planet, but unless you could work with others, unless you had persuasive abilities to persuade people to some degree, whether by overcoming them with facts or through schmooze or persuasion or relationships, you weren't going to get anywhere. So, I think it was a great help to me. And in realizing that sometimes it doesn't matter how quote "right" you are. Or think you are. (laughs)

Richard Martin: Sometimes in my early career, I was accused of being arrogant and thinking I was always right. You know, I didn't think I was always right. I was sometimes accused of that. It dawned on me at Wrangells that in some cases it doesn't matter how right you are or how smart you are. In some cases, even how persuasive or articulate you are. In many cases it's how your ability to relate to other people.

Richard Martin: And I found this to be true in WASO and I feel like my time in WASO was very rewarding. I made many good friends. I believe we collectively achieved a great many significant evolutions, if not revolutions, in the way park service managed many things during the time me and others were working in the Washington DC office.

So, I felt that the experience at Wrangells was of great, great benefit to that.

Alison Steiner: And how did that transition happen? Like at what point did you decide to, I guess either seek a new job, or did that job come to you? And what was that transition like? It seems very different situations. (laughs)

Richard Martin: Well, there were a few things. One is I felt after five years at Wrangells that I'd pretty much done my thing. Either because of personality or brain cells or something. You know, I was kind of out of ideas. I felt like I had, not me personally, but that me and the staff and in my personal brain power and creativity, I'd pretty much come up with as many good ideas as I thought I could come up with. You know, a few bad ideas as well. And that it was time to do something different. And I thought it would be great to go to another park as a superintendent. And I was pretty sure at that time that that was the kind of job if I was going to be in the field, I would want would be a superintendent's job. I didn't really feel like I wanted to go back to doing field ranger work, even though I loved the, what was it, 23 years that I did that. But again, kind of like I felt at Wrangells, kind of felt like in my field ranger work, I'd kind of done what I'm going to do.

Richard Martin: What I can do. Plus, you know, from a field ranger standpoint, I was getting older and creakier. And at least the way I approached ranger work; it was a significant physical activity. (laughs) And I didn't want to be in a field ranger job and feel like, you know, I can't quite do what I used to do. I used to love to go on long backpacks. I mean long backpacks. Twenty, 25, 30-mile days in the mountains and canyons and stuff. I just loved it. But I couldn't do that anymore. I loved long winter ski trips. Cross country and ski mountaineering trips. Not going to happen. So, I didn't want to do that.

Richard Martin: And the other thing I thought was if I got a job in Washington, it would really help me understand better how the park service functions and operates in a broader perspective. And then if I ever go onto another superintendent's job, that should be a great help to me, you know, as a future superintendent. Hopefully. Although that was only a hope at the time.

Richard Martin: So, I applied for that job. And I got selected. And in some ways, I couldn't hardly believe what I was doing. Going from a one-room cabin in Glennallen, Alaska, where it was, you know, 30 and 40 below in the wintertime to downtown Washington, DC. (laughs) You know, with all the urban amenities. I started referring to it, after I'd been in DC, you know, I'd gone from the Alaska wilderness to the urban wilderness.

Richard Martin: So, as I was driving back to Washington through the northern plains, Montana and the Dakotas and my home state of Minnesota, I said well, I wonder if I've lost my mind here, going to DC. But it turned out that I enjoyed it. I'm not a city person. I don't love cities. But I did enjoy DC. I enjoyed the history, the museums, the cultural activities you could do. The restaurants, the bars. I enjoyed learning about the politics. I didn't actually enjoy doing the politics. But I enjoyed learning about it as a matter of kind of something to put in the toolbox for you know, any hopeful future job I might have.

Richard Martin: But I also, working in Washington, DC, in the Washington office, I really enjoyed the things that we could do being there. And this is another potential thing that maybe future managers and/or rangers or superintendents might, that might find helpful. Learning and being and working in Washington, DC, is a tremendous enhancement to one's knowledge of how to get things done in the National Park Service. Whether you're working in the Washington, DC office for a period of time or whether you're a superintendent or regional director or somebody else because it teaches you one, it's all about relationships and communications. Less about facts and data and detailed information. That the role of facts, data and detailed information is to prove a point rather than to make a persuasive argument. Because the persuasive argument will become, come out of your credibility or your, the emotions of your argument, whatever those emotions might be. Whether they're political emotions or emotions about people or places.

Richard Martin: So, it was a tremendous learning experience for me. And I feel that we did some really, really good things while there. And I take only partial credit for this. We had a great staff of people. Walt Dabney and Andy Ringgold. Andy had left just before I got there, but he had done a great job of establishing a foundation. And Walt Dabney, of course, was one of the greatest leaders the park service has ever produced. A wonderful leader and persuasive and astute individual. Jack Morehead, who was one of, the associate director for operations. They don't call it anymore, but it amounts to that. And Jack Davis, both of whom were superb National Park Service leaders, were tremendously supportive of the things that we were trying to do.

Richard Martin: And some of the things that we were trying to do was to improve the resource management protection program in the park service through a variety of tools. We were trying to improve the ability of park rangers to do a better management of, a better job of managing illegal activities that were damaging park resources. And these were primarily activities that were done by professionals. Professionals that robbed and looted archeological resources.

Professionals that poached wildlife. Professionals that poached vegetative materials. Professionals that poached paleontological resources. And which were going on in national parks throughout the system. Some places more than others. High profile crimes? No. In most cases, not, except for maybe some archeological resources. And occasionally poaching. But usually these were significant crimes, but below the radar screen within the National Park Service.

Richard Martin: For example, in Wrangell-St. Elias, there was a group of illegal hunters and guides that regularly hunted trophy Dall sheep in the park. And this was 20 and 25 years ago. These guys were regularly being paid twenty and twenty-five thousand dollars per hunt for a trophy animal. And a trophy animal is like almost a full curl or a full curl animal. And if you get a curl and a quarter trophy male Dall sheep or ram sheep, those are really pricey 25 years ago. I'm sure it's more money today. Maybe twice that today. This was a below-the-radar screen activity. The park kind of knew about it out there. And the rangers did what they could. But you know, there's only, the park at the time had three permanent rangers (laughs) for 13 million acres. So, there wasn't much that could be done as far as, you know, investigating and prosecuting these kinds of crimes.

Richard Martin: The same was true of archeological resources. Except in a few places that were really tightly managed, like Mesa Verde or Petrified Forest, many of the archeological resources in the National Park Service are just out there. And these were being looted and sold on the black market. Similar with paleo.

Richard Martin: And of course, plant materials. Most notably in the more lush parks of the system, like the Pacific Northwest and the Appalachian parks, where there are coveted species of mushrooms and plants for sale on the black market. So, we wanted to improve that.

Richard Martin: A proposal for that was to set up a system of criminal investigators that could follow up on these crimes long term. And so, the park service was supportive of that, and we were successful in getting funding for a small cadre of criminal investigative people to come out of the ranger staff. This later got kind of messed up by the department, but its purpose, I think, still remains valid.

Richard Martin: We wanted to assure that when we put vast amounts of training money and development money into young working interpreters and rangers that we were able to retain them within the agency. At least for a period of time. At the time, the attrition rate among GS5s, 6s and 7s was something approaching 50 percent. The permanents, permanent employees. And I did a quick back of the envelope calculation of training, money that went into training of

these individuals, money that went into their salaries, money that went into their uniform allowances, money that went into equipping them, money that went into supervising them as a form of training, of young, beginning people. And I figured out, this was again 20 plus years ago, that we were losing about $250,000 per employee every time one of those people left the park service. And I believe that was a conservative number. And that was just a number. Aside from we lost a talented, trained individual, so we had to start over training somebody new. (laughs)

Richard Martin: So where were these people going? They were going to the Bureau of Land Management. Fish and Wildlife Service. Forest Service. In some cases, these other agencies, I mean, I recall a couple going to GSA and a couple going to IRS and other folks for more money. It was, in some cases, you know, more money or a career ladder thing.

Richard Martin: So, we believed it was an important, tremendously important, to create a career ladder for park rangers, whether interpretive or protection. And our argument was a money argument, primarily. It was harder to make the talent argument. But it was as much a talent issue as it was a money issue.

Richard Martin: And so, we proposed the ranger careers program, a GS 5, 7, 9 career ladder, after meeting certain training and performance requirements over a period of a year. If you started as a GS5 you could get promoted without competition to a GS7. And after another year, the same kinds of further requires successfully, you could be promoted without competition to GS9, which was the working level of a National Park Service ranger, interpreter, or protection.

Richard Martin: And we argued that GS9 was the, in fact, working level. Which took us some, we had to do our own personnel work pretty much in order to develop the position descriptions and performance standards and all that. And based on other agencies, such as the US Border Patrol and the, hmm, a couple others that don't come to mind right at the moment. I think the US Marshals, maybe, for the protection rangers. And then for interpretation, we used the teaching standards. Our argument there being that a GS9 interpreter was, in fact, a form of a teacher. Not a pure teacher, because they weren't in a classroom setting and they didn't give grades. But they were, in fact, instructors of park visitors about park resources. And that was actually a pretty easy sell for interpreters. Little harder for protection rangers.

Richard Martin: But anyway, this was a struggle that took three or four years of communication and persuasion within the National Park Service, within the Department of the Interior, with the Office of

Management and Budget, because it was going to be a budget issue, and with the Office of Personnel Management. And ultimately, that was successfully achieved because of great support from people like Jack Morehead and Jack Davis, who were the Associate Directors, Operations, at the time.

Richard Martin: But also, we got support from many unexpected sources. Some of the conservation organizations, such as National Park Conservation Association, were saying, my goodness, you know, the National Park Service should have a career development program that makes sense for your rangers and your interpreters. (laughs) So it was a big-time team effort, but also there was a lot of support.

Richard Martin: But a lot of that was the result of communications. We were meeting with people, talking with people. I can't tell you how many superintendents meetings I went to discussing this matter. How many times I met with regional directors and Washington office staff and Office of Management and Budget, and folks all over. But the lesson there is, if one is stationed in Washington, DC, with a team of folks that are on the same sheet of music, that have learned some lessons of communications and persuasion, why you can make a real difference. A real difference. Throughout the system, the park service system, as well as all parks and have it long lasting.

Richard Martin: That was 20 years ago. Ranger Careers is still in place. Is it perfect? No. Could it be improved here and there? I would be shocked if that wasn't true. But one has to say after 20 plus years that it has been a significant success in retaining rangers, in training rangers, and assuring that the National Park Service has the talent to do that kind of work at an appropriate cost.

Alison Steiner: And how did your work with ANPR play into what was going on in your career at the time? I know that ANPR also talks about range of careers as one of their successes.

Richard Martin: The need for Ranger Careers actually was initiated by ANPR some years prior to when I was in Washington, DC. ANPR was the first organization to kind of raise the flag as much as it could at the time that the ranger functions in the National Park Service were not functioning well from an administrative standpoint. Functioning pretty well in the field, but not super well, because it was so poorly managed administratively.

Richard Martin: At that time, there were two designations of rangers. There were park technicians and park rangers. And they were two separate and distinct functions. But they were both poorly managed. The park technician function was particularly poorly managed because it was so amorphous that nobody knew what they did. And you could hire almost anyone, even though they had what they called position

descriptions and stuff, they didn't really say much. They were so generalized that you could use a park technician for driving a dump truck, digging pit toilets, nailing roofs onto a building, or to make arrests or to make, do determinations about hazard trees. Or you could write a scientific thesis about any natural resource or cultural resource program and be classified as a park technician, GS3, 4, 5, 6, 7. The only supervisory levels were GS-7 or 8. They were all separate. You had to compete at each level.

Richard Martin: And the turnover rate on park technicians at the permanent level was astronomical. It had to be over 50 percent. And the protection rangers were going to the BLM and the other agencies. And the interpreters were going into the professional teaching fields or academia.

Richard Martin: So, in the '70s, the ANPR said the park technicians series is a mess. So ANPR was successful. I was a little part of this. Walt Dabney was a big part of it. Jim Brady. A few other folks. In getting the National Park Service to finally eliminate the park technician series and make everybody a park ranger.

Richard Martin: But they didn't really solve the problem significantly. They changed the name. But everybody became a park ranger. But it still was, there was no career ladder. And the professional requirements just were so generalized that they were essentially meaningless. And I think the turnover rate dropped slightly, but not much.

Richard Martin: So ANPR continued the push that the interpretative and protection ranger functions needed to have valid and legitimate, well-articulated position descriptions and performance standards that actually made sense. And there needed to be professional requirements for both training and performance that made sense.

Richard Martin: And so, by the time I got to WASO this discomfort with the park ranger function among field working rangers and interpreters and ANPR was well known. And ANPR at the time was a significant organization in NPS. Throughout the '80s, especially the late '80s and the early '90s, ANPR was a significant factor in NPS. Significantly due to many members that had or were working in Washington, DC. Both Walt Dabney and I and Jim Brady were founding members of ANPR. But also, the then leadership of ANPR was very well respected in NPS and throughout the Washington office significantly because of then ANPR President of Rick Gale. So, it was a period of time when ANPR was at its, one of its strongest periods.

Richard Martin: And of course, I was a bit of a product of both ANPR at the time and the activities regarding around the park technician series and the park ranger function. But also, then, in Washington, DC.

Richard Martin: And many of us that were there at that time all had this, one of these common missions we all kind of collectively had was we really wanted to fix, the best we can, the ranger and interpretive functions in NPS from a management standpoint. So ANPR was a significant factor in that.

Alison Steiner: And how long did you stay in Washington? And at what point did you decide to move on? Or why did you decide to move on?

Richard Martin: I stayed there five years. Mary, my wife, had a phenomenal job there. She'd actually been promoted once or twice there. And well-respected. And she loved working there. I am more of an outdoor person. I like the west. And I personally tired of DC. I felt, again, kind of like I had at Wrangell. When ranger futures and some of these resource protection programs we had started, the all risk management program that we had doing, the physical fitness standards, a few other things, that we all collectively had wanted to get started and make sure got institutionalized. I kind of like, well, I've kind of done as much as I think I can do. And I want to go on and I want to do some more things, different things. I guess I'm, partly I, you know, have a low threshold of boredom. Also, I wanted to get back to work in a park again. I wasn't getting any younger. I'd passed 55, I think, while I was there. So, I was by that time eligible to retire. But I really had no interest in retiring at that point. I really wanted to work and live and have activities in parks again.

Richard Martin: And I was getting so restless. Just as a personal view you go around most of the east and the Midwest. And of course, I'm a product of the Midwest. You can't just go out into the local national forest or BLM land and go for a hike. There isn't any! It's private property. You can go to your local national park or state park or something. But there's no freedom of public lands in the east, which I missed greatly. I missed the wilderness. I missed the big vistas. Open space. So, I was ready to leave Washington and go back out west again.

Richard Martin: I applied for a couple of jobs in the east but thank God I didn't get selected. It was foolish of me to do that. So, it was a combination of I kind of feel like I've done what I can do, and I want to do something different. And I was able to, Mary wasn't totally happy with the idea. But I have the greatest personal debt to people in Washington, DC, who agreed that Mary and I could both go to Desert Parks. And again, from a personal perspective, we were able to move. I was able to move to Death Valley and Mary was able to move to Mojave Preserve. And it turned out, I think, that we were able to do things we enjoyed doing in both those parks. And I think, I don't know whether anybody thought back about it

or not in Washington. But I think anybody that had could say maybe they were not wrong to have supported us in going there.

Richard Martin: So, we were able to move to the desert. And to me it was just like, (sigh of relief). The first day I drove into Death Valley after moving, I go, "I love this." (laughs) Like returning to the west. Wide open spaces. Oh my god, I feel like I'm out of jail! (laughs) I actually said that to myself. I might have said it out loud. Driving into Death Valley, like one of the first days. I feel like I'm released from prison. (laughs) So it was great.

Alison Steiner: And what stands out about your time at Death Valley? I mean, for Wrangell it seems like your experience was framed by the challenge of it being a new park and the relationship with the community. Were there any issues that you dealt with in Death Valley that kind of framed your experience there?

Richard Martin: Well, Death Valley had just become a National Park from a Monument and had been expanded by over one million acres of formerly BLM lands. So, there was some of almost the same stuff, except not nearly as bad. I mean, not even close. Not even. Almost couldn't say it in the same breath, hardly.

Richard Martin: Now Mary dealt with a lot of the same things I had in Wrangells. A lot. Mining, hunting, big time, well, quite a bit of hunting. A lot of innholders in Mojave Preserve. Upset local communities. So, she dealt with a lot of similarities.

Richard Martin: I dealt with similarities, but it just wasn't on the same scale at all. But there was a fair amount of discomfort among local communities in Inyo County, mostly. A little bit in San Bernardino County. A little bit, you know, part of the parks in Nevada, in two counties, actually. But not much in Nevada.

Richard Martin: Nevada was going through one of its sagebrush rebel periods at the time. (laughs) And they were fighting the U. S. Forest Service. They were suing the Forest Service. They were going to secede from the union, from the State of Nevada. They dragged the Forest Service and BLM into court. Forest Service was having their offices blown up and burned and stuff. Their rangers quit wearing uniforms because they were intimidated by the locals in some places.

Richard Martin: But I'd go to meetings in Nevada. It was a love-in. Because park service didn't expand at all into Nevada. All the expansion was in California. Plus, it was money in the pockets of local communities in those counties. And they were happy to get any money they could from park visitors. So that was a lot of fun, you know, going to meet with, and I met with some of the real leaders of the sagebrush rebel movement over there. And even though I closed

down two grazing operations that came out of Nevada. Just closed them. I said, "You can't graze in the park anymore." The piece of paper. And the ranchers weren't real happy. But even though I did that, I was never met with any acrimony in Nevada.

Richard Martin: I was met with some in California, in Inyo County towns. But not a lot. Because the Death Valley National Monument had been there since the '30s. And they were very comfortable with Death Valley National Monument. There were always a few little things here and there, but not much. Even though the park service took over a million acres, another million acres of BLM land, where there was grazing, mining, illegal property, people living illegally on the land, and a few other, hunting, a few other activities.

Richard Martin: There was not a lot of hunting that was closed down. And it was pretty easy to close. We just sent the rangers out; I told the rangers to go out and set up camp with a little flag and a vehicle and put their tent up beside the road and live out there for a week. We'd pay them per diem. And any hunters come by, talk to them. Talk to them. Talk to them, talk to them. Educate them.

Richard Martin: Our mission is education first. We are all resource educators. And your first mission as a ranger for activities that used to be legal but are not legal today is to educate. And they did. The rangers, Death Valley at the time can be incredibly proud of the job they did. With hunters, primarily.

Richard Martin: And grazing, there were two other grazing permits in the California part of the park that had been BLM. And one of those, like the ones in Nevada, I just closed with a piece of paper. The fourth one still exists today. An old family. Wonderful people. I really like them. Live locally there. And they still have their grazing permit in the park today. And I believe that NPS or a third party ultimately will probably buy out their interest for a legitimate cost, whatever it might be. Whatever they're willing and interested in doing.

Richard Martin: Mining was not a huge activity at the time. But we did buy out one mine, which was a little controversial. But we paid the owners of the mine a significant dollar amount of money. We the park service. For their unpatented claim. Which, you know, you're not actually supposed to have to pay for unpatented claims. But we paid it. And I think it was legitimate cost. So, they basically went away happy, and the supporters in the local town that had been behind them, they kind of mellowed out after that.

Richard Martin: So one of the significant issues remaining there revolve around the county's interest in road maintenance in one of the areas, the Saline Valley Road in particular, where the county feels it needs to use borrow pits in order to get gravel for the road maintenance.

Turns out their old borrow pits are in wilderness. Legal wilderness. Because the wilderness boundary's 25 feet off the center line of the dirt road. And their borrow pits from going back to the '30s or whatever are back there farther than that. So, I think that might, I don't know if that's still an ongoing issue or if the park's actually given them permits to access those. That was one kind of long-term issue.

Richard Martin: There are still many valid mining claims within the park, many of them owned by what was originally US Borax Corporation. Which is the corporation out of which came Stephen Mather and Horace Albright both. Most people don't know that about Horace Albright. But Stephen Mather was working as, I think, a contractor. And his father has also worked at US Borax as an advertising executive. And I think it was Stephen Mather, I'm sure it was, who was the creator of the 20-mule team advertising campaign from US Borax. Going back to the turn of the century.

Richard Martin: And Horace Albright was born and raised in Bishop. And actually, worked for US Borax a little bit in Death Valley when he was young.

Richard Martin: So, they today still have several thousand acres of mining claims within the park. And I'm hopeful that at some point in time, those lands will be donated to the park. I think they should be. And it's my belief that it's just a matter of time. Because they're not using any of their lands. So, it might be kind of like a Kennicott thing in Alaska. It might be just asking them in the right way at the right time. And maybe they'll just sign them over. Maybe clean up the hazmat in the process.

Richard Martin: Other than that, we did a general management plan for Death Valley at the time, which I think is a really good GMP. And there were a lot of public meetings, which I would go to. And we had a team for that, so I didn't actually chair most of the meetings. I would sit in them and answer questions. A few of them kind of bordered on the acrimonious, but people pretty much settled down over time.

Richard Martin: And again, we held a lot of meetings. Nowhere near the number as in Alaska. But a lot of meetings. And a lot of communication. And a lot of responding to people and listening. And I think over time, people became comfortable, again, with the park service is not here to ruin your lives, or to ruin your uses of the desert. And is not going to, in fact, do that.

Richard Martin: One of the issues that (laughs) I loved responding to was Death Valley became the largest lower 48 wilderness in the system, in the wilderness system. Including forests and BLM lands and wildlife refuges. Death Valley is the largest designated wilderness. But

there are road corridors through the wilderness. They're 25 feet on each side of the centerline, so 50 feet wide. And they're actually in the law, these road corridors are in the map that came out of the California Desert Protection Act. That's the only place you can take a vehicle is on those roads. Which irritated some of the park staff right after the—(laughs) and particularly the resource managers. Because they were used to getting in their four-wheel drive and going off all over the damn place. And I had to tell them after the Desert Protection Act, you can't drive there anymore.

Richard Martin: "Well how are we going to get out there and manage our resources?" Uh, this is not rocket science. Foot or horse.

Richard Martin: And for a long time, we borrowed horses from Sequoia, from here, over to Death Valley. The packers would bring them over and we'd feed them and stuff and support them at Death Valley. Which saved Sequoia a bunch of money. And we in Death Valley got the horses for essentially nothing except feed and care and watering. And we hired a part time packer over there to take people around. In later years, they dropped that, which I think is kind of a shame. Because I always believed in horse use for wilderness, whether it was desert or mountains.

Richard Martin: And, of course, I had to tell a lot of these kind of academic researchers who nobody ever said no to that you can't take a helicopter out there anymore. But one of the things I loved was responding to things like, "We don't have any access to all that wilderness anymore. We can't get out there. With all the wilderness, you guys are locking us out!"

Richard Martin: I said, "Well, where do you want to go?" "Well, I don't know. But I might want to go somewhere." "Well, where, actually? Let's get out a map and find out where you want to go that you say you can't get to."

Richard Martin: So, they'd pull out the map. I'd say, "Well, you know, actually this road that's open, it's just over here half a mile. This core road corridor."

Richard Martin: And I actually had one of the mapmakers in the park go through. There actually are very few places in Death Valley that are farther than four miles from a road. (laughs) So I loved pulling that line out when somebody, "We can't get out there and enjoy the desert anymore!" You're only four miles away from everyplace in the park.

Richard Martin: You know, and it was that kind of thing. And again, a lot of these folks were being fed hogwash, essentially, by anti-conservation groups, of whom there are many. And many of them very well-funded by commercial interests or property rights interests or

whomever. Scaring these local folks that, you know, the park service isn't going to let you out in the desert anymore.

Richard Martin: In fact, one of them even wrote up a thing, I think it was in *High Country News* about how the desert is going to be emptied out because it's gone from the mellowed out casual approach of the Bureau of Land Management to the buttoned-down, straight-laced, rigid, gun-toting park rangers who won't let you do anything. (laughs) What?!

Richard Martin: If you get a chance, there's a later issue of *High Country News,* I think it was from about '99, written by a wonderful woman named Michelle Nijhuis, which is spelled the German way. It's like N-e-g-h-o-u-s [should be Nijhuis]. Michelle Nijhuis. She actually came out to Death Valley in about '98, '99, and interviewed a bunch of people, including me. And she interviewed a lot of the local folks. Oh my God, the sky's falling. And interviewed a lot of other people. And a lot of the park staff. And it's a very, very even-handed, the most even-handed, I believe, at the time, of any of the media written works. And I still respect that woman. I see her stuff in *High Country News* periodically.

Richard Martin: And she came and interviewed me. She said – words to this effect – "What's this about the rangers? People are fearing all the rangers."

Richard Martin: And I said, "Do you think they have black helicopters?" (laughs) She said, "No, no, no. Not quite. Almost.

Richard Martin: I said, "Well, my view of them is they're heroes. They're out there helping people. Somebody in Saline Valley or someplace gets in trouble, a ranger comes along and helps them out."

Richard Martin: I told her a couple of stories about me being out there, in Goler Wash and me helping somebody with a dead battery and driving them all away to Trona and back to get a battery. Or somebody that got snowed in in Saline Valley and need help with chaining up their vehicle and plowing the road ahead of them with my 4-wheel drive so they could get out. They're out there helping people!

Richard Martin: "Well, so and so says that the rangers are heavy-handed." "Well, what's the example? Tell me the facts."

Richard Martin: I only remember one incident where a ranger actually was a little over the line among those whole years. Among thousands of visitor contacts. One! That actually – and even that wasn't that bad. I mean, there was quite a reaction to it, but it wasn't really that bad.

Richard Martin: So, I told her, "As far as I'm concerned, they're heroes. They're out there helping people. They're dealing with bad weather.

They're dealing with folks that are in trouble and helping them out." Well, she put that in her paper.

Richard Martin: But I think overall you go out there today, I was out there a year ago for a little celebration, the reopening of the visitors' center after it had been closed for two years for rehab. And the three superintendents, Ed Rothfuss who retired just as the Desert Protection Act passed and who I replace, and then J.T. Reynolds, who came after me, we all sat on a little panel for an hour and told stories to the hundred people that came. (laughs) You know, you didn't hear many, any people saying, "Well, you know, we've got this goddamn problem." There was none of that. It was like, "Oh, the park's just wonderful. And we love this place." So much easier, I think.

Richard Martin: You know, you, Alison, from your experience in Alaska, after this interview, I'd be interested in hearing what local folks where you are in Alaska are saying about the park today. But Death Valley was a much, much mellower situation. Undoubtedly, like any national park, it's going to have its detractors and its folks that dislike it.

Richard Martin: But the fifth oldest park in the system, which is Mount Rainier, where I worked for a long time, I was up there recently, and I stayed in one of the lodges right outside the park. And the owners were unhappy with the park. The park's 120 or 130 years old, and there's some local that's unhappy with it. Even though it's one of the best-loved parks in the system. So that's going to happen.

Richard Martin: Death Valley is without doubt an iconic desert wilderness. Now that Mary and I are retired, we occasionally work overseas. And we travel overseas a fair amount and work over there some. And particularly when we go to desert areas, like we did a lot of work in United Arab Emirates, in Abu Dhabi, helping them with a desert park there. So we've spent a lot of time there and a little bit of time in Oman, the neighboring country. Everybody there has heard of Death Valley. Everybody, it doesn't matter who they are. Local shopkeeper. Person sitting on a park bench. Everybody has heard of Death Valley. And of course, when we tell people we're from California, the other national park they all talk about is, "Oh, what's Yosemite like?"

Richard Martin: But as far as desert goes, Death Valley is an internationally known resource. And during much of the time I was in Death Valley during the summertime, the predominant summer visitors were not from the US. They were international. A lot from Germany. Because Germans travel a lot. They like to learn, see, experience. But internationally, want to come and see a desert. And see how hot. How hot is that place, really? I want to go there! Is it too hard

to get to? No! You can just fly to Las Vegas and drive over there in a couple of hours. Well, I want to go there. And then they go to Grand Canyon, L.A., they go to Disneyland or something.

Richard Martin: But from the standpoint of experiencing extreme environments, now, again, hottest place in the world, even though it was in second place for a long time, now it's hottest again, it's an incredible, incredible place. And I go back there once a year at least. I love to go out and do four-wheel drive driving on the road corridors.

Richard Martin: And on a recent trip, it's been a couple of years ago now, I saw a desert bighorn. And see other species and go to the archeological sites and areas. So, it's a phenomenal place that I think anybody would enjoy visiting.

Richard Martin: It does take a certain person to work there and live there. And I'm much more a mountain person than a desert person, personally. I don't want to live in the desert long term. But I was there six years and I enjoyed every minute of it. And learned an awful lot about the desert. And lessons that I value, and I think help make me a more knowledgeable and sensitive person about things I formerly didn't have a lot of knowledge of. But desert vegetation, talk about awesome stuff that has come out of evolution. Somehow over the gazillions of millennia and ages of the earth – tell me, it's a miracle – how can plant species deposit seeds in the desert in a rainy year. Some of those seeds, well, many, millions of those seeds will survive for decades, if not hundreds of years. Just sitting out there. Surviving. The seed's out there. It's waiting for the next big rain. When's it going to come along? I don't know. (laughs) How does it do that? that's a miracle. A miracle of botany.

Richard Martin: And I didn't know this before I worked in Death Valley. I knew that there were big flower years, on occasion. And it took certain rainstorms at certain critical times of the year in the fall and winter to produce a big flower year. But I did not know that those seeds were just sitting out there waiting. And I did not know what a profusion could occur during a big flower year. And there was a big one while I was fortunate to be there. I think it was '97. My God, you could not believe. I mean, you really couldn't! The flowers were everywhere. Everywhere. And these beautiful, spectacular flowers. Some of the species I can remember, but the species don't matter. Everywhere! I took off afternoons and I'd just go out. I should be doing work in the office. I'm only going to see this once. I'd take a bottle of water and I'd sit down on a rock among the flowers for 15, 20 minutes. I don't sit still real long. And just absorb the beauty. And the miracle of desert vegetation. It's incredible.

Richard Martin: So, do I want to live in the desert? No. But I think if a person spends a few years in the desert, they'll be amazed at what they learn. And they'll be amazed at what they'll enjoy. Because even remembering those experiences today, I find that I enjoy the looking back on them almost as much as I enjoyed them at the time. So. Death Valley. And the other desert parks, too. But Death Valley is closest to my heart, personally.

Alison Steiner: And you mentioned that Death Valley would borrow horses from Sequoia and King's Canyon national parks. Horses and mules during the winter. And I know that you moved, then, to Sequoia and King's next. Is that correct?

Richard Martin: Right.

Alison Steiner: And how did that transition come about? And then the same question. Were there things while you were here that were [unclear].

Richard Martin: Well, the transition, again, was kind of similar to my others. I guess I'm a personality type or something. I finally thought after six years in Death Valley, I could stay here. I could retire. Or I could get in trouble and the park service is going to try to ship me someplace. (laughs) But I thought is there something I actually would like to do? Maybe for a last job? Or is there something I could contribute to the park service before I retire? Because by that time, let's see, that was '01. So, I would have been 63 at the time. I'm not going to be working, can't work forever, A. B, I don't want to work forever, because there are a few things in life I still want to do other than work, and I don't have the time to do them and still do what I feel I should do for my job.

Richard Martin: But what do I – and there were only two or three things that I came up with. And one was to go to another park. Well and was there some parks I particularly would like to go to? And Sequoia-Kings was one of two. I also thought I would enjoy going to Grand Canyon, because I always wanted to learn more about the Grand Canyon. I'd hiked there a lot, and I enjoyed hiking across the canyon. My long-distance hikes, I enjoyed hiking in the canyon on various occasions. And I was really interested in the history and the, I'm not much of a geologist, but you know, the vegetation, the river. I'd never had a chance to run the river. So, I was interested there.

Richard Martin: And I always felt like I didn't spend as much time as I would have liked to in Sequoia-Kings Canyon. And I knew the backcountry intimately. But I didn't know, I didn't know the front country in the park hardly at all. Because I was living, they had me stationed in Bishop. That's where they wanted me to live. And I felt it was appropriate at the time. But my exposure to the front country of

Sequoia and Kings, just almost all the front country was, you know, just going to the trailhead and somebody giving me a ride to Ash Mountain or to the next trailhead or something. I'm not complaining about it. It was a wonderful experience. I loved it. But I just felt like I, from a Sequoia-King's standpoint, there was more for me to learn and know. And maybe I could contribute to Sequoia and King's.

Richard Martin: The other was, I thought if they offered me a significant job in WASO where they wanted me to do some things that they thought they or I thought were important collectively, I guess I would, and I knew Mary would be willing to go back there. I would go to Washington DC and I knew she'd get a job there in a heartbeat. Those were the only things. And again, that was just my personal brain power working.

Richard Martin: But I really, the other thing was, I didn't want to go anywhere where Mary and I could not commute to see each other and spend time together. We just, we weren't going to live long enough to waste years doing that and so, we felt that we were a partnership and we weren't going to do anything except support that partnership from a relationship standpoint. So, we agreed neither one of us was going to go anywhere very far away from the other, if we went anywhere. So, I figured I could stay at Death Valley or—

Richard Martin: Well, right about that time, Mike Tollefson left here and went to Smokies. And so, well, there's an interesting situation. So, I talked to Mary about it. And she said, "Well…" She wasn't super-enamored with the idea, because it's a little longer drive from Mojave to here than it is from Mojave to Death Valley. And it's not as fun a drive. You've got to go through Bakersfield and all that. (laughs) Always one of my least-liked cities. But she says, "Well, okay. We can do that for a few years."

Richard Martin: And at the time, she was thinking also, she's from the Bay Area. Maybe she would take a job in the Bay Area. Because they were always pushing her to take more challenging positions. (laughs) Some of which she wasn't at all interested in.

Richard Martin: So, I called up John Reynolds, who was the regional director at the time. I said, "Hey, would you consider me for the superintendency at Sequoia-Kings?"

Richard Martin: He said, this is now public knowledge, so I think I can say this. It's been talked about in meetings and presentations. So, he says, "Well, the director actually wants, is thinking of having J.T. Reynolds go to Sequoia-Kings." J.T. Reynolds at the time was the deputy superintendent at Grand Canyon, and a longtime friend of mine. And John says, "Why don't you call up J.T.," to me. "Why

don't you, Dick, call up J.T. and see what you guys want to do?" (laughs)

Richard Martin: So, I call up J.T. I say, "Hey, J.T." "Yeah, Martin." "I hear the director wants to send you to Sequoia-Kings." He says, "Yeah, that's right. Isn't that a good idea?" And I says, "Yeah, but I think a better idea would be for them to send me there." (laughs) "Oh, you want to go there, too?" "Yeah. Why, Reynolds said, if you want to come to Death Valley, I could come to Sequoia." (laughs) "Oh, really? Really?" I said, "Yeah, J.T. That's what John said." He says, "Really?" He says, "Let me talk to Dot about that." That was his wife, Dot, wonderful woman.

Richard Martin: So that's where that was left. It was precisely in J.T.'s hands, because the director was supporting J.T. Which is great. As he should have been.

Richard Martin: Next thing I hear, there's somebody on the park staff a Monday or two later says, "Hey, we saw J.T. Reynolds and his wife here in the park yesterday." (laughs) J.T. didn't tell me he was coming. I'm not sure I was there anyway.

Richard Martin: "Well, that's interesting." Next thing I know, J.T. calls me up, whenever it was. Says, "Martin." "Yeah, J.T." "I kind of like that Death Valley place and Dot likes it, too. So why don't we work that out?" (laughs) So, this is how some things are done in the park service. I don't think very many. But some.

Richard Martin: So, I called up Reynolds and I don't know, J.T. probably called, Bob Stanton was the director at the time. A really great guy. I basically didn't, except for calling Reynolds and telling him what J.T. said, I didn't do anything more. Next thing I know, I'm coming here and J.T.'s going to Death Valley. (laughs) So, that's how that happened.

Richard Martin: And remember I was telling you about the little presentation the three of us had down in Death Valley about a year ago? J.T. told that story to the hundred-some people that were sitting there.

Alison Steiner: And what were some of the big issues and challenges that you worked on, faced, while you were here?

Richard Martin: Well, I think there were some significant ones. I think of prime importance was the general management plan. But let me just list a couple of them, and then we can talk about them individually. That was a matter of prime importance. Stock use at Wolverton was a significant issue. The designation of the Mineral King Historic District. The Grant Grove hazard tree campground closure situation. Trespass grazing. Randy Morgenson's death. He had disappeared before, during Mike Tollefson's tenure here, but his body was found while I was here. The death of, I can't believe I

forgot the firefighter's name. at Grant Grove. Oh, geez. This is an embarrassment. I have to remember his name [Daniel Holmes]. Then I'll have to add it later, because I can't remember. But anyway, the death of the hotshot crew member at Grant Grove during a prescribed burn.

Richard Martin: There were some other issues, like the shuttle system and dealing with Edison Company on their water extraction and their dams. But I think those are the significant ones. The general management plan was the biggest struggle. Mainly internally and technically. It was very modestly commented on by the public. We held, I think, six or eight meetings around here or in the Bay Area. Even had newspaper articles we encouraged about it and stuff. And boy, people just, you know, are, "All right." Not that big a thing.

Richard Martin: Oh, another one is stock use controversies. Ever heard of that before?

Richard Martin: But it was a lot of work getting that GMP from rough draft stage kind of to the final stage. And I actually did not, it was not actually even finalized while I was still here. It was shortly after. Craig Axtell actually got it stamped and signed. But that was a lot of work. Dealing with Denver Service Center, who was actually doing the work. And our staff. And Dave Graber was involved with it, doing the detail work on this end. And it was an incredibly complex document. Almost overly complex. But it was so complex by that time. You know, the problem with complexity is once you get to a complex stage, it's hell to simplify. (laughs) One of Martin's rules of process. Don't overcomplicate if you can avoid it. But that did become a very complex document and a very expensive document. So that was a significant thing. I was going to Denver like monthly, it seemed like.

Richard Martin: The Mineral King Historic District had not been designated yet at that time. And the regional office was really supporting it. I wasn't enamored with the idea at all. I thought it was designating something that would be better left undesignated. But the folks, you know, what is it, 120 building owners, cabin owners up there, something like that. A bunch of them. They were all, you know, kind of semi-turmoiled about it. I had to go up there and meet with them quite a bit. And they're basically nice people. But there was a lot of, a lot of issues there.

Richard Martin: The Wolverton stock use, which I think is still going on today, was a significant matter. My view was it was inappropriate to have horses going through Giant Forest as they were twice a day. And I talked to the resource management staff and Dave Graber about it. And they felt the same way. I went up there and walked the trails. And you know, the hay the horses were eating were bringing in

exotic seeds. There were exotic hay species, grasses growing up beside the trail. Timothy and Kentucky bluegrass and crested wheat grass and some others – I don't think I saw any alfalfa. (laughs) And I know there's big efforts today for weed-free feed. But weed-free feed is way better than what everybody used to have, but it still ain't totally weed-free.

Richard Martin: So, all the big efforts to restore the Giant Forest, in my view it was inappropriate, not illegal, but it was certainly inappropriate for us to be sanctioning an activity that was bringing in exotic species into the Giant Forest. Because the park service by that time had spent identifiably a hundred million dollars restoring the Giant Forest. And we were permitting a process that was bringing in an exotic if not an invasive species.

Richard Martin: And we talked to, at that time we had just let the contract to build a new road and the new parking lot for the Sherman tree. And that was going to go right beside the Wolverton pack station. So, the Wolverton pack station was going to be enclosed on three sides by heavy use roads and on four sides by the giant forest.

Richard Martin: So, I talked to the engineers at the service center and they all essentially agreed, with a little pressure, that yeah, it could be a safety hazard. So, it became a safety problem. And that was the argument and the principle upon which I did not reissue the permit. And I believe that was the absolute right thing to do. And I believe that that permit should not be reissued for commercial stock use out of the Wolverton pack station under any circumstances. And I do believe that there is the resource management and protection issue, but also a significant safety issue of stock vehicle conflict there. Which would put park visitors at risk significantly.

Richard Martin: What else did I have on the list?

Alison Steiner: You had Randy Morgenson.

Richard Martin: Yes. I knew Randy. Not real well. But he had been a ranger in Yosemite, and actually grown up in Yosemite. His father, Dana Morgenson was a long-time photographer and gave talks for the concession there on photography and park resources. So Randy, I don't know if he totally grew up there, but he certainly was a Yosemiteite, familywise. And he was a seasonal ranger when I first worked there. And then he moved down here to Sequoia to be a backcountry ranger for decades.

Richard Martin: So, I was really upset when I heard he'd gone missing in, what was that, '96 or seven? And, you know, there were the usual, "Oh, he went to Mexico," and all that baloney. I never really believed it. On the other hand, you know, he never showed up.

Richard Martin: Well, I think you probably know the story. The off-duty trail crew hiking up, what is it, Arrow Peak? Or Arrow Spire or something? They hiked up out of Woods Creek from their camp to climb a mountain and found his body. Or at least his uniform shirt and, I forget if they actually found bones or not. But his uniform shirt and his pack and some other stuff.

Richard Martin: So, we had a big review of that. which was, I think, very appropriate. But that was a, I think, a very difficult time for the park staff. Just dealing with that whole thing. It was a difficult time for me. The ranger staff here generally were going through a hard time about it. The backcountry rangers, especially.

Richard Martin: I do think in later years when that book *The Last Season* was written, I think that really helped everybody deal with that. Because I think, I forgot the author's name, but I think he really captured the culture of the wilderness ranger. And their work and their lives. As well as the wilderness of the park. I thought his conclusions were a little less than I would have liked. I can't remember exactly what conclusion he came to, but I remember thinking in my own mind that there were at least three or maybe four possibilities for how Randy died. And I think, if I remember the author right, I think he decided on one.

Alison Steiner: I think he decided on a snow bridge.

Richard Martin: Was it a snow bridge he decided on? And I remember thinking I like that idea the best. But I also think it's possible he could have had a heart attack or a stroke. Or he could have slipped and broken his leg or his hip or something and been out of radio contact. I like the snow bridge idea best.

Richard Martin: But I think that helped everybody. But dealing with that was a really difficult time.

Richard Martin: The backcountry issues around stock use and horse use appear to be unresolvable among the interest groups. It kind of reminds me of the Congress, you know, where they don't want to listen to each other and consider the other's point of view, which I think is a horrible mistake on both sides. Of course, the stock users argue, "We don't care. We're fine with the hikers." Maybe.

Richard Martin: The far extreme backpacking hiking community, which is very small, and does not tolerate stock in the backcountry, I think are not looking at it accurately. Those trails they got wouldn't be there if it wasn't for horses and mules. It's just that simple. It's really just that simple. (laughs) So they ought to be buying feed for those horses and mules instead of complaining because they poop on the trail. It really bugs me that hikers, of which I consider myself, I

also consider myself a rider, can't see beyond their, for lack of a better word, narrow-mindedness.

Richard Martin: The Southern California Edison Company impoundments and flume came up for a review. They come up every ten years. Up in the Mineral King area, there's four impoundments. Been there since, oh, geez, is it 1908? Or 1903, 1908**,** 1912, something like that, for power generation. And of course, they do generate the cleanest power on the planet. On the other hand, they're in a national park using national park water. Water's protected by the National Park Service and the national park. So, they enjoy the benefits of our road maintenance, our ranger protection staff. They enjoy the policies of the National Park Service, which protect their watershed, and they enjoy a collegial relationship with the National Park Service. They are making money off of the National Park Service.

Richard Martin: At the time, they were contributing about $25,000 to the National Park Service here. And their reason for doing that had something to do with the cost of power in the headquarters facility here. But I've forgotten why that was. I guess because they don't have to transmit the electricity very far from their substation up here or something. Which was just a baloney reason. The fact was, they were using our water. And in my view, not paying full value.

Richard Martin: So, in my conservations with the Edison Company, the local staff, management, I can't remember the people's name, I would advise them that we didn't, we weren't comfortable with the situation the way it was. We believe that if they were going to continue their operation, that there needed to be full value compensation to the National Park Service for the services that we were providing to them. And that a full value study needed to be made to determine what that value was.

Richard Martin: And I later learned through sources that the University of California, Berkeley, I believe, and I'm not sure I've got all these numbers straight, so I guess anybody could refute them. But this was 10 years ago now. That Edison Company's gross from this facility here was about 10 million a year. And nobody knew what their net profit was. But it had to be pretty healthy. Given the fact that their costs were extremely minimal. They didn't have to provide security. They didn't have to protect the watershed. They didn't have to plow the road. Their costs were pretty darn minimal.

Richard Martin: So, I lobbied with the Department of the Interior, where the permit actually came from, the secretary's office, that the permit needed to change to a value-based permit rather than whatever we'd had before. And that that money needed to go directly to the park for purposes of National Park Service operations and management.

Because that's what we were doing. we were helping them operate up there.

Richard Martin: So, the department, at the time it was the Bush administration, (laughs) they understood a value argument. (laughs) One thing they understood. I don't know that they understood a conservation argument much. But they understood a value, a money argument. They said, "Well, sounds okay to us."

Richard Martin: Then I said, "Well, I'm going to go talk to our congressman about that."

Richard Martin: So, I talked to Congressman Nunes. And he said, "It sounds okay to us." So that's how that came about.

Richard Martin: Then I know that Craig, after he came, he had the value analysis done. That was after I left. A lot of the parts fell into place after I left.

Richard Martin: But I think Woody was telling me that it's now, what, $350,000 or something from Edison. And it should be more if they're going to continue to operate. I think I was told that the value analysis indicated what they should be paying for fair market value would be over a million, I believe. So, I guess it's coming up for renewal again. They'll get some more money. Because you know Edison's not going broke. Even though they're fighting tooth and nail to try to slow up the solar and wind power world – you know, they're not going away anytime soon. (laughs)

Alison Steiner: So, I know that you retired after being in Sequoia and King's Canyon. And I guess I'm wondering, kind of looking back at your entire career, are there certain trends or changes that stand out in how the park service is managed, or in the daily life of park employees?

Richard Martin: Yeah, there are some amazing changes. And Woody and I were even talking about this at lunch. In the '60s, when I started as a ranger, you lived in the park. You lived in park housing. You were expected to respond to anything, anytime, day or night. You didn't get much training. You got a lot of OJT, of course, but you didn't get much formal training unless you were fortunate enough to be able to go to Albright Training Center, which at that time had a great 12 or 16-week program. I was fortunate enough to go to that, and a lot of rangers did. But as far as being qualified to perform many functions, a lot of us had resource backgrounds. I was a forester by training and a firefighter and resource manager, essentially, by college training. But as far as park service operational training, you know, you pretty much learn on the job from people that were there doing it.

Richard Martin: You lived in the park. People would knock on your door. All hours of the day or night in these ranger stations large and small. And the body language expectation from the chief ranger and the superintendent was there's a problem in the park? What do you think we're paying for you out there? We're paying you to take care of it. Don't have any training? Well, figure it out. Or call somebody in—

Richard Martin: Well, of course communications were pitiful in those days. (laughs) Particularly, I mean, we had radios in a lot of the parks. But a lot of times they didn't work in a lot of areas, A. And B, a lot of times there was nobody on the other end, you know? Except maybe another ranger. We had park radios in our houses in those days. And you would communicate with your spouse, who would be by the telephone and call somebody if you needed help. Assuming there was any help in the neighborhood.

Richard Martin: And there was a park community, which had its plusses and minuses. It was wonderful socially. It was wonderful. For kids, especially. And I had three sons at the time. And they talk about it to this day, of the years they spent at Olympic and Mount Rainier living in the park, with their friends, playing with their friends every day, summer and winter. Going over to their friends, very few, it was a little more sexist in those days. Almost all the employees were males except for secretaries and a few others. Going over to the other houses. Spouse would cook them lunch, you know, and stuff. Feed them and all this kind of stuff. And they'd have parties and everything. Wonderful!

Richard Martin: On the other hand, it was a little constraining as well. You know, a little oppressive. Because you were, you know, living with the boss. Or the bosses. Or the coworkers. And like any human endeavor, some were easier to get along with than others. (laughs) Some were more prone to wanting things their way than others. And some were more competitive than others. So, it had its plusses and minuses. But it was very close-knit.

Richard Martin: And you also got a lot of exposure to what other staff members did. In those days, if the electrical crew had a line down, sometimes a ranger would go out and walk the line to see where it was down. And call them and tell them, "Hey, it's at pole number such and such." Or if the garbage can was overflowing, the ranger would pick it up. Or the toilet needed cleaning, the ranger would pick up the litter and wipe it down a bit so it would look more presentable. Or if an interpreter wasn't around, a ranger would go give a talk. Maybe not of the same quality, but acceptable level of competence so the public had an enjoyable learning experience.

Richard Martin: It was very common to go to schools to give talks on a variety of topics. Fire prevention. Or even more interesting topics like, you know, a bear talk to the fifth graders or something. Or a talk on glaciers, like at Mount Rainier, to a bunch of kids. For protection rangers as well as interpreters to do that kind of thing. So, doing a variety of things other than just protection or interpretation was very common.

Richard Martin: Influencing the management of the park was very common. From the standpoint of resource issues or visitor use issues. And I can't give you a cause and effect about why those things seemed to me more common in those days than today.

Richard Martin: But I know there was no lack of whining and complaining, either. On the other hand. I mean, talk about, we'd have these, you know, little beer sessions occasionally and bitch to the heavens. About oh my god, management's screwing up here, and doesn't understand us out here in the park. And nobody, oh my god, the world's going to hell! (laughs) Nobody listens to us.

Richard Martin: I remember in an office very close to this one where we're sitting in right now today, there was a sign over one of the desks that said, "We're like mushrooms. Management keeps us in the dark and feeds us shit." (laughs) Give me a break. I mean, it was taking whining to a new low. Because it wasn't very accurate. But there was a lot of complaining about things at the working and middle levels.

Richard Martin: On the other hand, when I look back on it today, we all collectively were able to occasionally influence the way management was approaching some things. Not everything, by any means. But wilderness management was one of the big ones, of course. Because that was right at the time in the beginning of about, I don't know, I'd say roughly '65, but somewhere in the mid '60s till the mid '70s was the first huge wilderness use boom. Backpacking boom. Because of two causes, in my view. The baby boom, of course. We're right there at the 18 to 24 age. But also, the lightweight equipment.

Richard Martin: When I first started backpacking in the late '50s, it was canvas and wool. Kapok sleeping bags. Big heavy leather boots. Lousy rain gear. Tents that leaked, either leaked rain or dropped condensed moisture on you all night. (laughs) And I loved doing that kind of thing. But not very many people did it. I hiked on the AT, part of it, in spring of '57. Saw two other people in four days. Now that was the early spring.

Richard Martin: And in the early '60s, I hiked a lot. I hiked down the Rogue River. Four days in southern Oregon. And I did a lot of hiking in Olympic, all over the Olympics. And I'd hike sometimes for a day

and not see anybody else. Or a couple days and see hardly anybody.

Richard Martin: But then this backpacking boom came along. And at least in my view, it was the rangers in Olympic and Mount Rainier that said, "We've got to do something." And I know Sequoia-Kings had already started, because of being in California. But in Olympic and Mount Rainier, it was the rangers, basically. "We've got to change our way of doing business in the wilderness." Called it backcountry then, but it was wilderness.

Richard Martin: I think from the standpoint of search and rescue, it was a big time of evolution. And rangers were the driving force behind the development of technical SAR expertise in the park service. And actually, had a lot to do with it externally. Mountain Rescue Association, of course, was kind of the gurus. But park service did a lot of developmental things with search and rescue. NPS developed the managing the search function course in the late '70s out of Albright Training Center. People like Jim Brady and Bill Wade and a couple of others. Which later was adopted and of course now has gone on to higher levels of technicality.

Richard Martin: But you know, in the '60s and '70s, search and rescue was make it up as you go along. And almost all of the equipment was your own. I had my own crampons, my own rope, my own backpack, my own carabiners, my own survival gear, all that stuff. So, we each had our stuff individually. We knew how to use our own stuff. But we didn't necessarily, things were not interchangeable. We had almost no avalanche training. That only came along, oh, kind of in the late '60s.

Richard Martin: So anyway, the whole issues of rescuing and searching for people evolved dramatically during those years. I guess probably into the mid, what, early '80s, mid '80s. And of course, the All Risk Management Program, there was another example of things, where when like there was a special event or a huge problem in some park, whether it was a law enforcement, a SAR or a dignitary visit, again, it was make it up each time new. (laughs)

Richard Martin: And only in the early '80s in Yosemite did we – and I was a big part of this – realize, we need to get this better organized. Because we can't just have these semi-out of control operations. Whether it's a visit by the queen of England or the president, or a big search in the backcountry. So, we need to develop a common incident system that works for everything.

Richard Martin: And the National Park Service developed that program. The ICS system for all incidents came directly out of the National Park Service. It's now spread through FEMA and other organizations. But that came out of the park service. Fire folks take a lot of credit

for the ICS system, as they should. But the all risk management program was NPS all the way, and Rick Gale and me and Jim Brady and a few other folks were kind of the driving folks behind that. So that was a huge evolution.

Richard Martin: The law enforcement program was pretty big. And I know there is a lot of discomfort with that, and I'm still not sure it's reached perfection. If it can. The Department of Interior is so powerful in that role, in that function, that unless NPS can figure out a way to better deal with the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Interior that might be the way it is.

Richard Martin: But of course, it was unacceptable the way it was previously. Because previously, people had their own guns. All different kinds. Training was whatever park person, you know, knew how to shoot straight. The training in the legal parts of law enforcement was scattered all over the place. So, it was unacceptable the way it was up until, just started to change in the late '70s. And I think only became quite good in the '90s, I guess? Probably.

Richard Martin: I think the downside of that is that the protection function has, in my view, become a little overly focused on the law enforcement role and a little less focused on resource education, resource protection roles. But I think, again, that varies from park to park. A place like Lake Mead or Yosemite where they actually have a lot of incidents that are law enforcement-related, it's very understandable. A place like Sequoia-Kings or Death Valley, I think less so.

Richard Martin: One of the significant things that occurred is the professionalization of resource management. Most rangers in the '60s and '70s had professional degrees in resource management. But the ranger function was a generalist function. So, like, say, in my case, as a forester, I could go out and easily identify hazard trees. And I could even go out and cut them down, if need be, because I knew how to do that kind of thing. Or mitigate the hazard. But I didn't, I knew a little bit about fish and wildlife but not at a professional level. And I didn't know much about geology or archeology. I didn't know much about; I only knew botany primarily from a forest standpoint. Very little zoology. So, we weren't really professionalized from resource management standpoint. And that's, I think, been a huge kind of productive change. There's issues, of course, with specialization and professionalization as things do then become the purview of that professional and that specialist. And less a responsibility of others. Which I think is a shame. Because I believe that involvement from a variety of functions helps any function, A. And B, it gets too easy to say, "That's not my job."

Richard Martin: So, I don't have a solution to those issues. It's kind of like the law enforcement issue. I don't have a solution of that issue that's easy or handy. But the professionalization of resource management, in many cases, has been phenomenal. The bear management, I can't believe where NPS has come in the last, well, it's now 30 years in bear management.

Richard Martin: The first time I saw a bear canister was about '82 or '83. It was one of those long, skinny things with screw ends. I think it was white pipe. That somebody, it could have been Brad Cella or it might have been Dave Graber, both in Yosemite at the time when I was there, had gotten from somebody in Montana, a bear manager up around Glacier or Yellowstone someplace. The guy had gotten tired of having his food stolen by bears. (laughs) A bear researcher or a bear studier of some kind. And he'd dreamed up this thing using a piece of pipe with screw-ins to put his food in. Ah, shit. I remember to this day. Why the hell didn't we think of this 30 years ago? This is going to change bear management in the national parks. And it evolved to those nice canisters we have today. I think I have four of them in my garage. (laughs)

Richard Martin: You know that kind of thing. The management of bears. The management of, in this particular park, the yellow-legged frog programs. The management of hazard trees. So focused and professionalized today that it's phenomenal what's going on with those things. Just phenomenal. Just never would have happened in the '60s or '70s because people like me at the time, of a generalist nature, you know, we had a lot of things to do. We didn't really have, some of us were very creative and inventive. I remember rangers inventing a lot of things. But you know, they made them in the garage or on their living room floor at home. And then it might have gotten around to their few friends or something.

Richard Martin: The rangers at Mount Rainier one time invented, this was in the '40s, a ski area rescue sled that far surpassed anything else that was available at the time. But it was just used at Mount Rainier. Never got over to Aspen or down here to Mammoth or anyplace else.

Richard Martin: So, it wasn't that there weren't plenty of creative people out there that wanted to develop and improve on things. It was just a matter that you had a lot of things to do. And you were really being paid to do a lot of those things. You weren't necessarily being paid to just focus on—

Richard Martin: I remember at Olympic that we had a bear problem in the backcountry at a place up near Enchanted Valley. It was in my subdistrict. And it was in the day when you didn't want any bears shot, but you didn't want any bear problems. Which was code for

just deal with it but don't tell anybody. So, I dealt with it and didn't tell anybody. I walked 12 miles to get to this thing, carrying my little problem solver. Stayed up all night. Baited the bear with bacon. Hiked all the way back 12 miles the next morning. And then drove back to my ranger station, which was a couple hour drive. I was tired.

Richard Martin: I get a call from another ranger that night, just before I go to bed. And he says, "Hey, Dick. I need you to come up here to the north end of the park." "Oh, yeah? What?" "Well, we've got a guy lost in the wilderness. In the backcountry. Way back there. And we need you to come up here and hike into this place and help us look for him." I said, "I'm really tired." I told the guy my story. "Dick, we really need you to do this. Could you just try?" (laughs) Oh, shit. Okay, I'll try.

Richard Martin: Well, so, anyway, I did it. But the story is there. I couldn't concentrate on bears because the very next day, I had a real request to go do something else that was valid and was part of my job.

Richard Martin: So, I think specialization has dramatically helped the park service quality of work when it comes to park resources. But there are those kind of wrinkles associated with specialization and with professionalization that (sighs) you wish weren't there. But that don't necessarily have any easy solutions.

Richard Martin: Housing is dramatically better. I go back and visit some of the places I lived 50 years ago now. I actually did a 50-year trip back to Olympic and Mount Rainier. And the places I lived in Olympic now are pretty much abandoned. Maybe an occasional seasonal lives in them and stuff. But you know, on the other hand, I mean, it wasn't the greatest on earth. But I mean, I was only in my twenties. It wasn't horrible. It wasn't dreadful.

Richard Martin: I think people's expectations of housing today is a little higher than it was in those days. But I don't know that that's bad at all. But I mean, it's a change. For sure. Because there was a day when, well, right here, for example, in Ash Mountain, when I would come over here from Bishop in the '70's, every house in Ash Mountain was full. And there were demands for more people than they could accommodate here in park housing. All of these houses down here in lower Ash Mountain had families living in them with kids. Those houses up there and everything down at Buckeye were chock full of – there were people and kids all over the place. Housing was very inexpensive and coveted from that standpoint. But also, you know, you could walk to work. Didn't have any commute costs. Didn't have to buy a house. You could just move in.

Richard Martin: And it was easy to move. To transfer. Very easy. Supremely easy to transfer from one park to another. You didn't own a house. So, it was kind of like being in the military. You could just load up your house and move to another government house. And from that standpoint, if you liked, there were, and I don't know, I think there still are today, people that like to move often. Some folks from a career mobility, upward mobility standpoint, the more experience I get, the more places I go, the more promotions I get, which there's some truth to, and it's fine. Part of the system. Some people just from the standpoint of different experiences. Different places. You know, you only live once so see as many as you can. Some, you know, unhappy with no matter what boss they had so they want to move on. You know, whatever reason. It was extremely easy to transfer.

Richard Martin: And it was cheap for the park service to transfer you in those days. Because people oftentimes didn't have a lot of furniture and a lot of stuff. So, it was easy for a person or family to be mobile. But it was also very cheap for the park service.

Richard Martin: I moved from Bishop to Yosemite Valley and it cost the park service my gasoline to move up there. (laughs) That was it. I moved from Yosemite to Alaska and it cost the park service like a three-week trailer rental. That was it.

Richard Martin: Then once I started owning places, it cost the park service tens of thousands of dollars every time I moved. Obscene amounts of money just to move Mary and I. Two people. So again, it's a fair thing to do. The right thing to do. But from the standpoint of just economics within the NPS, I mean, they're crying the blues over travel costs today because they did get awfully, awfully, awfully high.

Richard Martin: There was a guy in Alaska that worked in the mining office, in the regional office. He was a GS-12. His wife, I don't think, was employed at the time. He moved from Alaska to either Virgin Islands or Florida. It cost them 100,000 bucks to move him. They had to buy his house in Alaska and pay his closing costs in wherever it was, in the southeast. A hundred thousand bucks.

Richard Martin: Two or three years later, they moved him back to Alaska. Another hundred thousand dollars. Now that's just plain dumb. You don't have to be an economist. This is stupid of the park service to do this. This is stupid! You must be able to use $100,000, in this case, $200,000, for something better than moving this guy and his family from Alaska to Florida and back.

Richard Martin: So, it used to be cheap to move. Not true today. It's expensive unless it's a single person living in a government house that's moving to a government house.

Richard Martin: I guess if a person is renting locally, it would be about the same. And going to go rent someplace else. But if a person owns a house – I don't know, do they still pay closing costs and all that kind of stuff to move?

Alison Steiner: I'm not sure. I feel like they might have reined—

Richard Martin: Some of that in?

Alison Steiner: Yeah.

Richard Martin: So that's, I think, a significant change.

Richard Martin: Staffs are bigger today. So, when I hear complaining about staff levels, especially if somebody is telling me, "Oh, we got cut." (laughs) "We got a cut in our staff from," I don't know, 75 to 50 or something. Well, how many did you have 20 years ago? Thirty years ago? How many did you have 50 years ago? Staffs are bigger today.

Richard Martin: And the part I like the least is high paid office staffs are bigger today. This is the thing that bothers me personally and economically and I guess maybe even professionally the most. There are a lot of GS12s, 13s and 14s in park headquarters offices today that are not contributing much to the mission. They might be doing important work from a process or procedures standpoint. Because I know you've got to do NEPA work. And you've got to do concessions management. And you've got to do all this process stuff. Planning things. Which take professional level staff to perform. On the other hand, if you've got people doing all this process work, you know, for every one of those you could hire a plumber or a ranger or a carpenter or an interpreter. Or maybe one and a half of those. So high paid office staff, I think, and we actually eliminated two of those while I was here. I think, just here in the case of Sequoia, I think a later superintendent reestablished one of those.

Richard Martin: But you know, every time you eliminate a GS13 or 14, there's a hundred thousand bucks. Maybe 140 when you count benefits. That you can do some real work with. So, there's a significant change today.

Richard Martin: And I don't want to, I don't want to probably elaborate too much more on that point. Because I could get, say something that would upset some folks. (laughs) But I think the size of park headquarters office staffs are the thing that bother me the most. From the standpoint of getting real work done and real, getting value from park service mission value, for the dollar. Big change.

Richard Martin: I do think, though, when you look at everything that the park service is doing, whether it's ranger work or maintenance, or resource management, concessions management, the quality of

work is dramatically better than it was 50 years ago. It's a lot of fun, you know, to make things up as you go along. But that's what it is. (laughs) It's not learning from history or learning from training or learning from a thought process. It's reacting to the moment and hoping you do the right thing. So, you know, I do think that, and from that standpoint, I'm pretty sure I'm right.

Richard Martin: Going back to Olympic and Mount Rainier after 50 years, the places look great. They just look phenomenal. The places I worked in 50 years ago – if I'd have thought I'll come back in 50 years, this place is going to look as good or better than when I left, I'd have said, "Not a chance! Can't happen." But it's true.

Richard Martin: So, from the standpoint of product, you can't complain about the park service. You probably can complain about certain specific things. But from the standpoint generally of the product the park service is producing today from 50 years ago, it's dramatically better.

Alison Steiner: Well that might be a good positive note to end on, unless there's anything else you want to add.

Richard Martin: You know, I could ramble on for hours about specific things, but that's probably pretty good, Alison. Unless there's anything else specific that—

Alison Steiner: I think we've covered everything that I had thought of. So, I appreciate you taking the time to come finish the interview.

Richard Martin: My pleasure. Thank you for your patience and listening to all this. I know that takes a certain amount of perseverance. So, thank you. I've enjoyed it. I've enjoyed remembering some of these. So, thank you very much.

[END OF TRACK 1]

[END OF INTERVIEW]