



National Park Service Paleontology Program

Oral History Interview – Vincent Santucci

Natural Resource Report NPS/PALEONTOLOGY PROGRAM/OHI—2020/012



ON THE COVER
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Vincent L. Santucci¹

¹National Park Service
Geologic Resources Division
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The National Park Service, Paleontology Program publishes a range of reports, plans, oral histories and other documents that address a range of paleontological resource topics. These reports are of interest and applicability to a broad audience in the National Park Service and others in natural resource management, including scientists, conservation and environmental constituencies, and the public.

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Background

This interview, Part Two, was conducted over the telephone on Wednesday, December 2, 2020 between Erin Eichenberg (EE), National Park Service in Boulder City, Nevada, and Vince Santucci (VS), who was at his home in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. At the time of the interview, Vince was the National Park Service Senior Paleontologist and Paleontology Program Coordinator. Jon Burpee (JB), with the National Park Service and Jill DeStefano (JS), President of Protectors of Tule Spring also participated in the phone interview. The interview was recorded on a digital audio recorder and a mp3 file was created. A written transcription of the interview was produced from the digital audio recording by NPS volunteer R. Sky McClain and this document contains the discussion during the interview. Vince Santucci signed a release form for the National Park Service for the preservation and use of the interview in the future. If present, PII has been omitted.

Transcript

57:42 Total

[START OF INTERVIEW]

EE: In November [2020] we spoke to you about Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument, In Part Two of this interview we will talk about your work after your detail. Today is Wednesday, December 2, 2020 and my name is Erin Eichenberg and I'm the Integrative Resources Program Manager for the National Park Service at Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument. Today we are continuing our interview with Vincent Santucci, who served as the first Superintendent at Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument. The interview is being conducted by telephone from Vincent's home in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He is currently the Senior Paleontologist for the National Park Service Paleontology Program. We are joined today on the phone by Jon Burpee, a former Superintendent at Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument and Jill DeStefano, the President and one of the founders of Protectors of Tule Springs. So, welcome Vincent.

VS: Thank you very much.

EE: So, let's begin this interview. After your Superintendency Detail work ended at the Monument you continued to provide technical assistance to Tule Springs Fossil Beds Park staff Paleontology Parks program. What projects have you provided assistance with and how has this enabled the park's small staff to develop their paleontology program?

VS: So I am just going to give an overview statement and then try to address that more specifically. I have to say the Detail assignment at Tule Springs was really one of the most rewarding things that I have done in the National Park Service. In part due to the people I had the opportunity to work with and meet through this entire experience. The positive energy that was conveyed around every corner with everybody we interacted with during that 120 day period. Knowing that things were going to be in good hands with Jon Burpee, the incoming Superintendent and with Jill and others that were involved I really felt good that the Monument was going to proceed to be a wonderful success story. A great opportunity for the public to learn about those resources. Obviously, once I had the Tule Springs sediment in my blood things carried back with me. Although I was happy to get back with my family that I had been away from for four months, I had so many motivations to continue to try to hang on, as best I could, with Tule Springs. But, at the same time not impeded in any way on Jon and his vision that he had so positively articulated during the interview and some subsequent conversations. I wanted to be a help and I wanted to be involved in some way. I am so thankful that Jon kept me involved with a number of projects.

VS: One of the things that was great fun and very important was that Jon and Erin and Kathleen Springer and Jeff Pigati. We all had the opportunity to go down to Tucson, Arizona to the University of Arizona and do an oral history interview, that was recorded both on audio and videotape I believe, of geologist Vance Haynes, who was the coordinating geologist for the Tule Springs Expedition in the early 1960's. We were able to meet with Vance on May 10, 2016 and really had an outstanding

interview with him. Dr. Haynes has a very good recollection of the work he was involved with at Tule Springs. He was able to articulate all of the who, what, where, when, and why aspects of things that really helped us capture important history related to the work that he was so intimately involved with. That was one of the things I was happy we were able to accomplish after my tenure at Tule Springs. A next project that I had a small part in was the Foundation Document. The National Park Service over the past five or six years or longer looked at trying to develop a new approach to planning. General Management Plans (GMP) being a very expensive undertaking. Although Tule Springs was legislatively authorized to begin that General Management Planning process, the Foundation documents were a way to come up with an alternative more cost effective and efficient basic document that could serve that role as a mini GMP to highlight the significance of the park, and the resource, and the fundamental values in a concise way. During the time I was at Tule Springs, during the detail, we began to discuss with the Region being able to move that forward. Never had any confirmation but I think then Jon was able to step in and was able to move forward in development of that. Is that correct Jon?

JB: Yes, absolutely. The folks out of the Regional Office were real eager to do it. They were motivated by the fact that they were attempting to get them all done by a certain amount of time in all the new – the new parks that came in under that piece of legislation, bit of addition to them so they were very ready to jump on it.

VS: And I think that the document turned out very well. Jill, you had a role in that Foundation Document and the planning for that as well. Is that correct?

JD: Yes, I was at the charrette [planning meeting] as a member of the Advisory Council. I was there for two of the three full days.

VS: Because that was new to you and you were outside of the National Park Service did you have any general impression about that whole process and the resulting document?

JD: Oh, I thought it was exciting obviously seeing things come to fruition and extremely organized. I was fascinated at the way it's done. Obviously it all takes more time than I would have liked. Especially getting it actually in print and out to all of us. But, other than that I thought it was just a fascinating exercise.

VS: Very good.

JB: If I might add, it really was a challenge that we faced. You know, the legislation calling out for a GMP and our changing planning scheme that the National Park Service was using. It was definitely great to get it going. I think it was a bit of a challenge because some of the folks, Jill was great, but some of the folks in the room were just a little surprised by the cost of the General Management Plan. And also, by my memory, we had some challenges because their side of it was whether or not recreational values were real important. We had one member of the Lake Mead staff who comes from Lake Mead National Recreation Area who really wanted us to highlight recreation and I think many people in the room really wanted to highlight more of the scientific values and somewhat downplay the recreation. So, it was an interesting process to go through. The facilitator did a really

good job of making sure that both sides were heard but that the majority carried a little more weight on that.

JD: The wordsmithing was fascinating. That was a real challenge. Getting all the words right with scientists and laymen in the same room. That was a challenge.

9:50

VS: So, in the notes here Erin, you have the TUSK P3 Workshop. So, the phrase P3, is that the General Management Plan process?

EE: That was the preliminary workshop prior to developing a GMP, a General Management Plan. The P3 workshop was to see if we were ready for a General Management Plan or not.

VS: Would it be like a scoping meeting for a General Management Plan. Would you characterize it as that?

EE: Yeah. And I believe you called in for that. You were serving as a subject matter expert for the paleontology.

VS: I didn't recognize the P3 workshop. But I assumed it was for that General Management Planning effort.

EE: Yep.

VS: So, is there anything specific you think worth adding to that discussion?

EE: I think your involvement and calling in for that workshop when we met at the Regional Office to assess whether we were ready for the General Management Plan or not. I think it was really helpful because you were able to point out some of the low hanging fruit – different projects we could do, information to gather regarding the paleontology prior to us having a General Management Plan versus waiting for the plan and certain projects we had to wait for the plan until we could actually do them. So, I think it was helpful and from the P3 workshop you had suggested us creating a paleontology sensitivity map. Your office had assisted us with developing that and it's still in progress. I think that from the P3 workshop what I wanted to emphasize was it opened up the door for you to provide other technical assistance and other ways for paleontology and interpretation.

VS: Very good. That's helpful because Erin you were involved in the full workshop. So, you understood how it fit together. I was on the phone participating from a motel room for about an hour or so. So, I wasn't sure whether or not information I provided was of value and how it was incorporated. Other than, I think you touched upon precisely it led to a couple of technical assistance requests to move forward that may have been generated from the discussion.

EE: Yeah, definitely. And then it also helped us better understand that we don't really know a lot of information about the paleontology in the North Unit. And so through the General Management Plan, through that workshop to determine if we were ready for the GMP, we had finally determined that

the North Unit with a lack of paleontology surveys up in that area – those were some of the things we needed to work on in the future. Some of the things that were discussed regarding the paleontology also led to us putting in for funding for a paleontology survey which we will be receiving this next year. I think the overall discussion prompted some more ideas of how we can start doing things now versus waiting for the General Management Plan.

VS: OK great. Just for the record. Do you know what the status is of the General Management Planning process?

EE: I believe next year we will receive the funding.

VS: 2021?

EE: Yeah

13:50

VS: One of the fun projects that I think was initiated when Erin and myself were working together at Tule Springs has to do with the administrative history. Although everybody was quite excited about the paleontology of Tule Springs. It's of course the focus of the legislation creating the Monument. There's an extremely rich history we've talked about a little bit in the previous interview. But what really worked out nicely was that Erin is just so organized that when we were working together prior to her being in her current position she was working as the curator for Lake Mead National Recreation Area. She was assigned for us to work together and kept a really detailed administrative records of everything that we did. Creating files and folders and archives that would be available in the future. We were able to do that so early on I think we developed an organizational scheme where records that may otherwise be easily lost have been preserved from the early months of the Monument. I think through that process of trying to save every important piece of history and the conversations that were critical conversations leading to some decision making we came to the conclusion that the history of the Monument is something that needs to be preserved. It needs to be researched and it needs to be shared through interpretation and education because of the extraordinary stories that are preserved there. We started that back during the detail but it carried on more recently in an effort with Jill DeStefano and Erin and some of the interns in terms of going through systematically and developing phases or periods of the history of Tule Springs and trying to locate those critical documents that are tied to those portions of the history of Tule Springs Fossil Beds. Anything to add to that Jill?

JD: No, there's a lot more work that I have to do. But, I think it has been exciting to do some more research and pull out every bit of information there was. It's amazing how much information has been relocated which is great.

VS: And the other thing that we are indebted to Jill is she went to Helen Mortenson who is a keeper of lots of important documents and archives related particularly to the pre-Monument history. Jill spent a lot of time with Erin getting those documents on loan. Getting them scanned. And getting them into the archives.

JD: There's probably lots more hiding there but until the Covid-19 virus is over she won't let anybody in the house.

VS: Understandable. Erin, anything to add from your perspective on that?

EE: I agree. There is on-going work to do and as we continue to work on it we are finding more and more stuff. It's interesting. There is a lot of historic site and historical information at other repositories and museums in other states and other cities. So, I think it's a huge undertaking to try to gather all that information and put digital copies of it all together in one place. That way it will help park researchers and park staff in the future to better understand the park resources.

VS: And Jon, from your time at Tule Springs and from your perspective, given the fact that you are a historian, what was your impression regarding the history of Tule Springs?

JB: Well, let me say first of all that it was so nice stepping into a park that had a really well thought out filing system. That included right down to computer files that could easily be recovered in the future. That was masterfully done Erin. On the history that for me was one of the more intriguing aspects of it. I think the Oral History we had just lost—I can't remember her name—we had just lost. She had worked for the Nevada State Museum. From the original expedition.

EE: Margaret L. Susia.

JB: Yeah. And that was such a lost opportunity there. Capturing as much as we could from that period was really valuable. And the fact of Vince organizing the trip down to meet with Dr. Haynes. Oh my gosh, that was a real treat. And that is when it actually opened up my mind about what potential exhibits could include. This was more than a paleontology story which was enough paleontology story. But, it was such a story of the excitement of new discovery. New abilities to date fossils and materials that when we were talking to Dr. Haynes that really struck me. That is something immediately graspable by a large portion of folks. That would be a great way to actually get folks thinking about paleontology is hitting them with the human side of it. It was so fun because so much of that expedition really was the question of human impact upon the landscape. Whether or not there actually was evidence of humans hunting these Ice Age animals. Of course, in many ways, that was the most disappointing thing for a lot of people who were involved in that. But, boy the human drama, the human story of discovery is amazing. Whether or not there was evidence of people hunting these animals with such amazing stories of these expeditions. I was really thankful for that. The other thing that really struck me on it was the fact when the brand new National Park Service site had the opportunity to document that history in a better way than many parks have for their administrative history. Just thrilled we can do these interviews and taking a look at these larger repositories out there of historical information as well as the known specimens that we have out there that are from the paleontological record.

21:47

VS: Absolutely and two things that really stand out to me regarding communication that we had with Vance Haynes. That we continue to have and is productive is one—that he had indicated to us. It was

the first time that I had heard this information was on May 10, 2016 during our interview that the name Big Dig was according to Vance Haynes was not a name that was used at the time. It sounds as though that name kind of caught on later as the media hyped that incident when they were planning reunions for it. Do you recall that as well, Erin?

EE: Yeah. I remember hearing that and to date we still haven't been able to find out the exact date when Big Dig was coined. I'm pretty sure it was one of the newspapers that had done that.

VS: And the second thing was the discovery that Vance Haynes had some left over carbon material that was originally collected during the Tule Springs Expedition, part of which Willard Libby had run some samples on. And so it was interesting that Vance was asking us, even though he had it in his possession, if it was ok for him to go ahead and run modern analysis on it. To see if the analysis that was done many years ago was far off from what they were getting with more accurate dating today. Erin, to this date, did you ever receive the remaining portion of that charcoal sample from Tule Springs from Vance Haynes?

EE: No, we don't have the actual charcoal. We did receive two samples but I don't know if it is the same thing you are referring to. There was one that was charcoal covered in tufa and then there is another carbon sample that we received.

VS: And you received those from Vance?

EE: Yeah.

VS: So, it might be good to get clarification in terms of where those charcoal specimens were obtained from. He probably has field notes related to the date they were collected and where they're from exactly.

EE: I know he has provided us with a diagram of where they were collected from and he had some of that information provided. But, I don't believe we have the field notes.

VS: OK. Probably something worth following up with him.

JD: I can check with Mary Manning who was a reporter for the Las Vegas Sun during the time of the reunion of the scientists. It's possible – you know she is still very involved in following all this. It's possible she would know when that [phrase] was originally used. So, I will make a note and check with her.

VS: Thanks.

25:29

VS: Willard Libby was obviously someone of interest to us and important significance to the history of Tule Springs. Vance Haynes knew him personally and communicated with him in regards to the sampling that was done during the Expedition. So, in our research in digging into the history of Willard Libby it led us to one of Libby's daughters, who lives in San Diego. She's been a source of

some information to us about her father. Erin, are you able to share with us just briefly some of your direct communication since you've had a chance to sit down and visit with Janet Libby?

EE: Yeah, sure. So, Janet doesn't remember anything about her dad being at Tule Springs. She was a young child at the time. She does remember him saying he was going on an Expedition. But, I guess she doesn't remember the details. She did however provide us with some newspaper clippings and photographs of Willard Libby's work and some photographs of Willard Libby and his family. So we were able to scan those and I think that will be helpful to interpreting how Willard Libby was related to Tule Springs. And to the extent of what work he did at Tule Springs and possibly other Park Service units.

VS: Great. Did you happen to show her or give her a copy of the photograph of her dad at Tule Springs?

EE: Yeah, I did.

VS: Did she have a comment about that?

EE: No. Like she said she didn't know anything about the Tule Springs area or hadn't heard the name until you had gotten in touch with her initially.

27:30

VS: Great. I think the other important thing that we were very fortunate in terms of the timing of how events took place was the fact that we were able to get over and begin to get some of the collections and archives back from the San Bernardino County Museum prior to both of their paleontologists Eric Scott and Kathleen Springer actually leaving that institution. They both had been there more than 20 years. They were very much involved in collecting from Tule Springs Fossil Beds and the bulk of the collections were there at the San Bernardino County Museum. I think Erin, that you and myself had the opportunity to overlap with them during somewhat of a tumultuous time at their Museum where things were changing and transitioning. We were somehow able to capture a lot of that and bring it back and preserve it. Not only the fossil specimens but the history that went along with the collecting and the involvement of the San Bernardino County Museum. Do you agree with that?

EE: Yeah. And both Eric Scott and Kathleen Springer have been continuing to provide more information as we run across things that we are lacking data in and we are able to contact them. They still have very good memories of the site and the work that they did. And a lot of time they're able to provide us with that missing information.

29:16

VS: Great. Thank you. So, you had mentioned when we were talking about the P3 workshop. The discussion about being able to develop a Paleontological Resource Sensitivity map. So, just a little bit of background about that. The Paleo Sensitivity map or the BLM refers to them as Potential Fossil Yield Classification maps are maps that are derived from geologic maps. And essentially what it does

is it looks at the geologic units. What are their formations or members or beds and based on previous collecting of fossils from those units they identify those units through color coding. They code them based on whether or not they have a high, moderate, low, or no potential to have fossils. And because there has been extensive collecting from Tule Springs Fossil Beds for many, many years. Being able to utilize a geologic map to create a Paleontology Potential map or a Potential Fossil Yield Classification map is very easily accomplished and effective. One of the things that we had discussed during the P3 workshop and then subsequently with Erin submitting a Technical Assistance Request to the National Park Service Geologic Resource Division for assistance in developing a potential Paleontology Potential map for Tule Spring. So, that work is underway. Not yet completed. We have a basic map that we're having it peer reviewed so we can provide the highest level of accuracy and the use of that map as it applies to both the management of the resource as well as use in the General Management Planning process. Anything to add to that Erin?

EE: I just wanted to add if you're going to compare the Nevada Potential Fossil Yield Classification map with the one you are creating for Tule Springs, yours will be more detailed when zoomed in versus the Nevada one. I think it will be really helpful for park staff to have that more detailed map for us to better understand where there may or may not be fossils.

JD: I would like to weigh in since Jon may not know this but that map will be critical as NV Energy has asked for the line – is applying for the line across the corridor on Moccasin [Street]. So part of that mapping will be very important as we will want to make sure, if it gets that far, that they have to do detailed mitigation of the areas they're crossing. So, that map is going to be critical in the next few years.

VS: Very good.

JB: Absolutely.

VS: We hope to probably have that map finalized to deliver in February, late February early March of 2021. Other small projects – Erin had helped coordinate putting together some educational lesson plans for Tule Springs. And we provided a little bit of help to get those to be 508 compliant. That's an important thing for federal agencies to do, particularly if we want to post materials and information on the web so that it allows greater access to a whole range of individuals with different capacities. Anything else about that Erin?

EE: We currently have a request in to have that added to our website and I think during the Covid-19 pandemic that we're going through right now we've seen a huge increase in home school people and the general public that have kids at home trying to learn virtually right now. I think those lesson plans are really important to be able to get easy access to people. Otherwise they have to e-mail us to request them. So, I think that is really important during this time frame to keep people busy at home. And then also more opportunities to help educate the public about paleontology.

VS: There are four lesson plans that are age or grade specific, is that correct?

EE: Yeah.

JB: Are those the ones that were created as part of the Mammoth Penny Push or are those new activities?

EE: They're the same ones and eventually we'll be working towards updating them.

JB: Very cool.

VS: Jon, were you involved in that and is there anything to add in regards to those lesson plans?

JB: Just the extraordinary efforts that were undertaken at that time. Primarily by our POTS friends, Jill and Sheri in particular. That whole Mammoth Penny Push period is just a classic example of the great things that are done at Tule Springs with a lot of effort. Things that many people never thought could be pulled off. Those K through 12 curriculum pieces – the activities are not full curriculum but they really were something that people, particularly at Lake Mead, were just amazed it was pulled off in that period of time. Huge admiration for what POTS was able to do.

VS: Was there collaboration with the staff at Waco Mammoth National Monument?

JB: Yes, we utilized a lot of activities and also graphics from them. That was one of the biggest challenges, having copyright free graphics we could use on early materials. Raegan King [Program Coordinator] at Waco Mammoth in particular was great to work with.

VS: Very good. And Jill your perspective?

JB: Well, yes. When it comes to Mammoth Penny Push I was – how are we paying for this and are we going to pull this off? In the fifth largest school district in the country. And thanks to Sherri Grotheer in particular, it was well planned. It was well executed. Jon as the Superintendent with his visions and making sure that everything was ok with Lake Mead to proceed with this. It was an amazing situation and I think the final tally for the two years that we did this with the Clark County School District where every child had the opportunity to see the video on Tule Springs. The final tally was about \$55,000 earned which went for clean-up and education in the Monument. It is now final monies of the Mammoth Penny Push are paying for this fiscal year's geo-science in the park position at TUSK. It's been an amazing, amazing program.

JB: I will say there was some significant concern is I guess the phrase I would use at Lake Mead in particular about whether or not something like this could be done under our laws, rules and regulations. And the great support that I got out of our Regional Office with Ray Murray, our Partnership Coordinator, really helped win the day. Because I was up against some really strong opposition – perhaps this isn't what we should be doing as a National Park Service site. Then I love that everybody that was worried about it thought it was the greatest thing that had ever happened and couldn't believe it was pulled off. Were very supportive after it happened (Laughter). Boy, we really had to come up with some ways to make people feel more comfortable about what we were trying. I have to admit I never thought we could pull it off. (Laughter) I was so thrilled that it was pulled off so well. Thank God for POTS. Oh, I can't think of Kori's last name from the School District. Jill can provide that.

JD: Klobberdanz.

JB: Just extraordinary. And the actual process of all those school secretaries getting those pennies in and having to count them and take them to the bank. My wife was teaching at a Las Vegas Elementary School and the secretaries kind of hated me there for a while. (Laughter) In a good way. People were very happy. My gosh.

JD: Yep.

40:25

VS: Very good. One project we are currently involved in and this can also serve as an update for you Erin. Erin you put in a Technical Assistance request so Jack Wood, one of our geologists, who does our photogrammetry, 3D imaging is scheduled to assist Tule Springs by traveling to Las Vegas whenever the pandemic [travel restrictions] allows that to occur. And to photograph a dozen or so specimens to get 3D images and models produced so that a virtual, on-line website museum displaying some of the really cool specimens from Tule Springs can be seen by the public. Given the limitations in staffing you have at Tule Springs and the lack of facilities for interpretation, etc., this is a way to reach a large audience. To really open up their eyes to some of the incredible fossils that have come from the Pleistocene at Tule Springs. Jack Wood was just hired permanently last week [by NPS]. So the first project we have on his work plan for 2021 is travel to Las Vegas and meet with Erin at the State Museum to try to photograph 10 or 12 of the specimens to develop into this website. Jim Wood, from the Geologic Resource Division, who develops all our websites has created a few of these already. He's created one virtual museum for Grand Canyon specimens and one for Chaco Culture National Historic Park. I think Erin saw those and contacted us and said, "How can we get one of these?" And that's all it took. So, that will happen for sure. We just need for this pandemic to go away.

JB: Can I just add in that that's extraordinary. That really thrills me. One of the things that I would love for the park to pursue, with your assistance, is some of those specimens that are really never probably coming back, that we know of. That amazing Bison latifrons that's up in Canada. Also, I think there's some specimens in New York. If we were actually able to add those in the long run as well. I think that type of scanning would be great for future exhibit development with 3D printing. Also, with the online presence that's great.

VS: Thanks.

JD: The latifrons is actually here. Dawn Reynoso from [Nevada] State Parks was able to get that back from Canada.

JB: Really. Oh, that's cool.

VS: And Erin is working—she may have already done it—a list of specimens she would like to have imaged. And I think that is one of the specimens we hopefully will want completed.

Erin: Yeah, that one's on the list.

JB: That is so cool. Oh my gosh. Thank you for sharing that. That always bugged me in my first entreaties with that museum, 'No, this is not something we do.' (Laughter) I think that is the phrase the curator actually used, 'This is something we don't do.' So, that's really great. Way to go, Dawn.

VS: And the way that Jack Woods operates – he is really gifted and skilled. So, not only will we create the 3D models that can visually viewed on line on the website. But, also if there are particular specimens you'd like to have printed. They can be printed either in life size with some limitations or they can be miniaturized so you can use them for interpretation. You know, be able to have a mammoth tusk or a jaw of one of the animals printed in a miniaturized size.

JD: That will be awesome.

EE: Another thing, the Region assisted us in purchasing a 3D printer and scanner so we will have that in house at Tule Springs.

VS: Outstanding. Wow. It's hard to keep track of all the good things you are doing, Erin.

JB: Yes, no doubt.

JD: Yes, life has been good the last five or six months.

VS: You know if you wait and not communicate with Erin for a week you'll probably get a list of all new things she's accomplished.

EE: I'm still trying to keep up with my Vince Projects. (Laughter by all) We have a lot of collaboration going on.

VS: Yes, it's good. It's fun. You know when I'm going through my 100,000 e-mails each day, when I see Erin's e-mail I go directly to those and open them. (Laughter)

46:07

VS: One last thing I wanted to include is the discussion of your new Superintendent Derek Carter. I was very appreciative the Superintendent of Lake Mead invited me to join the panel for selecting the new Superintendent. I have to say—I lost count—in several conversations with the team we kept asking ourselves what would it take to get Jon Burpee back here? We realize you're happy where you are but you certainly set the bar very, very high. And we are always indebted and admire you for what you've contributed. We knew that was going to be a difficult task. So we received a cert [list of candidates]. There were quite a few names. Quite a few people who were highly unqualified. But there were a couple of names that we looked at that had a skill set that was very interesting. And Derek really stood out. In fact the rating committee that went through it – most of us had Derek at the top of our list. Based upon the quality of his resume and of the references. The information provided by the references really instilled in us hope that he could bring a whole different set of skills that he had gained not only in his short term in the Park Service but his career in the military. And his leadership stood out in everything about him. And when we had the opportunity to talk with him it was love at first sound. We knew that we had somebody who was going to be able to step in and

provide the very needed help that had been missing for a couple of years. Since Jon Burpee left. That skill set, I think, has really paid off for us. I think all of us on the phone will agree that Derek Carter has been sent to us from heaven to save Tule Springs and he's been doing a tremendous job.

JB: Very much so.

EE: Definitely.

JD: Oh, absolutely. It has been a breath of fresh air. My only concern is finding him a spouse here who never wants to leave Las Vegas. So he can't go anywhere else.

(Laughter from everyone)

VS: Yes, that was one of the things that the selecting committee, that we were going to make recommendations to the Superintendent of Lake Mead for the Superintendent position, said was, "What we don't want to do is get somebody that is so qualified that they will be at Tule Springs for a short time. Cause they are going to be so marketable to get drawn off into other positions. It was an important question that we had to ask Derek during the interview. About what his long term goals and plans were. I think when we listened to the quality of his response and the content of how he expressed himself, we had such confidence that he's going to teach us a few things about how to manage this Monument. And he has.

JD: Yes, he has a vision for the first 30 days he was here. And coming in the June in the middle of this pandemic. There was never a doubt in my mind from the moment he got here that he was going to be amazing and supportive of Erin's efforts and finally that Protectors could really be the support role we needed to be. We should be instead of the leadership role.

VS: After we completed all of the interviews Margaret Goodro [Superintendent of Lake Mead NRA] got on the phone with all of the selection panel and she asked me the first question. She said, "Vince, what do you think? He doesn't have a strong paleontology background." I told her, "You know, I was really impressed that one of the responses that Derek gave was a very honest response. And said he has very little experience in paleontology and he is going to need help there. I directly said, "I'm not concerned about that in the least bit. We've got Kathleen Springer and we've got Eric Scott and we've got the Geologic Resource Division Paleo Program to answer those questions. What he does bring is a skill set and characteristics about who he is that are going to be hard to find elsewhere. So, the paleontology will be easy. The things he can help us with would be hard to obtain and we need to grab him."

JD: Yes, and he is willing to ask for help. When he doesn't know the answer he goes to the subject matter experts and finds out. That's what a leader does. You can't know everything. It's worked out very well, I think.

VS: So, bright future ahead. Again if you check back with Erin once a week you'll find that Derek and Erin and the interns are all doing remarkable things. Very proud of the work that is being done.

52:40

VS: Final thoughts from anybody? I think I'm talked out.

JB: Vince, I will say that all the way it was a challenging thing in that you brought a level of showmanship to your time there. But, one of the things that inspired me from the very get go. Actually inspired me there in the hall of Main Interior when I first met you was just the main concept at Tule Springs. They are great friends. They are great partners. And if you bring enthusiasm forward great things will happen. And you really inspired me in that. I just want to say thank you! Following your Acting [Superintendent] time there you set me up so well to be able to come in and make the best positive efforts when there was very little federal funding. There was a lot of questions in our future. You really provided us a road map. And I just really appreciate that. Appreciate the friendship you have shown me over that time. Thank you, man!

VS: Means a lot, Jon! Telling you I'm getting tears in my eyes just thinking about it. Thank you.

JD: Wait a minute. There's no crying in paleontology. (Laughter by all)

EE: I also want to thank you Vince for me coming into this position. And even before I started working at Tule Springs. Having an archaeology background I didn't really know very much about paleontology but my early work with you really did inspire me to want to learn more and to do more for Tule Springs. So I was ecstatic when I got the job at Tule Springs and was able to continue to work there and try to move things forward. You have been a great mentor, very inspiring! The harder you work the harder it makes me want to work. I see the amount of work you get done in other projects in other paleontology parks within the Park Service units and I think it is just amazing. It lets me know I can do so much more for Tule Springs also. So, thank you.

VS: Oh my goodness! That means a lot. Thank you very much.

EE: Jill, did you want to butter him up? (Lots of Laughter by all)

JD: Well, Jon's right! You came in – I had prepped everybody in Protectors that there would be a quiet time and that funding was tight. We probably wouldn't see much happen until the General Management Plan. And Vince came in like a bull in a china shop providing us with all sorts of excitement. Bringing the first logo on a pop-up display to the [Las Vegas] Science Festival that year. Things that we never thought would possibly happen in our first year. He did set the bar very high but Jon came in and right away put us all at ease. That while there may not be quite as many goodies coming our way as Vince provided we were in good hands. And we were. I appreciate you. I know how many paleontology parks you have but we have always felt like we were a priority. So now I'm crying. So there! I appreciate it.

VS: Thank you so much! I really appreciate it. Lot of good memories I think we've shared and a lot of good friendship. One of the things I can say with full conviction is that the four of us are on this phone today not because we are doing our job. It's because we care so much about what we do. We care about Tule Springs and its future and preserving its past. And so, on behalf of myself and our paleontology team it's been a real privilege, honor, and positive experience being able to work with all of you.

EE: Well, thanks so much. Thank you for talking to us about your amazing accomplishments at Tule Springs and your on-going work with the National Park Service Paleontology Program. We really appreciate it. Thanks!

VS: Thank you! I'm going to go ahead and shut off the recorder.

[END OF INTERVIEW]



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1201 Oakridge Drive, Suite 150
Fort Collins, CO 80525

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