NPS Oral History Collection (HFCA 1817)
Association of National Park Rangers Oral History Project, 2012-2016

Bill Wade
October 22, 2014

Interview conducted by Brenna Lissoway
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

Bill Wade

22 October 2014

Interview conducted by
Brenna Lissoway

Transcribed by
Teresa Bergen

The narrator has reviewed and corrected this transcript.

Audiofile: WADE Bill 22 Oct 2014

[START OF TRACK 1]

Brenna Lissoway: Okay, so this is Brenna Lissoway interviewing Bill Wade. Today is October the—

Bill Wade: Twenty-second.

Brenna Lissoway: Twenty-second, 2014. And this is a continuation of the interview that we began in 2012 during Ranger Rendezvous. This time we're interview at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado. So, Bill, I was just saying, the last time that we spoke, we sort of left off on your story in mid-career. So, what I'd like to do today is just start talking about your time at Great Smokies and some of the experiences and challenges that you had at that park, that assignment.

Bill Wade: Okay. All right. Good. Well, I got to Great Smokies by virtue of Boyd Evison, who was superintendent at Albright Training Center for a while, while I worked there. And while I was in New Zealand, he transferred as the superintendent at Great Smoky Mountains. So as we were coming back to the country by way of Europe toward the end of the summer of 1977, we were actually in Switzerland and there was a Western Union telegram from him saying that the job of the assistant chief ranger in the Smokies was open. And that if I was interested, it was mine. But he said don't make a decision now. When you get back into the states, why, give me a call and we'll talk about it.

Bill Wade: And so, it was about three weeks later, I think, when we got back in the states. And I was staying with some friends in Washington, DC. And we'd been picked up at the airport, taken back to the friends' house. And within 15 minutes, Ann Baugh from Albright Training Center, who was kind of watching out for where we were in Europe and all that kind of stuff, called and said you're about to get a phone call from the superintendent at Mount Rainier National Park and he's going to offer you a job as the chief of operations there.

Bill Wade: So sure enough, we hung up and he called and offered me the job. And I said well, can I think about it over the weekend?

Bill Wade: And he said sure.

Bill Wade: So, in the meantime then I called Boyd. So, we called about both places. The job at Rainier would have been a promotion. The job at Smokies was a lateral. But I'd already worked at Mount Rainier. And we already knew that place and all that sort of thing. And so, called Boyd and decided to take the job down at Smokies.

Bill Wade: And it was one of the best decisions I ever made, I think, because I got down there. And even though I worked for the chief ranger, who was a very traditional chief ranger. He'd spent a lot of time in Lake Mead and you know, he was not very resource oriented, I would say. He was more

people protection oriented. And Boyd, of course, was very much into resource protection and so forth. So, they weren't exactly compatible in terms of their management objectives and that sort of thing. And I think that's why Boyd asked me to come there, because he knew I was very interested in the resources.

Bill Wade: So anyway, I got there. I'd got along with the chief ranger fine. But it was just a real joy to work not directly for Boyd, but work for him. You know, he turned out to be, as much as anybody, kind of a mentor of mine just in terms of what I learned from him and his values and his management philosophy and those sorts of things, which served me really, really well as I went on forward in my career.

Brenna Lissoway: Are there some specific things that you really felt that he passed on to you?

Bill Wade: Well, yeah. I mean, among the things was, even though Smokies, and it's never been legislated wilderness. They've had proposed wilderness on the books for almost as long as the park has existed. And because of the, primarily because of the political delegation out of North Carolina, which changes all the time, but nonetheless, they just aren't very prone to that sort of thing. So, they never allowed the wilderness legislation to actually go through. But Boyd's idea was to manage it as if it was wilderness. It's proposed wilderness and so forth. So, he began to close down a lot of the use. Some of it administrative, and our own maintenance employees' use of roads that had gone into the back-country years before. By some of the people who originally occupied the park. So, he was bound and determined to cut that back, and particularly start to cut back the maintenance use of it and trail crews and that sort of thing. So, I learned a lot about that.

Bill Wade: There were some issues with, again, like I learned at Shenandoah when I went there, the descendants of some of the people who had lived on that land before it was designated a park and then subsequently moved off, and all of the bitter feelings that, you know, that continued after that for years and years and years. In fact, still hasn't gone away in some of those places.

Bill Wade: And Boyd had a really good way of dealing with that sort of thing. And so just going to public meetings with him and observing and watching and learning how he did it was a great benefit to me, particularly when I went on to Shenandoah, because I faced some of the same problems with some of the same kinds of people whose grandfathers had been moved off the land and that sort of thing, you know.

Bill Wade: So, it was a great place to work. And I spent three and a half years there, I think it was. All as the assistant chief ranger.

Brenna Lissoway: Any particular accomplishments that you were proud of at that park?

Bill Wade: I think the things that I probably remember most about what I was able to do there was in sort of hiring and influencing some of the people who came in in the ranger division. And when I say that, there was a tendency back in those days to sort of be, I guess what I would call a little bit, to have a little bit too much emphasis on the law enforcement kinds of things. And particularly what we would call front country law enforcement, and not so much back country. And my values were, I think, coincided with Boyd's in terms of we're a resource management agency and we need to spend a lot more time dealing with that sort of issue and you know, protect the resources as much as just patrolling the roads and looking for speeders. So, I focused a lot on trying to influence the people that worked in there in the various districts and tried to get them to think about that balance and so forth.

Brenna Lissoway: How did you do that, to try to change the culture?

Bill Wade: Well, it's just a matter of having long discussions with them. And all of that sort of thing is values-based, in my judgment. So, you really have to work on people's values for what's important in the park. And in the parks. And it's sometimes a slow process. Especially if they've come into it expecting that this is what they're going to be doing, and then they find out that they need to shift their emphasis and their behaviors a little bit to focus more on maybe the back country. Or get out of the patrol cars and wander a little bit more.

Bill Wade: So that was kind of fun. We had a pretty good staff there. There were some differences between the North Carolina side and the Tennessee side, from the standpoint of the culture. I mean, not a great difference. It didn't influence much about how we manage the park.

Brenna Lissoway: You mean in terms of the surrounding communities?

Bill Wade: Yeah, yeah, the surrounding community. On the North Carolina side, of course, where the Newfound Gap Road goes out on the North Carolina side, you're in Cherokee, which is heavily influenced by the Native American culture. And caged bears and you know that sort of thing. Which wasn't so prevalent at the time I was there, anyway, on the Tennessee side. So, there were some differences like that.

Bill Wade: And Smokies is just a tremendous back country park with the Appalachian Trail running right through the middle of it. You have the higher elevations with the Balds, B-a-l-d-s, which are basically, were grazed off and burned off historically. And now they've come back in with rhododendron and that sort of thing. And in the fall, there's just some beautiful colors up there.

Bill Wade: We had some very significant, serious, search and rescue incidents there. Primarily plane crashes. The one that I remember most was an airplane that was flying, if I remember right, out of Atlanta, headed up into the upper Midwest somewhere. And typically, they would fly right over

Knoxville and then they would cross over and then head on up into the upper Midwest.

Bill Wade: And so, we got a call one evening that this particular airplane had been lost from their radar and everything. And they figured it was down in the park somewhere. So, we started a search and there wasn't any ELT, emergency locator transmitter signal or anything like that. We had information that there was a mother and father and three children on board.

Bill Wade: So anyway, we searched into the evening. Didn't find anything. We called out more resources from the state and from the army at Fort Campbell. And they sent some helicopters over. And even during the night, we sent one of the helicopters up that had one of those great big searchlights on it. And flew around for a while, didn't find anything.

Bill Wade: So, we got started very early the next morning. And the Fort Campbell helicopter took off with two of our rangers, the two, the pilot, copilot and two crew members from the army, and went up. And the state helicopter was going up right behind them. And the army helicopter suddenly developed a mechanical problem with the tail rotor. And turned upside down and augured in upside down into the side of the mountain. And the state helicopter saw this and reported it. So we were, of course, very concerned about that, particularly because we had two rangers on board.

Bill Wade: And pretty soon we got a call back from one of the rangers on his radio that he and the other ranger were okay. They were injured. One of them fairly severely. And that as far as they could tell, the pilot and copilot were probably dead. One of the other crew members probably was dead. And so, we immediately turned—

Bill Wade: Oh, and in the meantime, the state helicopter had located the other air crash. And so, I instructed him to fly as close as they could and see if they saw any signs of life. And they called back, and they said no, we don't see any signs. It looks to us like it's an unsurvivable crash, was what they pointed out.

Bill Wade: So, knowing that we had survivors on the other one, we immediately turned our attentions to that and got those people evacuated. And then sent in a ground crew. And sure enough, all five of the occupants in the original airplane didn't survive that crash. But that went on for about a day and a half, and it was pretty tense. You know, when you start off with one airplane crash and then you have another rescue resource that crashes, also. So that was probably one of the more testy search and rescue things that I've ever been on. But you know, I think we did a pretty good job of it, all things considered.

Brenna Lissoway: You know, thinking back on our last conversations, and also just looking at your resume, it seems that you've had a good deal of emphasis during your career on search and rescue. Whether teaching or being involved in

on the ground activities. Can you talk a little bit about – well first, about your involvement with the national search and rescue organization. And how you decided to get involved with them.

Bill Wade: Well, I first got involved with it, of course, at Mount Rainier. I mean, that just was the ranger's job up there. And I was on a number of the high-altitude rescues there, as well as lower ones. I didn't do much of it in Yosemite because I was not in the valley. And usually it was the valley that had the big high wall rescues and everything. We had some carry-outs in the district that I was in.

Bill Wade: And then I think when we were talking about Albright, I probably mentioned that my job, I was given the task of doing a training course in search and rescue. And I chose to focus on the lost person rather than technical rescue. And so, what I, and I'd gotten to know a number of people in California and Washington when I was at Rainier and in Yosemite that had been involved in, mostly the volunteer SAR units. But they were very, starting to get very advanced in terms of using search dogs on lost people incidents and some other changes in philosophy having to do with actually using mathematical probabilities of detection and probabilities of area to help define where to look, what resources to use, how effective those resources were in those areas. And so those were the people I brought together to actually put on that course.

Bill Wade: And it was right about that same time that this National Association for Search and Rescue got off the ground. And so, I was actually on the board of directors for that organization for a number of years and sort of handled their training program as well. And that was made up of all kinds of people from all over the country. Some international involvement, even. But both technical rescue and remote area search was very much what they were focused on.

Bill Wade: And the park service had a very large role in that for a long time. I was involved in it. The second president of the national association, the second, third and fourth presidents of the National Search and Rescue Association all came from the park service. I was a vice president for a number of years, never president. Didn't want to be. I wanted to do more of the work stuff. And so, it was a very effective organization. And not only for networking but learning and that sort of thing. And during all that period of time, particularly the search management stuff continued to evolve. Still evolves today. In fact, at this Rendezvous today, there's a workshop that Paul Anderson is giving on the advancements in the planning function on search incidents. Having to do with this probability stuff and strategic planning and those sorts of things. So, it continues to advance from the early '70s when I first started working with it, and NASAR really got underway and so forth. And that's gratifying to see that it doesn't stop.

Bill Wade: NASAR, as an organization, has kind of taken a dive lately. And it's not as active and it's not as viable. But that's not unseal for organizations. You know, they kind of come and go and they run in cycles and so forth. So, it may go back up at some point. But it's still there and it's still, I think, serving a function.

Bill Wade: But there's a great probably 20 years in there where there were really some significant advancements in a number of aspects of search and rescue.

Brenna Lissoway: What, to your mind, were the big advances?

Bill Wade: Well, I'm not so much familiar with what took place in technical rescue. But you know, the use of air-scenting search dogs as opposed to what they call tracking dogs, which are the old classic bloodhounds that have to follow the actual trail of the subject. You give them a scent article and then they actually follow the trail. And the air scent dog works very much differently. It picks up scent through the air of some human. Not necessarily the one you're looking for. And then it goes to that source of that scent. And so, as a result, it can cover a whole lot more area. And the handlers for some of the air-scenting dogs, which originally were almost exclusively German shepherds, because they had very effective sensory capabilities and they were also rugged, and they could get into the back country and so forth easily. But I've seen, you know, poodles that have been trained as air scenting dogs. So, it's gone all through the whole series of different breeds and everything else. Probably some not as effective as others. So, I think air-scenting search dogs, the advent of that, was one of the real significant breakthroughs.

Bill Wade: Another one was the whole concept of what we call clue detection, which means, originally when somebody would get lost, the idea was to get as many people together as you could. Send them out in the woods, you know, arm's distance apart. Run through the woods yelling the name of the person. Well, along the way, some of the people that I'd gotten to know realized that when you do that, first of all, it's not very economical, because you have a lot of people. It's costing a lot of money. You have no idea whether you're really being effective or not. And you're destroying potential clues. Like footprints. Like things that the subject might had dropped. All of which help confine the area you're looking at. If you find a footprint that you can attribute to the subject, you've just eliminated a whole lot of area that you no longer have to search. Because now you have, you know, perhaps a direction of travel and things like that. So, clue detection was another.

Bill Wade: And then the whole advent of the mathematical probabilities, I think, is probably the greatest thing. Because now they can go in there with these equations and it's all computerized. And put in some data. And it will give you the highest probability search areas. Then you, when the resources come out after an operational period, they report what they think their

probability of detection is. Which means if the subject were out there, or a clue, what do you think the probabilities are that they would have seen it. And it's a subjective guess. But when you put all that together, and it all accumulates and rolls up, it's just a tremendous help to a person running a search.

Bill Wade: And I think as a result, I mean, there's no way to know for sure, but I'm absolutely confident that all of those things that have advanced over the last 30 years have saved hundreds of lives. Because what's happening is lost people are being found much quicker. And you know, we know that if a person is out there very long, particularly if there's inclement weather, the chances of survivability sometimes goes down pretty quickly. So, finding them soon, and all of these resources, the computerization, clue detection, use of other kinds of resources more effectively, rather than just lining a whole bunch of people up and running them through the woods. And it's also a whole lot more economical.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah.

Bill Wade: Because you're not spending an awful lot of time searching, number one, in places where maybe there isn't much of a probability that they're in there. And number two, just having so many people out there that you're wasting a lot of time and money and effort.

Brenna Lissoway: Right. Right. Are there other search and rescue operations that you personally were involved in that perhaps you'd like to talk about? Or is that—

Bill Wade: I think that's the main one. I mean, there were a whole bunch of small ones, some things on Mount Rainier. But not any that were, I would say, remarkable, in the sense like the one at Smokies. That probably was the most complex one. I'm happy to say that both the rangers recovered. One of them I think ended up having to take a disability retirement later on. Because he had suffered from a fractured back. And so, he was off duty for quite a while recovering from that. And with a fractured back, you never really get over sometimes. So, he ended up leaving the service maybe earlier than he would. But he was okay. And the other ranger was, well, turned out to be fine. He had a couple of fractures, but nothing as serious.

Brenna Lissoway: Right.

Bill Wade: But you know, you hate like to have a whole family wiped out, number one. And then number two when you lose some rescue resources, such as the pilot, copilot and one of the crew members from Fort Campbell, why, it's not a good time.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah. Yeah. Anything else about your time at Great Smokies that you would like to talk about, just in terms of challenges or a particular – maybe things that you participated in? Career development?

Bill Wade: Well I'll tell you about a little, you're familiar with the Monkey Wrench Gang thing. Well, I actually, I actually was, if you want to call it, guilty of monkey wrenching there one time. And it's an interesting little story. Along the whole Little River, on the road that runs between headquarters in Gatlinburg and up to Cades Cove. And the road parallels and sometimes crosses what's called the Little River. And it's a very, very good, nice river. Gets a lot of use both for fishing and recreational use, and some swimming and some diving. And sometimes people dive where they shouldn't and hurt themselves and things like that.

Bill Wade: So, when I went there, there were all along the Little River, in every little turnout, or near every little turnout, there must have been 30 of these little pullouts for one or two cars. And then down by the river was a little wooden kind of a frame set on a post and put in the ground. And a little box next to it. And what this was supposed to do was to post the fishing regulations for the park. And then there was creel census forms. So, the fishermen were supposed to fill that out when they finished fishing and leave it there. And that was supposed to help determine, I guess, how many fish that were taken and all that sort of thing.

Bill Wade: And so, I watched the whole process for quite some time. And first of all, we weren't getting any creel census forms back at all, to speak of. So, I'm questioning in my own mind what good is this. Secondly, whenever you'd go try to post the regulations, either somebody would rip them off or, Smokies is a fairly rainy place. And so, we tried all kinds of different things, laminating them or whatever. But pretty soon they'd crinkle up and it just looked like a mess.

Bill Wade: So, I proposed taking them all out. I said, what good are they doing us? Well, the chief ranger, you know, this was tradition. So, I tried several times to get them to agree to take them out. They were kind of an eyesore. They couldn't keep them up to date. They really weren't serving all that much purpose. But no, we can't take them out.

Bill Wade: So, several months after all of that, another ranger and I, one late evening, got a pickup in a very slow period of time and we went along there and we pulled every one of those things out, threw them in the back of the pickup and took them off in a place where we left them that was unlikely for anybody to find them.

Bill Wade: And you know the interesting thing is? Nobody ever said a word about them being missing. Chief ranger never commented. Nobody ever raised a question about it. Which sort of solidified in my mind that sometimes you just have to be selectively disobedient. If it's in the best interest of the resource, or whatever, just do it. So, we did it. And nobody ever said a word about it. We didn't get in trouble. We didn't have to go put them back up. And the resource and the whole scene along that road was better off as a result of it. So, I think that's the only time I've done a monkey wrench thing. But there are other times I've been selectively disobedient.

Brenna Lissoway: Well, I'd like to hear about that. What are some other times that you felt you had to—

Bill Wade: We'll get there.

Brenna Lissoway: We'll get there? Okay. Okay. So maybe then tell me about the transition to your next post.

Bill Wade: Well, when I was in Smokies, and partly because of the New Zealand assignment, I had been contacted again by the Office of International Affairs in Washington, DC and asked if I'd be interested in doing an assignment down in Trinidad and Tobago, in the Caribbean.

Bill Wade: And I said, well, yeah, tell me about it. So, they gave me a bunch of information. And I decided to take it. It was a one-year assignment. I had to basically leave the park service and go to work for the Organization of American States. And so, this was a job to try to help the commonwealth country of Trinidad and Tobago establish a system of national parks. Now they actually had several designated national parks down there at the time. But they were all being administered by their division of forestry. And not very well. And so, the idea that Organization of American States was pushing was to set up a national park service and a national park system.

Bill Wade: So, I was recruited to go down there and help try to facilitate that. Meaning that the primary job that I had was to develop and draft, I guess you could say, what we would call legislation to accomplish this. And in the meantime, I also did some consulting and that sort of thing with some of the park rangers down there. And offered some management suggestions on a couple of the national parks and so forth. So, it was kind of a mixed bag of what I was doing. And when I left there, I had delivered the product, which was this draft legislation.

Bill Wade: So, I was there a year—

Brenna Lissoway: Working independently? Just you?

Bill Wade: Working pretty independently. Although I was supposedly reporting to the head of the Division of Forestry, who was a corrupt person from the word go that I had some real clashes with. There were a couple of really good people working for that gentleman who were more in the national parks section. And so, I worked as closely as I could with them on some of the issues related to specific parks. You know, the ones that existed.

Bill Wade: So, got through it and felt like I had accomplished things. But you never know what happens to that kind of stuff after that. And I confess that I really haven't followed that up to know what's happened. I know they have more national parks down there now. I looked into that a little bit. But I don't know how they are organized. Whether they were successful at setting up a new national park system or whatever.

Bill Wade: But it was a good assignment. You know, the first time I'd been in the Caribbean. And I lived in Port-of-Spain for a year in a little rented

apartment. And drove a couple miles each day to work at the forestry office. And spent time out in the island. Trinidad was fairly well developed, but the island of Tobago was very undeveloped, except for the primary port where you go in there. The rest of that island was just gorgeous because it had been very much undeveloped. And was largely set aside as a reserve. So, it was being fairly well protected, and so forth. But I was over there several times. Fairly easy little flight to get over to Tobago from Port-of-Spain. So, it was a fun time.

Brenna Lissoway: So, when you took the position, was there an understanding with the park service that you would return?

Bill Wade: Yeah. Same with New Zealand. The idea was that I would be entitled to come back in a position at the same grade level that I left that matched my capabilities and all that sort of thing, unless I had chosen to actually apply for a position at a higher grade level and competed for it. Then I could be selected for something like that.

Bill Wade: So, when I came back from Trinidad, it was an interesting situation that occurred there. I had put in for several jobs through the regular vacancy announcement system. One of which was the assistant superintendent's job at Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. And a couple of other ones that I can't remember.

Bill Wade: So, when I got back to the mainland in Florida, I still didn't have any clear place that I was going to go. So, I just went back up to Smokies where I'd left and stayed with some friends and kind of waited for things to happen. And in the meantime, I got a call from the superintendent from George Washington Memorial Parkway – and also, I'd gotten a call saying I was on the list of eligibles for this position at Delaware Water Gap. And so I was being considered for that. And I got a call from the superintendent of George Washington Parkway. And he offered me the chief ranger's job at GWMP, which would have been a lateral. And he was doing it because my name had gone out for placement under the arrangements that I'd had when I left. And so, to his credit, and to my good fortune, I told him that I knew I was being considered for this other job up at Delaware Water Gap. And that's what I would really prefer. But if that doesn't pan out, then I'll take this job and I'll do the best job for you I can.

Bill Wade: And he said, "Well," he said, "I think we'll just wait." He said, you know if you get the offer for that job, fine. If not, then you let me know. Call me and we'll start working on the other part of it. So, I really always appreciated that. I did, in fact, get the job at Delaware Water Gap.

Bill Wade: So, I moved up there in the early fall of 1981. I'd been in Trinidad from '80 to '81 and I moved up there in the early fall. And it was not unlike the move to Smokies in the sense that what had happened up at Delaware Water Gap, there had been the superintendent who was there at the time had a management assistant working for him. And that person transferred to another park. And so that was the vacancy. And he wanted to fill it in

the same way, as a management assistant. And the regional director at the time, who was Jim Coleman, who I had also worked for at Albright Training Center said no, we're not going to fill it as an assistant superintendent. We're going to set it up as a management training position. And we're going to select somebody who's never been a superintendent, never been an assistant superintendent. So, this would be their first position into park management as a training position.

Bill Wade: And so, to the dismay of the superintendent, that's what they did. And they advertised it as assistant superintendent. And I don't think they could put in the announcement that we'll only pick somebody that's not been an assistant superintendent or a superintendent before, but that's clearly what they were after.

Bill Wade: So, I showed up on the list. And Jim Coleman knew me. So once again, not unlike the chief ranger at Smokies who didn't get to select the person he wanted for the assistant chief, why the superintendent at Delaware Water Gap didn't get to pick, because he was basically told by Coleman to pick me, because I fit the thing. I'd never been a superintendent or an assistant superintendent. And he knew me, and he felt like that's kind of what was needed up at Delaware Water Gap.

Bill Wade: So, to my good fortune, I went there. And the superintendent was not real happy for the first couple of months. He only gave me the responsibility to begin with for the protection division and the interpretive division, because I'd been a ranger and supposedly, I knew all that stuff. And then, you know, about 7 or 8 months later, something like that, he did turn the maintenance division over to me. Never did turn the admin over to me. Not because I think he didn't think I could run it, but he always wanted to keep his fingers on the purse strings and the purchasing and the selections and all that, so he wanted that control. So, he didn't – but that was okay with me.

Bill Wade: So that was a very interesting assignment. When I went up there, they were still extinguishing all of the special use permits that had been inherited from the Corps of Engineers. The history of that area is that all the land was purchased with the idea that there was going to be a big dam built on the Delaware River. So, the Corps of Engineers did all the initial land acquisition. They didn't care who stayed. They just issued special use permits under their authorities to anybody that wanted to stay. Because they figured once the water started backing up, people were going to leave.

Bill Wade: Well, then along came a big citizens' outcry against the whole dam. They weren't successful at de-authorizing the dam legislatively. But what they did get is legislation to establish that section of the river under the Wild and Scenic River System, which means you can't impound it. So, Tocks Island Dam is still an authorized thing. But as long as it's under the Wild and Scenic River System, they'll never build it.

Bill Wade: So, then the park service was given the responsibility to come in and administer the river and the land as a national recreation area. So, we took over all of the special use permits from the Corps of Engineers. And we had a whole set of different authorities for special use permits. And so many of them that were still there weren't consistent with our authorities and so we had to basically eject them. Evict them. Kick them out.

Bill Wade: And a lot of them had been done by the time I got there. But again, typically with people who'd lived there before, we had all kinds of problems. There were arsons of some of the historic structures there from people who were disgruntled. We actually literally had to physically evict some people. Meaning go into their places and move their furniture out when they refused to leave.

Bill Wade: And so, I was in on, sort of toward the end of the last several hundred of those special use permits. We got rid of most of them. When I left, there were still several, I'm going to say maybe a dozen or a little bit more life estates that were still on the books. And I understand now, because I was just back there last week, that all of them have now gone. So it's, you know, the park has transformed into something that nobody probably would have envisioned back in, say, the 1950s when there was nothing but tarpaper fishing shacks along the river and, you know, just a mess.

Bill Wade: The other thing that we did while I was there, there's what was a state route that came parallel to the river down the Pennsylvania side. Infamously called Route 209. I think about 45 miles of it was within the authorized boundary of the recreation area. But it was a state-owned highway. And so, they had all the authorities on it and everything.

Bill Wade: So, about a year after I got there, the state deeded over that highway to the park service. Well, so immediately the park service regulations came into force. And primarily the big thing was that park regulations don't allow any commercial vehicles on park roads. At the time all of that happened, there were an average of 1400 18-wheelers going each way each day. Because it was a shortcut between interstates 80 and 84, I think, 80 on the south and 84 on the north. So, anybody coming out of New England and headed southwest, or anybody going the other direction, would come down 81 for a while, take 209 down to 80 and they'd head on west, and vice versa. So, all these 18-wheelers were there, and of course they didn't adhere to speed limits or anything else.

Bill Wade: So, our job was to eliminate commercial vehicles on 209. And it was a nasty publicity fight. It was all kinds of threats from the truckers and so forth. They were going to bring all kinds of things up there. So, we set up a big plan. And on the day, it was going to go into effect, and we had some things standing by. Because they, at one point there was a threat that they were going to blockade the road. They were going to drive their 18-wheelers in there and block the road from anybody else. So, we had a couple of D9 Caterpillars standing by, ready to push trucks off the road if

they did it. We would have done that, because they would have been illegally blocking the road and so forth. It didn't turn out to have that kind of impact. But it was an interesting several months, planning that and ultimately implementing it.

Bill Wade: And again, I was just back there last week. And I came down Route 209 from the town of Milford, which is on the north end of the recreation area, down to the south end. I didn't see a single commercial vehicle. Now it's a delightful park road to drive down. You know, you get some views of the rivers. And it's just so much different than it was then. So being there in the middle of that, and basically being responsible for it, because the chief ranger that we had at the time wasn't any, you know, real forceful person when it came to that sort of thing.

Bill Wade: Fortunately, I'd hired a really good district ranger on the Pennsylvania side in anticipation of that, because that position was vacant. And so, between he and I, primarily him, put together the plan and carried it out. And it was quite an operation.

Bill Wade: So those things really occupied most of my time during the three and a half years, roughly, that I was at Delaware Water Gap. And dealing with special use permittees, and all those sorts of things. And still trying to preserve some of the really significant historical structures that were there, that had gone back several hundred years, a couple of them. And some of them still exist. We've lost some of them since then, just because there isn't money to take care of them. And you go through the process of trying to do a historical structures lease, to get somebody to come in and occupy it, even if they pay you a penny a year or something like that. But that far out from the city, and what do you do with it? I mean, there just aren't that many people that are interested in it.

Bill Wade: So, one of the disappointing things last week when I was back there and did kind of a tour of the park was to see some of those old buildings in poorer shape, even, than when I was there, just because there isn't enough money in the budget to take care of them, and they haven't been successful at getting leases on them and so forth. So, they'll probably eventually just deteriorate, some of them. Some of them they've saved, and they're doing rehabs on some of them, and that's good.

Brenna Lissoway: Well that's a big transition for you, then, having gone from more focused on education or operations to park management. What, at that point in your career, attracted you to that?

Bill Wade: Well I think I always had that as a goal. In fact, at the time, I think at the time that I was at Albright, you know, I pretty much knew that I wanted to go into park management. I sort of had this goal in mind. Unstated, I guess. I never had a very well written, you know, career plan. But I knew I really wanted to be a park superintendent at some point. And so, I think that that opportunity really launched me into it. And of course, much like I can thank Boyd Evison for mentoring me through some of the park

operations kinds of things with regard to resources, protection, and those values and stuff. I can certainly thank Jim Coleman for giving me the opportunity to get into park management.

Bill Wade: Although that short period of time that I was in National Capital Parks, I had sort of been a park manager in some ways. But it was very limited, because we didn't have much in the way of interpretive stuff going on, except for the monuments and memorials. We didn't have any law enforcement responsibility at all. Was limited in terms of natural resources. We had some cultural resource things. So, I sort of got into it in that sense. But that was only a short period of time, and it wasn't very comprehensive like most park operations are.

Bill Wade: Anyway, so that was my opportunity to get into it. And from that point on, then my goal really was to become a park superintendent. But I still have this tendency to launch into training. And so, I got a call one day from Flip Hagood, who was the chief of training for the park service at that time. And I think this was probably in late September or October of '84. And I was at Delaware Water Gap. Had been there for three years and so he offered me the job as the superintendent at Mather Training Center in Harpers Ferry. And that was a little bit of a dilemma because once again, I loved the training stuff. I'd been in it; I knew I wanted to continue in it. And even did, while I was at Delaware Water Gap. I would continue to do training courses in various places and things like that whenever I could. But I didn't know whether, if I'd accepted that job, is that going to kind of take me out of the competition for park superintendent or whatever. But I decided I was going to do it.

Bill Wade: So, I went to Mather and spent about three and a half years there. Mather, of course, was the primary training center for interpretation, cultural resources management things, and I guess you could say administration. At that time, the responsibilities were sort of broken up. Mather had those. Albright had protection, maintenance and natural resource portfolios.

Bill Wade: It was very interesting to me, then, having been mostly in protection to go into this area where our job primarily was to develop and put on courses in interpretation and cultural resources. And a few admin courses. We did a few procurement courses and things like that. But it was mostly interpretation and cultural resource.

Bill Wade: Had a great staff there. And all I had to do, really, was just turn them loose. There wasn't, looking back on it, there wasn't a lot of quote "management" that I had to do. Which is great. You know when you don't have to prod people to do things and so forth. They were all self-starters. They all went on and from that assignment and had great careers of their own. Some that they never, ever thought about.

Bill Wade: A side story related to that that again brings into the arena, Boyd Evison. I was at Mather. Boyd, at the time, was the regional director up in Alaska. And so, he called me one day, probably a couple of years after I was at

Mather. And he knew that I knew a lot of people in the park service around. So, he called me, and he said, "I'm trying to fill a job at Kenai Fjords, the superintendent's job at Kenai Fjords. And I'd like to get a female or a minority into it. But there are all kinds of problems with that potentially in the little town of Seward. So, I'm just wondering if you know of anybody that might really be able to fit that bill."

Bill Wade: So, I said to him, "Well, nobody comes to mind right away, but let me think about it and I'll talk to you."

Bill Wade: So, I went home that night and I remember distinctly waking up in the morning, early morning sometime. And with this sort of blinding flash of the obvious, that there was a lady by the name of Anne Castellina who worked for me, who was on my staff, who had a cultural resource background. Just a dynamite person. And so, I thought, you know, that's it!

Bill Wade: So, I called Boyd back. And I said, "Boyd, I have somebody that I think could really do a good job for you. But here's the situation." And at the time, she was a single mother of three adopted daughters from Costa Rica. All sisters, that she and her husband who left soon after that had adopted. And they were living at Mather. And these were, I don't know, maybe like seven, five and three, or something like that. Little girls. So, I said, "Here's the situation."

Bill Wade: He said, "Well, sounds like she could really be a good, this could be a good job."

Bill Wade: So, I said, "Well, if you're willing to talk to her, I haven't talked to her yet. But," I said, "I'll ask her to give you a call."

Bill Wade: So, I went into Anne's office and said, "Anne, did you ever give any thought to moving to Alaska?" And she said no. I said, "Have you ever given any thought to being a superintendent?"

Bill Wade: "Well," she said, "a little bit. But you know, it seems to me to be a long ways off."

Bill Wade: So, I told her that Boyd had called. And I said, "He's trying to fill this job. And I think you'd be great at it. And I've suggested that you talk with him."

Bill Wade: And she couldn't believe it. You know, she was just fit to be tied for a while. But she called him. And he offered her the job. She went up there. She was the superintendent of that park when they had the Exxon Valdez oil spill. She did a wonderful job with all that. She was there about 15 years. Raised her daughters there in that community. So, you know, that was one of the great influences I think I had that you know, you look back on those things and say, that could have gone really bad. But fortunately, it went really well. And Anne went on to do a couple other things, too. But again, just that relationship with Boyd and being able to have that sort of an arrangement, I always thought that to be very special to me in the park

service, to have somebody like Boyd that trusted you and that recognized that you'd give him good advice when he asks for it, and so forth.

Brenna Lissoway: Anne, at the time, she was working at Mather. What was her position?

Bill Wade: She was one of the staff trainers. She had come up through her career up to that time in interpretation. As had the other two people, I had two other staff members, instructors. All of whom had come up through interpretation because that was kind of, and they were all there at the time I got there. I inherited them, so to speak. I think Anne was the first one to leave. And then I hired in behind her before I left. And then Mike Watson was on the staff, and he left. And ultimately became the chief of interpretation for the park service. And then he moved back to Mather as the superintendent later on. And I filled in behind him. So, you know, having those very competent staff people to do that kind of training, like I say, it just made my job very easy.

Bill Wade: And so, I did a lot of external things. I continued to do training offsite. Some of the other leadership training and things like that that I'd been doing, it gave me the opportunity. I didn't do as much instructing at Mather, for instance, as I did while I was at Albright. But I continued to do a lot of it in other places, and so forth. So.

Brenna Lissoway: And what was the emphasis, then? Were there certain initiatives or things that the training center was really trying to support at that time, that was agency-wide, perhaps?

Bill Wade: No, not really. I think it was just the continual effort of trying to upgrade the competency of interpretation and those sorts of things. So, there was a constant, I wouldn't say reinventing, but certainly recycling, reconsidering, improving the courses in interpretation. And, to a certain extent, in cultural resource management, too.

Bill Wade: We had a course load of, if I remember right, 20 to 24 courses a year. And most of them were one weeklong. Some of them were two weeks long. But most of them were one-week residential courses. We had a dorm there that we would put people up in for the duration of the courses. There were the three staff members that worked for me. So, we all four, there were four government houses there, Mission 66 houses. So, we all had government housing, which no longer exists there now. If you go back now, they're gone. So, we had our own little community. And being that close to Washington, it was very convenient, very easy, to get really good, and I don't mean technically good, necessarily, course instructors. Like the top echelon of policy makers and so forth out of Washington to come up and do appearances in some of these courses. Much easier than it was at Albright, for instance, just because of the distance. And so, we were quite lucky in that regard. We could call down and get Jerry Rogers, you know, the chief of cultural resources, to come up. Or somebody like that. Anne Hitchcock in curation, you know. They were always available. And they loved to come up to Mather. So, getting those people to fill in some

of those instructional blocks was not only easy, but it was very, very good, I think. Because those kinds of people, people coming into those kinds of courses like to hear from those people, you know? As you well know.

Brenna Lissoway: So, what are some of the main differences, would you say, then having most of your, well, some of your experiences being park-based. And then here you're at a training center which is not really a park. You've got a very different constituency. I mean, you're really serving the park service instead of the community. You know what I'm saying? So, what were some of those differences that you experienced in managing a [unit?]

Bill Wade: Well I guess I didn't feel that so much at Mather. And maybe that's because I had had a similar experience at Albright, having the responsibility for that larger national constituency and so forth. And I don't, you know, I don't remember any significant difficulties at making those kinds of transitions. I think it was a really significant benefit to go from a field position into both of those positions. In other words, I was specifically, as were all the other staff instructors at Albright, specifically recruited to come from several field operations positions in your specialty. Which in my case at Albright was park and resource and visitor protection. And having had those assignments behind me and then coming in fresh with the techniques, you know, all the knowledge of what you were supposed to instruct. So I don't think we ever considered ourselves technically good instructors so much as we considered ourselves educators and influencers relative to being able to translate what was going on in the parks, what was needed in the parks, to the people that came through the courses.

Bill Wade: And it was a similar situation, I think, going to Mather, because I had come from Delaware Water Gap and had that experience. And also, the other ones behind me. So, bringing that operational experience in, and again, the staff there had that same sort of thing.

Bill Wade: So now, looking back to what I see at some of those training centers, it seems to me now like they're not staffed as much with people who have the field operational experience. At least that's kind of an observation that I have from afar. It's not validated, by any means.

Bill Wade: Of course, the whole situation with training these days has changed in the park service just because of budget considerations and people can't get away from their jobs for longer periods of time. So, there's a lot more computer-based training, things like that. Which is a natural evolution. And so, I guess what they need now are people who can develop those kinds of programs rather than on-site instruction and instructors, in some cases.

Bill Wade: But you know, there wasn't any significant change, in my opinion. It was just easy to make that transition into sort of translating what I did at Delaware Water Gap and previous assignments into operating the training center and bringing some of that knowledge to bear on designing the

courses and using examples and exercises and things like that. So, it was fun. Great fun.

Brenna Lissoway: So, then you went from Mather to your first superintendency?

Bill Wade: Yes, that's correct.

Brenna Lissoway: Okay.

Bill Wade: I got a call again one day from Jim Coleman, while I was at Mather. And he said that there are two positions that are open in the, what was then the Mid-Atlantic region, still. And he said, you know, I think they're both positions that you might want to apply for. So, he told me which ones they were. One of them was the superintendency at Shenandoah. And the other was the deputy regional director's job at Philadelphia. His deputy.

Bill Wade: So, I went ahead and applied for both of the jobs. And I was out at Phoenix one day, actually at a search and rescue conference, and I got a message to call Jim Coleman. So, I called him, and he said, "Bill," he said, "you applied for both these jobs." And he said, "I'm prepared to offer you whichever one of the two you want." He said, "I know which one I would like to have you take, but," he said, "I think I know which one you're going to select."

Bill Wade: And I said, "Jim, if you think the one, I'm going to select is Shenandoah, you're absolutely right."

Bill Wade: And he said, "Well, I knew that." He said, "I really wish you'd come into the region," and all of that sort of thing, "but I'm not going to do anything else on it. You'll be a fine superintendent of Shenandoah." And he said, "I have another candidate that I'm prepared to offer whichever one you decline." So, he said, "I think that will work out fine."

Bill Wade: So, yeah, I accepted the job for Shenandoah. That was in March, well, I went there in March of '88. Took over the job in Shenandoah. And never regretted not going to the region. Although the difficulty with that decision was it would have been great to work with Jim Coleman again. Because I think that we would have made a very good team. And he always said that. He said he needed somebody that he could have a team kind of management situation with. And unfortunately, the guy that he selected for that job didn't turn out to be that good. So, I was sort of, not really thought that I'd let Jim down, but it was a little bit of a dilemma. He never held it against me or anything. He supported me, for sure, going to Shenandoah.

[END OF TRACK 1]

[START OF TRACK 2]

Bill Wade: So, I went to Shenandoah in March of 1988.

Brenna Lissoway: Can I ask real quickly, what is it about a park service superintendency that was so intriguing or attractive to you? What about that position in particular?

Bill Wade: I think in my case it was just the, sometimes unplanned, certainly, progression of the work that you do in the park service, what you learn as you go along. And, for the most part, particularly if you're not in some very specialized, you know, profession or discipline, you see it as here's the chance to put it all together. Here's the chance to put everything I've learned, everything I value, whether it's managing people, whether it's managing park resources, whether it's managing special interests, external interests, you just feel, you presume, that this is the chance to put it all together. And see if you can do it. At least that's the way that I felt about it. And I think a lot of people do feel that way. And you know, you feel like you've got a discreet operation to run. It's almost exclusively up to you to make the decisions how you do it. It's always nice to be fairly far away from the regional office so you don't have them breathing down your neck every day. We always used to joke that the further away you were from headquarters, the better things are. It's the same in parks. In Shenandoah, the south district, which is the furthest one away from headquarters, always felt like they had more independence and things like that than the central district, which is right next door. So, if you were at Independence National Historic Park, right across the street from the regional office, I don't think that would be as fun as being at Shenandoah, where you're quite a ways away from there.

Bill Wade: Not that, Jim Coleman wasn't a meddling kind of regional director, anyway. And then later on, after he left, I ended up working for Marie Rust, who assumed, when they consolidated what was then North Atlantic Region and Mid-Atlantic Region into one region, Northeast Region, she then took over as the regional director. So, I worked for her probably for the last three or four years of my work at Shenandoah. And she was easy to work for. No big problems.

Bill Wade: So, the first thing I had to do when I got to Shenandoah was hire an assistant superintendent, which was good. Primarily because the guy who had been there before had a reputation of a nature that I wasn't looking forward to having to have him work for me. Fortunately, he got another job and left just, I mean, we didn't overlap, even. He left and I came in. so I got to advertise and select a superintendent. And that person came in, Paul Anderson, who'd worked for me before at Delaware Water Gap. So, he came in. he stayed, I think three years.

Bill Wade: And during that three years was probably the most intense period of time that I had I had in Shenandoah. Because that was right at the height of all of the issues in that particular area having to do with air quality. I think it was not the first year I was in Shenandoah but the second year. So that would have been in 1989, there were 40 applications to the Commonwealth of Virginia for small coal-fired power-producing plants to be scattered around the state. And they all had to apply for permits from the state. And the park service has, under the Clean Air Act, has the authority to review the permits as they are being drafted and so forth by

the state. And so, we were, I literally almost did nothing during those first three years but to be involved in air quality issues. Monitoring or reviewing permits. Fortunately, the people in the air quality division of the park service at the time were just tremendous help. Because they did all the modeling and all that sort of thing to determine okay, if this plant goes in here, what's it going to do relative to the air quality, the visibility, the acid rain, and everything else in Shenandoah. And sometimes those models, computer-generated models, were very explicit, they were very accurate, and we used those a lot to try to, in some cases, get the state to modify the permits for either less emissions or maybe in some cases, not even issue the permit.

Bill Wade: And so, all of that period of time we were just working on all of these permits. I was going to public meetings all the time on these things all over the state. You know, it was a pretty rugged period of time. But again, I had a great staff. Paul basically then ran the park because he had a good operations experience behind him. I had a really, really good resource management division. And they were very helpful in all this stuff. We actually hired an air quality specialist in the park for the first time during that period of time. And they helped the air quality division in Washington, DC and Denver with all of that modeling and providing data and that sort of thing.

Bill Wade: But I can just remember it as there was a lot of contact with the media. The media was always interested in these things. Some of them were very supportive of what we were trying to do. Some of them accused us of, you know, trying to stand in the way of advancement and development in Virginia. And all these plants would bring on thousands of jobs or whatever. All those sort of standardized arguments that people make. And our job was to try to – I mean at the time that I went there, the air quality was so bad already that there were times that you could be up on the Skyline Drive and you literally could not see the valley floor on either side of the Skyline Drive. It was that bad.

Bill Wade: And the ozone got very bad. We actually had to put up signs sometimes warning people of high ozone so that they wouldn't, if they had lung problems anyway, they shouldn't be out hiking, exerting a lot of pressure, whatever.

Bill Wade: So, there were just a lot of things that were going on at the time that were very fun, very interesting, very difficult. But I'm glad I was there and had all of that experience and so forth. So, it was a fun time to be there.

Brenna Lissoway: So, would you say that this sort of science-based management approach was something that was relatively new or up and coming? Because it sounds like you really relied on science to make the arguments for what's best for the park.

Bill Wade: Well, it was certainly new in Shenandoah. Not that they hadn't had issues with air quality before, and not that previous superintendents, especially

the two previous superintendents hadn't engaged in some of those. But there were a few here and a few there over the preceding maybe 10 or 15 years. I remember reading about one of the things that, not my immediate predecessor, who was really in the park for only, I think, about 18 months. But the superintendent that was there before him had been there for, I think, over 20 years. And he confronted, there was a lot of stories about this, so you may remember. But there was a time when the Coors brewery wanted to put in a brewery in the east somewhere. And they located an area right near the boundary of Shenandoah National Park. And they were going to put in this big brewery, that was going to cough out all kinds of bad air and everything like that. The reason it turned out that they wanted to pick that area was because there was a stream that came out of the park at that time called Rocky Mount. And they wanted to be able to continue to say, "Brewed with pure Rocky Mount spring water." So anyway, that was their reason behind choosing that particular location.

Bill Wade: And so, Bob Jacobson, who was the superintendent there, stood up and worked with the state. And made the permit so difficult for them that they couldn't afford, or they couldn't whatever to put the whole brewery in. So, they changed their approach and just made that a distribution station. So, they would bring in trainloads of Coors beer and then distribute it from there.

Bill Wade: So, there were some successes. But all the time that that was happening, the air quality was getting worse and worse. Not from the immediate ones but from stuff down in Kentucky and you know, all of that air that comes up from sort of the southwest of Shenandoah funnels right up there. And over the, I'd say, five, six, seven years, the air quality there just got really, really bad. And now here came another potential 40 sources to add on to that.

Bill Wade: So, I think that was when things really got cranked up, and where we really had to rely on the air quality division and the specialists that were in there. And then to some extent, some of the other disciplines that had to look at it also. Like what's it doing. Acid rain was a big issue there. There were times when you could take measurements of stream water in Shenandoah and it was the same acidity as vinegar. And so, you had the impacts on all of the aquatic resources. So, we had people studying all of that stuff and everything. So, there was a lot of science-based effort that went into trying to justify reasons why we didn't want to add to it. In fact, we wanted to cut back on the emissions that were affecting the park.

Bill Wade: And ultimately, we were pretty successful at it. We were successful at getting a number of the permit conditions tightened so that if the plants did go in, that they would be less emitters of the nasty stuff that would come in the park. And over time, I think the air quality has gotten better there. Not just because of what was going on immediately, but of course there's been tightening of emissions requirements all over the place. So, some of

those really dirty plants down in Tennessee and Kentucky and that sort of thing have been tightened up as well.

Brenna Lissoway: That's interesting just hearing you talk about this large problem that really was beyond the boundaries of the park.

Bill Wade: Yes.

Brenna Lissoway: And I think that most superintendents deal with those sorts of beyond boundary issues, climate change being one of the biggest ones.

Bill Wade: Certainly, now that's true, yes.

Brenna Lissoway: So, in thinking about taking on something so large, you as a superintendent, how did you think about that? What were some of the strategies that you used to try to get a handle on—

Bill Wade: You know, I almost have to admit that it was just almost by default or by whatever. I mean, it was so obvious what needed to be done. It wasn't like I had any great insights or any overriding visions of anything. It was so obvious what was happening. The people who were advising me at the time, my own resource management division people as well as people like Molly Ross and others in Washington who were really, really heavily involved with air quality issues, were just hugely important. And if it weren't for them, I probably wouldn't have done very well at that at all. Because I didn't have a background in that sort of thing at all. And so, the lesson to me, I think, was figure out who the people are that can help you and have the information that can advise you appropriately. And get all the information that you can to make the decision that you have to make. And then move forward. And as I say, it just was almost a natural sort of thing. It's not anything that I had to do a lot of studying about or a lot of investigation about. It was there. It was in front of me. I knew what I had to do. I knew who I had to listen to. I knew how I had to deal with the state. I knew how I had to deal with the media. I knew how I had to deal with the other environmental groups that were supporting me in this around the area. But you know, sort of coordinating that and pulling all that together and managing it is the challenge. But it's a fun challenge when you have the right kind of people in those places. And you can fight down the state when you have the right people.

Bill Wade: The state wasn't bad to work with. They were trying to do the right thing. And for the most part, we cooperated with them pretty well. And they did respond to our efforts most of the time. There were a couple of times when they didn't, and that we had to go to the mat with them. But it was really a good time.

Bill Wade: And then after we got past that three years, things settled down some on the air quality stuff. And then we had the big gypsy moth infestation. Which came all the way down the Appalachians and completely defoliated sometimes 70 percent of the trees along the way. So, we had all of that problem in Shenandoah. And of course, the pressures from the outside

landowners and everything. We should be spraying everything to keep the gypsy moths from coming in. Because you know, if you don't spray, then you become the place where gypsy moths are harbored. And then they're going to come off onto our property, and, you know, that was a big issue. But fortunately, not as big as the air quality one, and more time limited.

Brenna Lissoway: Mm hmm. So how did you handle that?

Bill Wade: We just explained our policies. We're not going to spray. It's against our policies to spray. We did a little tiny bit of spraying of trees right along the Skyline Drive. For the only purpose of limiting hazard trees. Not because we wanted to keep a green strip down there or anything else. But we knew if enough of the trees were killed, we were going to have a huge hazard tree problem along there. So, we did do some spraying along the drive for that purpose. But nothing else. And so, it was a matter of educating people about what the policies of the National Park Service are. And for the most part, they accepted it. And again, fortunately, after like two seasons of defoliating then they moved onward. And they were at the lower part of their cycle, so things sort of evened themselves out.

Brenna Lissoway: And in your experience with these two large controversies, what were the most effective means of communication that you saw?

Bill Wade: I used the media a lot. I went to a lot of public meetings. I went to a lot of that sort of thing. But most of those were with your friends. I mean, other than the ones with the air quality, which were the required public meetings for the permit. So, you were at those with a lot of people who didn't like you. And who would stand up and rave about how bad the park was, and things like that. So, with the exception of some of the meetings I went to in a couple of the adjoining counties, we had six counties that were adjacent to the park. And most of them were good to work with except one county in particular on the east side of the park, Madison County. Which seemed to be the seat of people who always claimed that their grandpappies got kicked off the park by the feds. And they just harbored all of these bad feelings. Much more so than people in the other counties, seemed like.

Bill Wade: And of course, what they never understood, or what they were never able to accept was it wasn't the federal government that bought the land for Shenandoah National Park. When the people from the Commonwealth of Virginia came to the Department of the Interior and said, "We think this would make a great national park," Interior said, "Okay. You guys go buy the land. And then when you get it all, donate it to the federal government. We'll make it a national park." So, it was the state, the commonwealth, that bought all the land and kicked all the people off. Not us. But of course, we were now the managers of it, so we were considered to be the bad guys. So, you constantly had to deal with that some.

Bill Wade: But I used the media a lot. And not to go out so much and solicit things. But there were enough interesting things going on there that a lot of the

local media came to me and I was not the least bit reluctant to comment on what was going on. And then some of those stories got picked up in other places, and so forth.

Bill Wade: But for instance, the newspaper out of Harrisonburg, Virginia, and Front Royal, often very supportive. So, we were able to do a lot of education and conveying reasons why we were doing things through those means.

Bill Wade: We didn't have a friends group at the time. We started trying to put one together toward the end of the time I was there. And it was kind of operating with fits and starts. I think it took quite some time after that, even, to get really going. So, we didn't have that luxury, to have a friends group, like a lot of parks do, to sort of carry some of the issues for. But there were a lot of little organizations outside that were conservation-oriented that were very supportive of what we were doing. And we were able to rely on them to help us a lot, particularly through those difficult times.

Brenna Lissoway: Mm hmm. Did you live in the park at that time?

Bill Wade: No. I lived outside the park. Yeah.

Brenna Lissoway: What was that like, living in the community that you were working with?

Bill Wade: Actually, there wasn't any particular problems with that. I lived up in Front Royal, or just outside of Front Royal, which is up at the north end of the park. I didn't live in Luray, which was the closest community to headquarters, and where probably there would have been more interaction among the people that were in the community. Front Royal, with the exception of a few issues that came up, was not an unfriendly community. It was a more diverse community in the sense that a lot of people had started moving into Front Royal who actually were commuting into Washington, DC. Because it was right along Route 66. And so, it wasn't as, I guess you could say, as much of an ingrown community as Luray was, or Madison on the other side of the park. So, there weren't any particular issues related to that.

Bill Wade: Other than when I decided not to plow the snow on the north end of the drive one time because we were trying to save money. And I announced that during a particularly period of time during the winter I was going to not plow the north end of the drive. We were only going to plow the central portion, because that's where most of the people came in.

Bill Wade: Well, that got me in some pretty serious trouble. The people in Front Royal raised a big stink about that. Because that would have meant their part of the entrance to the park would have been closed for that period of time. And they were absolutely convinced that would have just wrecked their economy. So, they got their delegation all hyped up. And I remember having to go over and have to sit down on the Hill, in Washington DC, in Congress with Jack Davis, who at the time was the associate director in

Washington, DC for operations. Roger Kennedy was the director, and he wouldn't go. (laughter)

Bill Wade: So, Jack and I went over there and sat down for two hours just getting ripped by both senators and, I think we had four or five congressmen that were in those districts surround the park. And they were all in this room. And they were all taking potshots. And poor Jack was trying to defend me as much as he could. But you know. And I got rolled. I mean, I ended up having to plow the drive. But those are just some of the political decisions that you're caught with sometimes.

Bill Wade: And I was told later by both Roger and Jack Davis that that's the right decision, you made the right decision, but you also understand why sometimes we can't stick with those politically. So, I understood that.

Brenna Lissoway: Were there other points while you were there, or anytime in your career, where you were asked to do something that you did not agree with?

Bill Wade: Mm hmm.

Brenna Lissoway: And you did it? Or vice versa? You didn't want to do something, you know, that you were pressured—

Bill Wade: Probably the single biggest one that I ended up having to deal with, and it's a story that went all through the park service, so I'm not telling any tales out of school. So, I had Paul Anderson as my first assistant superintendent. He left. And then I hired Vaughn Baker, who's the superintendent right now at Rocky Mountain. And he came in as my assistant superintendent.

Bill Wade: In between those two, I got a call one day from the Washington office. Jim Ridenour was the director. I don't remember who called me exactly, but somebody called me. I know that John Reynolds, who was the regional director for a little while in Mid-Atlantic and then ultimately became the deputy director of the park service, was involved in this.

Bill Wade: So, they called me, and they told me that my next assistant superintendent was going to be a person who had been working over on the hill, and who had been a former employee of the National Park Service. I mean, I might as well just say his name. His name was Steve Hodapp. And so, he had gone over on the hill, worked for the National Parks Subcommittee, or the Natural Resources Committee, I don't remember which, and stayed over there.

Bill Wade: And so anyway, one thing led to another. And Steve decided he was going to exercise his rights under what they call the Ramspeck Act to reenter the executive branch after you've left it and gone to the hill, if you do it within a certain period of time. I think it's ten years. And so, his ten years were starting to run out.

Bill Wade: And so, he, the story was that he had contacted the secretary of the interior, Lujan, Manuel Lujan, who was the secretary at the time. Said, "I

want to come back into the park service." And there were rumors that he first of all said, "I understand the regional director's job in Alaska is open. I'd like to go there." And Lujan said no, I don't think so. And then the superintendent of Delaware Water Gap position, I think, is open. So, he decided he wanted that one. And they said no, you're not going to go there. So, they said, "You're going as the assistant superintendent of Shenandoah."

Bill Wade: So, I got the call that I was going to take this guy. And I didn't know him. At all. He had worked at Grand Canyon before as the chief of resources. And before that he had been, I think a planner in the Denver Service Center or something like that. So, his only supervisory job in his entire career was the chief of resources at Grand Canyon. So, I called the superintendent out there. And after he left out all the expletives about this guy, he didn't have much to say about him. But it turned out he just did a terrible job out there. The superintendent actually had to reorganize the park around him. His behaviors had resulted in a couple of EO complaints and several grievances, and I don't know what all.

Bill Wade: So, having all of this information, I went back to John Reynolds and others, and I said, "I'm not going to take him. And here's why." I said, "Because here's what you're asking me. Here's a guy who's only had one job with any supervisory experience whatsoever. And that was a division chief level job in Grand Canyon which he badly mucked up. And now you want to put him in a job where he's going to supervise five division chiefs. And what kind of sense does that make?" So, I said, "I'm not going to take him."

Bill Wade: Well, they said, "Yes, you are."

Bill Wade: And so, I thought, okay. This is probably not worth falling on your sword totally about, because I think I can figure out a way to work around it. So the interesting thing was, the last day that his Ramspeck authorization ran out, which is very unusual, his first day on the duty at Shenandoah was Christmas Eve Day, December 24, in the middle of the week, in the middle of a pay period. That was his duty day. I was on leave.

Bill Wade: So, I had to come over and sign him in, and all that sort of thing. Which I did. So, we got him signed in. and I think he took a couple of days of leave or something. So, he came back after the first of the year.

Bill Wade: Well in the meantime, I had put together a very fair but very stringent individual development plan. And I called him in one day and I said, "Look." I said, "You're here. You have no authority over the division chiefs until you complete this individual development plan." I said, "You're the assistant superintendent on paper. You're getting the pay and everything else. But I'm not giving you the authority over the division chiefs until you do this." I said, "I'll help you do everything you can to fill these things." There were some training courses and there were some assignments and all that.

Bill Wade: So, he took it. And for the next probably six weeks, he sat in his office with the door closed. And I think he was on the telephone almost all day long because you could see the light for his line lit up. He'd come to work on time. He'd leave on time. He'd not do anything. And as far as I'm concerned, that's okay, because he's not creating positive harm in the park.

Bill Wade: So maybe six weeks later, something like that, he walked in one day and he said, "Just want you to know that this is my last day. I got my job on the hill back, and so I'm leaving."

Bill Wade: And I said, "Okay. Have a good time." And he was gone. So, I survived that in good fashion. I mean, I didn't have to put up with him very long. I actually didn't have to do any managing of him, because I wasn't going to push him to finish the IDP because I really didn't want him doing anything. So, I just isolated him. So, the outcome was good, and I didn't get in any particular trouble over that, or anything like that.

Bill Wade: And actually, he soon got in trouble with the committee chair over the Yosemite flood. And apparently what he had done is he'd gone out to Yosemite after the flood and made some big media proclamation that made the local congressman really upset. And so, the local congressman went back to the chair of this committee and informed him that, you know, he was not happy with all this.

Bill Wade: And then I hired Vaughn Baker after that. Which was a really good thing. So, we recovered and moved on along. But I literally told them I wasn't going to take Hodapp.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah.

Bill Wade: And you know, ended up having to back off that position. But it was pretty interesting time.

Brenna Lissoway: Have you had other employees that have been difficult to manage during your career?

Bill Wade: Yeah, the, actually the chief of maintenance at Shenandoah we had to actually move him out of that position. We didn't fire him. But Paul, again, put up with him for almost two years. He was a brilliant engineer and so forth. But talk about somebody who could not or would not be a team player. And so, I mean, it was things like we would get together to say all right, this is how we're going to handle the budget allocations this year. So, the team would get together, do that. He'd agree. "Okay, that sounds fine." And then he would do it a completely different way. And just throw everybody else off and, you know, frustrated everybody else.

Bill Wade: So, we put up with that a couple of years. And finally got the region's approval to just take him out of that position. And we ended up, we actually initially put him in what they call an undescribed position at the same grade level and so forth. Which you could do for 60 days without anything. And in the meantime, then they moved him into a position in the

regional office as kind of a construction project supervisor. And left his duty station at Shenandoah, which didn't affect his, so we didn't affect his grade level, pay level or commuting area. Therefore, it wasn't a disciplinary action.

Brenna Lissoway: Right.

Bill Wade: So that came out okay. He grieved it. The grievance didn't get off the ground or anything. The regional office supported us wonderfully.

Bill Wade: While I was at Delaware Water Gap, we actually fired a guy who was a carpenter. Also, the union steward, which was kind of interesting. And when I got there, there were all kinds of horror stories about this guy. No one had taken him on. So finally, in fairly short order I accumulated, I think it was five conduct-based things and then a performance-based thing. And went to the regional personnel officer. And I said, "So I have this information. So, can you tell me what the next step is? I assume we've got to do a letter of reprimand, or we've got to do this or whatever."

Bill Wade: The regional office guy said, "Nope. Let's fire him." Which amazed me, because up till that time, I thought you had to go through every one of these steps. Which you really don't. So, we did. We fired him. It was upheld. It went to MSPB, the Merit Systems Protection Board. They upheld it. His union paid to get the appeal to federal court. It was upheld there. So, we won out.

Brenna Lissoway: Wow.

Bill Wade: Now do you want to hear the other selective disobedience story?

Brenna Lissoway: Yes, I would like to hear the other selective disobedience story.

Bill Wade: So, this was at the end of the sort of period of time that we were grappling with all of these air quality permits. And we had this one air quality permit that was literally, I mean really close to the southern boundary of the park for coal fire-powered generating plant. And the modeling showed it was just going to blow right up into the park. So, we did everything we could to try to get the state to modify the conditions. They would only go so far. That wasn't far enough for us. And so, they weren't going to budge any more.

Bill Wade: So, at the time, this was when James Watt was the secretary of the interior. And he had a guy in the deputy assistant secretary for fish, wildlife and parks position by the name of Scott Sewell. Who came out of the petrochemical industry in Louisiana. That was his background.

Bill Wade: So, what I wanted to do when the state wouldn't do anything else was appeal the permit. In the the clean air legislation, they have a designation in there called the federal land manager. And it says that the federal land manager has the authority to appeal any state permit to EPA.

Bill Wade: Well, what Interior had done is it had administratively assigned the federal land manager designation to this deputy assistant secretary. Okay. So, I

tried to get them to agree to issue the appeal to EPA. And I mean, we're right down to the wire. Because there's a deadline, you know, under which you have to file the appeal if you're going to do it. And so, like the last week or so, I'm on the phone constantly trying to get a hold of this guy or somebody in his office and talk to him and tell him. I mean, I'd already made the case of why I wanted to appeal it. And no response. I mean, they were just stonewalling me.

Bill Wade: And so, under my interpretation of the Clean Air Act, the way it's written, it literally says, *I'm* the federal land manager. And it's very clear. So legally, I'm the federal land manager. Administratively, this other guy is. And obviously, they didn't want to appeal it.

Bill Wade: So last minute, last afternoon, nothing from them. So, I put the appeal together. Gave it to a ranger. Said, "You've got to get into the EPA office by five o'clock in the afternoon to put this in there." So, the ranger said sometimes he was running lights and siren taking this appeal into EPA.

Bill Wade: We got it in there. And of course, the media went crazy about this. And I understood later that the assistant secretary wanted to fire me. And the director wanted to fire me. And one thing led to another.

Bill Wade: So, the story about the permit is, then, because this appeal was obviously going to drag things out for a considerably longer period of time, the company that wanted to build this plant lost its financing. And so, they simply had no way to build it. And so, the issue just disappeared. And the appeal never really had to be heard.

Bill Wade: But I did get a written reprimand from the regional director. Which I have proudly displayed next to being named the superintendent of the year for the National Park Service for natural resources that same year. And the Mather Award from NPCA for doing that same act. So, it worked out okay. (laughs)

Bill Wade: But you know, that one, I felt, was worth falling on my sword for. I mean, if they were going to do something, I was, you know, I was getting toward the end of my career anyway. But that was important enough to me to protect that park to do that, even though obviously it was going against what the secretary's office wanted. So.

Brenna Lissoway: So, Bill, I'm going to ask you what may be a difficult question. But are there any issues that now, looking back, you wish you had handled differently?

Bill Wade: You know, I'm sure there are. But nothing really pops out in my mind. I could probably bring up little things that if I had done little tweaks on the margins or something like that. But I really can't think of anything that was a big issue that if I'd have done differently, or that I regret doing it the way I did it. I'm sure if I thought about it long and hard. But that just simply means, probably, that there's nothing significant that immediately comes to mind.

Brenna Lissoway: That's remarkable.

Bill Wade: Yeah, probably.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah.

Bill Wade: And I would just say that's probably an issue of maybe in many cases being more lucky than whatever else. But, yeah.

Bill Wade: One other accomplishment at Shenandoah that I did that I'm very proud of is I took all of the trashcans off of all of the overlooks on the Skyline Drive.

Brenna Lissoway: And why did you do that?

Bill Wade: Because it was costing us about three hundred thousand dollars a year to haul trash from those 85 overlooks along the Skyline Drive. And my sense is that, my sense was that most people, if you don't invite them to leave their trash by putting a trash can out, most people will take it somewhere else and drop it. Yeah, a few will litter along the road. But and I'd read a bunch of research about that. That people, if you put a trashcan out, they're going to use it. And so, my sense was, why should we invite people to leave their trash with us and make us pay for hauling it off to the dumps?

Bill Wade: Well, I got, as you can imagine, I got huge squawks from maintenance and everybody else about this.

Bill Wade: So, I said, "Here's what we're going to do. I want you for three weeks," or whatever it was, two weeks, "I want you to measure the total amount of trash that we haul off the Skyline Drive." And they could do that by the trucks, you know, cubic yards of trash. And so, document all of that. Then we're going to take the trash cans out. And yes, you're probably going to have to do more litter pickup along the roadsides and maybe under the overlooks. So, do that after we take the trash cans out. Measure how much that is, what the increase is. And then we have something to compare.

Bill Wade: Well, in the end, we were hauling way, way less trash than before. I always looked at the trashcans on the Skyline Drive at these overlooks, and it seems like there was a trashcan right in the middle of the most exquisite view off the overlooks. So, I wondered how many people were running around the country with their picture taken by somebody, you know, with a trashcan in the scene looking off into the valley from the overlook. So, we not only improved the visitor experience, I think, but we ended up saving, I think almost two hundred thousand dollars in terms of hauling trash from the Skyline Drive.

Bill Wade: Now, I heard a rumor that the trashcans are back.

Brenna Lissoway: Mm hmm.

Bill Wade: And again, that's one of those things that always happens. You do something. And somebody comes along behind you and wonders well, why don't we have trashcans out here? It's traditional to have trashcans.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah. (laughs)

Bill Wade: So, I don't know if they're there or not. But we took them out.

Bill Wade: And I also cut way back on the mowing. For the same reason. We were spending huge amounts of dollars to mow the roadsides on the Skyline Drive. And I don't mean just a little strip along the pavement. But up onto the banks and everything else. Because it had been tradition. So, my judgment was, in a natural national park, that's not an appropriate thing to do. So, I said, "We're going to cut it back." And of course, maintenance squawked and all that kind of stuff. And everybody said that the public's going to complain because the weeds are going to come in. And we were lucky in some sense because the next spring after, we stopped in the late fall and we weren't going to start again in the spring. And that spring was a very wet spring. So, we had a wildflower display like you couldn't imagine. And the visitors loved it. So, I was able to survive that one.

Brenna Lissoway: (laughs) Wow. Other remarkable, or things you'd like to discuss from your time at Shenandoah? Other challenges or accomplishments?

Bill Wade: I think that's probably pretty much it. Those are the ones I can think of. Yeah.

Brenna Lissoway: Mm hmm. Okay.

Bill Wade: Great time. Fun time. I made the decision to retire from there because, for two things. One is I had, you know, without opening up a big, big new issue, I had accomplished most of the things that I thought I could while I was there. I did try, I did apply for several other jobs toward the end of the time that I was there. And for various reasons, probably, didn't get them. I was interested in going on to a larger area as superintendent, or even a regional position. But I didn't get those. So, at the time it seemed like okay, you can either stay here and sort of continue to just sort of ease along. Or retire and do some other things. So that's what I chose to do was to go ahead and retire and do the things that I'm doing now, which are the training and consulting and continuing those sorts of things. And the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees, which I had no idea about at the time. But those kinds of things were the sorts of things that I was interested in continuing in my retirement. And that I knew I could do and would do. And that would keep me busy and still allow me to contribute in some ways to the park service.

Brenna Lissoway: I would like to talk a little bit about your retirement involvement with the park service. But I'm also cognizant of your time. Should we stop and take a break? Do you have a few more minutes?

Bill Wade: Let's take a little break, yeah.

Brenna Lissoway: Okay. Yeah.

Bill Wade: What time is it?

Brenna Lissoway: It's three o'clock.

Bill Wade: Okay. No, I don't have any—

[END OF TRACK 2]

[START OF TRACK 3]

Brenna Lissoway: Okay, this is Brenna Lissoway continuing the interview with Bill Wade. Today is October the 22nd, 2014. So, this is the second part of our interview today. So, Bill, you just sort of ended speaking about your retirement and how you came to that decision. So now I was hoping that you could talk a little bit about your activities since you retired. And I know you started your own consulting company. Maybe you could just start with talking about some of those activities.

Bill Wade: Yeah. The last year or so that I was at Shenandoah, I actually got back into the training game, I guess you could say, in the sense that the then deputy director, John Reynolds, and the chief of training at the time, came to me and asked me to coordinate a series of what they were calling leadership seminars to be delivered throughout the National Park Service. And so, what I was supposed to do was pull together a two-week facilitators' training program at Albright Training Center. Bring people together that we had gotten together and selected from the various field operation in the parks and other offices. Put on this two-week session. And then these people would go out in groups of two to three to a number of parks. And put on these up to one-week leadership seminars. And they were designed to be very informal. This was all in the advent of the restructuring stuff that took place. And some ideas that some people had that we needed to kind of do some things differently in the park service at that time. So that was the design of these seminars.

Bill Wade: So, we did the two-week seminar, the facilitators' things, at Albright Training Center in Grand Canyon. And then I sort of coordinated to some extent, I think there were 85 of these things that were put on throughout the National Park Service over the next year and a half or so. So that got me back into the training game about something that I really cared about a lot, which is leadership as a general topic.

Bill Wade: And so, once we concluded all of those, and given the decisions that I'd made about Shenandoah, it was the right time to retire. So, I retired. And my last day of work was July third of 1997. Which gives a whole new meaning to Independence Day. And moved to Tucson, Arizona. And a little bit earlier than that, several of us who'd worked in the park service, and another couple that we knew from the National Association for Search and Rescue started a little company just to get something set up. So that if we wanted to continue to do this kind of work when we retired, we'd have an organizational structure to do it.

Bill Wade: So, once I retired, I started moving into that pretty quickly. And did what I could to develop and deliver training courses. A lot of them, most of them, for the park service, in things like leadership, supervision, customer service, team effectiveness, team building, those kinds of topics, which I had over the years sort of, those are the ones that interested me the most, and that I had done most of the work in.

Bill Wade: So that continued off and on for a number of years. I'm still doing those kind of things. I still even as of now am delivering a number of three to three and a half day seminars, and performance-based coaching and leadership for a number of different parks.

Bill Wade: So that's what I put together. When I decided I was going to retire, I felt like I had the opportunity and desire to continue to contribute to the park service. And do it more in this informal sort of role of doing training and that sort of thing. So that's been fairly successful. I didn't do it to make a bunch of money, but to keep things going.

Bill Wade: I did have a very interesting assignment about three years ago. I'd actually gone up to Denali National Park a number of times to help them with some of their strategic planning, and team effectiveness for their management team, and doing some training. And I got called one day to come up and help them take care of, as they put it, three dysfunctional work groups in the park.

Bill Wade: And so, I went up there and quickly determined that two of them really weren't all that dysfunctional. They just needed a little bit of help and support. One of them was truly dysfunctional. So, I got involved in trying to figure out why. And it wasn't very long that I figured out why. And I went to the superintendent and the deputy superintendent and said, "You can fix this real quickly. All you have to do is get rid of the foreman." Because he was the problem. So, to their credit, they did. And they got another foreman who turned out to be just as bad, but for different reasons. So, it took them another year to get rid of him.

Bill Wade: And then they called me one day. They were just getting ready to go into the spring opening for the summer. They didn't have a foreman. They'd gone through everybody that could be acting several times. So, they said, "How about coming up and being the acting buildings and utilities foreman?" Which is not anything that I had ever done, you know. But I said sure because I knew what the problem was. I knew what they needed was just some good leadership and some good management and some good support. There wasn't anything wrong with the competency of the people that were in the group. So, I went up there and did that for that whole summer. And then back up there the next summer for part of the summer. Because by then they'd actually selected a foreman, but he wasn't there yet. So that was a very interesting time. And very gratifying. Because the group, the team, just really responded remarkably well to it. And so to get some feedback, informal feedback, by just observing what

took place to me, and having studied a lot of that stuff and been involved in it for a long period of time, was very gratifying to see it actually work.

Bill Wade: So, I've been a great believer in this, the whole issue of doing good leadership training for people all the way down to the first level supervisors. Because I don't think that it's been very well done in the park service for a long time. I don't think people are getting the right kind of leadership training. They're getting the technical stuff about how to be a supervisor and how to fill out the forms and how to do all that stuff. But in terms of managing people? A lot of times it's not working very well. And I think that only has to be, you only have to look at a couple of the surveys that are done, the OPM survey and, I think it's called the Best Places to Work survey that that nonprofit does on government organizations, to figure out where the park service is now. And the ranking among those. It's not very good.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah.

Bill Wade: So that's sort of continued to motivate me to do this kind of stuff. And to make the contribution wherever I can to try to help people. So, it's been fun. It gives me an opportunity to travel to some places that sometimes I haven't ever been before. So, you know, can't think of a better thing to be doing right now.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah. Well speaking of travel, during your career, you've had an extraordinary amount of international opportunities. Probably more so than most park service career people. And I'm wondering, first if you could talk about how you've seen the role of the National Park Service change in terms of international outreach or involvement since the time that you started your career.

Bill Wade: Well, there has been a change. Because I can remember back when I came in. And for instance, when I was at Albright Training Center, there were some very formally structured programs for I guess what we would typically call exchanges. Where employees from our National Park Service would go to Australia and work for six months. And somebody from that country would come over here. And there was quite a bit of that going on. And in addition, I assume for some shorter-term kinds of things.

Bill Wade: I don't see any evidence of exchanges going on now. For a long time, it seemed to me that the international opportunities, and maybe this is a budget issue, or I'm not sure what. But it seemed to almost disappear. From about the early '90s maybe on, there just didn't seem to me to be much activity in that whole international arena.

Bill Wade: It's come back some now. Particularly the Interior Department's technical assistance program is involved in a number of international kinds of projects. In a lot of different places. And a lot of park service people and retirees are going to those kinds of things now. It seems to be a little more difficult for current employees of the park service to go because with the

budget limitations and staffing limitations and so forth, even if a person wants to go, often their supervisors won't let them go because they just don't have anybody to fill in behind them.

Bill Wade: So Interior, at least, has started to rely a lot more on retirees. And so, as a result, I've been involved in several more of those international assignments through them in the last several years. And about to go on another one, I think. So.

Brenna Lissoway: Can you talk just a little bit about each one of those?

Bill Wade: Yeah. I first got, not through Interior, by the way, but through another source, got selected first to go to Abu Dhabi with the idea that I was supposed to help them set up a brand-new national park. And staff it and mentor the management people that were going to manage this park and so forth. And it was going to be a two-year contract. So, I was going to be over there for two years. It just sounded like a wonderful assignment, and I was looking forward to it.

Bill Wade: So, I got over there. And about three months after I got there, it became very clear that this thing's not going to get off the ground. And I never really understood why, other than the fact that that was right at the time, I think, when the emirate of Dubai almost went bankrupt. And the United Arab Emirates are a very close-knit group. And so, the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, because they're probably the, that's where the primary leadership, and they're the richest of them, decided to bail out Dubai. And I think what that did is they sucked up all of the short-term project-oriented money to do that. And so, what that probably left is that they didn't have any money to start doing staffing of this park.

Bill Wade: So, I was there with nothing to do. And I suggested a couple of times things that I might do that were sort of not what I was hired to do, but that I thought I could do. And never got any responses back from the agency that I was supposedly working for.

Bill Wade: I probably could have stayed over there, you know, for the rest of my two years. And made a good salary because they were paying me a good salary. But I just couldn't. I couldn't see myself sitting around with nothing to do. So, I submitted my, to end my contract, my 30-day notice. And came back after about five months in-country. And that's when I ended up then going up to Denali for the rest of that summer.

Bill Wade: And then subsequent to that, through Interior's technical assistance program, several of us were selected to go to Petra Archeological Park in Jordan. Which turned out to be three separate trips. We went over there for two months the first time. About a month the second time, and about three weeks the third time. And the whole project was to mentor park rangers in Petra. And not do classroom training or anything like that, but actually get out in the park with them. Shadow them. Talk to them. Make suggestions to them. We also offered, because we were down in the park every day

that we were there, we also threw out our observations about certain things relative to park management. Offered a whole series of suggestions about things that we thought they could do differently in terms of managing the park.

Bill Wade: So, that was a great assignment. Petra is just an absolute wonderful resource, and it's not being all that well taken care of, unfortunately.

Bill Wade: Then I went back later the second year for another two weeks to Wadi Rum Protected Area, which is managed by another regional authority. And our job there was to kind of help them put together an operational plan for managing the park. That was very much more successful, I think. The manager of the park there was much, much more receptive to ideas and input and suggestions than the manager of the Petra park, who talked a good message but didn't seem to be interested in implementing a lot of it.

Bill Wade: But you know, you never know about those things. I mean, we left all of these series of recommendations and everything. And you never know when three, four, five years later, somebody's going to pick them out of the file and you know, actually read them and do something with them. So, it's not like there was a, we felt like there was time lost there or anything like that. We weren't, I don't think, as successful at raising the professionalism and the image and that sort of thing of the park rangers as we hoped we would be. But it was a great assignment for us. And we did make some contributions, so that was gratifying.

Bill Wade: And then, as of right now, I've been selected to do another two-week assignment, I think it is, coming up in about three months from now, two months from now, to do some sort of a project which I don't fully understand yet, because we haven't had our first conference call about it, in Bangladesh. So, you know, I love to do the international stuff. I think there's a real opportunity to make a significant contribution there. Particularly the more Third World countries that are just trying to put together effective professional staffs or parks or whatever. So, I will probably continue to do as much of that as I can.

Brenna Lissoway: And what do you think it is primarily, the United States National Park Service, or system, can offer to other countries?

Bill Wade: Well, I think we're looked upon by much of the world as being the epitome of a national park management organization. We've been in business, so to speak, longer than, I think, maybe any country in the world. We certainly have the first national park. I don't know if there were, I can't remember if there were other national park systems that were established before ours was in 1916. But you know, we've been in business that long. We've done it very well, I think, for the most part. We have a very diverse system of parks. So almost any country can look at the US National Park Service and see the diversity, see the history of managing parks that we have, and therefore make a conclusion that we can probably help them in many, many ways. And so, I think that's what

drives the potential. Some countries, obviously, maybe not interested. But a lot of them are. And I think there's still a lot more maybe requests for international assistance than either Interior or the park service will ever be able to handle.

Bill Wade: But it's something that I hope we never get out of. Because I think it's good for, it's certainly good for those countries. Particularly the Third World countries or the developing countries to be able to call on us to be able to provide that kind of assistance. And I think it's an honor for the US National Park Service to be looked upon as experts and asked to do those kinds of things. So, I hope we keep doing it.

Brenna Lissoway: Were you involved in a sister park relationship at all in any of the parks that you worked in in the United States?

Bill Wade: No, that didn't turn out to be anything that happened at the time I was at those areas. But I think that's another very successful program that I understand is going on. And I hope that gets further developed, even. Because I think there are some contributions there that are very helpful, from what I hear.

Brenna Lissoway: I would imagine that all the time you were able to spend in these various countries, and observing their national parks, their systems, their politics, their resources, was there anything that you felt you gained from, you personally gained from observing a different culture? That you were able to bring back to the United States to help improve our system?

Bill Wade: Oh, yeah. I'm not sure I can put a specific tag on any of them. But I think any time that you can get involved in those sorts of things with different cultures, different people, different ways of doing business, you always learn something if you allow yourself to learn something. And as a result, maybe you sort of internalize some of that stuff. And you bring it back and maybe you're not completely conscious of even implementing it sometimes. But every place I've gone, I'm sure I picked up things that have been useful and helpful. And it all adds up to that sort of, I guess, the whole picture of how you do business and so forth.

Bill Wade: The time in New Zealand was just really tremendous for me. I'd grown up, of course, in the Southwest and interacted with Native Americans and everyone else. But up to that time, I hadn't been involved in any park where there was a real close relationship with what you would call the natives or the, and in New Zealand, the relationship, particularly in the parks, I think, in the protected areas with the Maori culture was just absolutely wonderful. And significant. And so, observing that was a very good learning experience for me.

Brenna Lissoway: Did you have, because you were mainly working in eastern parks—

Bill Wade: Over half of my career was in the east, yes.

Brenna Lissoway: Did you have any significant issues or dealings with any Native American groups?

Bill Wade: No, not really. Not anything on the scale of what probably would be the case now in some of the Southwestern parks but wasn't so much at the time, in some cases. So, no. I guess the things I learned in New Zealand and even in the other countries were more back in the back of the mind. Always being aware, awareness of those things. And it probably wasn't just with Native American cultures. But that kind of concept expands to a lot of other relationships with minority groups and that sort of thing. So, it was all a very, very good experience for me.

Brenna Lissoway: You were also involved in, was it the International Congress of Rangers? I'm not getting that correct.

Bill Wade: Yeah. It's the International Ranger Federation. Right.

Brenna Lissoway: Ranger Federation. Thank you. Mm hmm.

Bill Wade: And I never was part of the governing part of the organization. I never held an office with them. But I went to the first, I think, four of their international congresses which they have every two to three years in different countries. And I was always called upon to do various projects and help with a number of the things, like drafting bylaws and putting together education policies and things like that, which I always felt like I was pretty good at doing those things. And some of the people who were in the official positions knew enough about me, I guess. So, I was always sort of the behind the scenes helper with that. But again, there were some great opportunities to interact with a number of people from a number of different countries in those that I went to. I haven't been to the last three of them, I don't think. But it's a great organization. It's struggling. It will probably never have much money behind it. But when you think about the people, the poor rangers that are trying to save the gorillas in Africa. And they come to these things and they learn things from the people who attend that. You know, it's the work of the angels, I think.

Brenna Lissoway: You've been involved in another organization. In fact, you helped found an organization, the Coalition for National Park Service Retirees, which has been very influential over the last decade or more. And I wonder if you could talk a little bit about that. And why you started it.

Bill Wade: Well, what happened was, it was all absolutely coincidental. Again, there was no real planning or anything else. I got a call one day from Destry Jarvis, who I had known for years and years and years. Who had, prior to that time, worked for National Parks Conservation Association, and for the National Park Service. I'd worked with NPCA at Shenandoah and other places. And so Destry called me because I was on the board of another small conservation organization with him. And so, he knew that I kind of kept track of a lot of people in the park service. He had been hired by the Rockefeller Family Fund to do a report on the extent to which the Bush administration and particularly Gail Norton, the secretary of the interior at the time, were influencing in a negative way public lands, but specifically national parks. So, he had been contracted by them to do this report.

Bill Wade: So, he did the report. And they, this was, I think he finished this in 2003. And the Rockefeller people decided they really wanted to "out" this report. So, they wanted to get the information out. And they wanted people to talk about specific things that were going on in the national parks, and so forth. And so, they knew that they couldn't call on current employees of the National Park Service, because there was a whole undertow of retaliation and everything in that administration anyway going on.

Bill Wade: So Destry called me, and he said, "Here's what they want to do. They want to have a press conference in Washington DC at the National Press Club. And they want three people to come and speak about these things that they have experienced, or they have experience in." So, he asked me if I'd be interested in doing it. And if I was, then could I find two other people that might be interested. So, I said yeah, no problem, I'd do it. And right then we identified Rick Smith and Mike Finley, both retirees.

Bill Wade: So, the three of us went back there. We had this national press conference. We fashioned a letter to the president and to the secretary of the interior that summarized these things that we thought were egregious actions that were being taken against the national parks and those sort of things. And got that ready to sign.

Bill Wade: And so, at the last minute, somebody in Rockefeller Family Fund or whatever said, "Listen. We need to get a lot of other signatures on this letter." So, we spent the whole afternoon in DC after our press conference, calling up people that we knew, reading them the letter, and saying "would you be willing if we put your signature on this?" And I think we got 60 people or something like that to agree to sign it.

Bill Wade: So that thing went out. It got a fair amount of press coverage. It got distributed informally in a number of places. And all of a sudden, a number of other retirees started calling Mike and Rick and I and saying, "How do I get my name on that letter? I think what's going on right now isn't good, and I'm retired, but I still want to be involved."

Bill Wade: We thought, hmm. Here's a message, you know? There's a bunch of retirees out there that still want to be involved in everything. So, we floated the idea of starting an organization. And of course, it was, everybody really wanted to do it and everything. So, we put this thing together.

Bill Wade: Initially we called it the Coalition of Concerned National Park Service Retirees. And we loosely organized it under an umbrella of another nonprofit that the Rockefeller Family Fund was funding – the Campaign to Protect America's Lands. And we operated for a couple of years under their auspices. They had an executive director and a legal counsel and some things like that. And so, they would involve us in the issues, and they would pay for it.

Bill Wade: So, the biggest thing that we got involved in, very early in that whole battle, was the attempt to change, significantly, radically, change the National Park Service management policies. And we got a leaked copy of the draft that the person in Secretary Norton's office was working on. And we were able to take that and just get a huge amount of media coverage on it. Here's what they're trying to do. This would radically change the intent of the Organic Act and a whole bunch of things like that.

Bill Wade: And so, we were in the forefront. We were coordinating very closely with National Parks Conservation Organization and several other conservation organizations. But because we commonly said about ourselves, you know, 'we're the voices of experience.' And in fact, that's still a tag line for the organization. And so, we took the lead in being the spokesman about how these radically changed management policies would affect managing the national parks. And the result was that they basically turned around and decided not to do it. So, they did modify the management policies, but not nearly as badly as it could have been.

Bill Wade: So that got us going. And you know, people continued to come to us and so forth. So, in 2005, I think it was, we decided that we were going to go ahead and formalize the organization. Get a 501c3 nonprofit, incorporate it, and so forth. Which we did. And we started an executive council. And I chaired that council for eight years, I think, during those early times. And gradually now it's time for other people to take that on and move it forward. But it's now up to over a thousand members. It's still kind of a watchdog organization. Right now, there's not a lot happening that has involved much of the coalition's time and effort. But we got very involved, for instance, in initially the attempt to change the regulation, and then subsequently was legislated to allow guns in national parks. Which we adamantly opposed. But we lost that one. So, you know, those are going to continue to come up. And I think the coalition serves a pretty good purpose now. It's different than NPCA and it's different than all those other organizations. We continue to say we're the voices of experience. We say we've got over 30,000 years of experience in the National Park Service. Or managing the National Park Service lands. And when you say those kinds of things to the media, that hooks them.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah.

Bill Wade: So, it's been, I think, a very good organization. I think it will continue to grow. As the cycles change in the political scene, why sometimes there will be more things that they need to be involved in and sometimes less. So.

Brenna Lissoway: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. It seems like there's been an increasing role in various capacities for retirees within the National Park Service. Advising or contracting. Working, you know, in something like this type of organization. Do you think, I guess what do you think is the role of retirees?

Bill Wade: Well, I think, I tried to get a more formal arrangement made with the National Park Service under which retirees could be called upon to contribute more of their talent and expertise and interests and that sort of thing. You know, we called it, I can't remember what we called it. But anyway, the idea was that we were going to kind of act as a clearinghouse. Much like the international technical assistance program does. So, if a park or regional office had some kind of work that they needed done, they could put out a "vacancy" announcement. For lack of a better term. They would send it to the coalition. The coalition would distribute it to all of its members. And then the coalition doesn't have any further role. If some retiree out there is interested, then they contact directly the "selecting office," and they negotiate the deal. I mean, it may be for pay, it may be a re-employed annuitant thing. It may be a volunteer thing. It may be expenses-only reimbursement. Doesn't matter. But we simply are the distributing outfit. And so far, the park service still hasn't approved that whole process yet.

Bill Wade: But it was clear to me that there still are a lot of retirees out there that want to make a contribution. And that would be willing to take these shorter-term assignments. Sometimes with pay, sometimes without. But it would be up to them to make the decision with whoever the selecting official is, or whoever needs the work.

Brenna Lissoway: Right. Right.

Bill Wade: So maybe that will get off the ground at some point in time. I don't know. But I just do know that there are a lot of retirees out there that maybe not quite as motivated for something close to fulltime as I'm doing. But you know, I've always said that in the park service it's not really a career. It's a lifestyle. And I think a lot of people view it that way. And just because they retire, they don't immediately give up their interest and their willingness to continue to contribute. And I think the coalition made it clear that that was the case.

Brenna Lissoway: So, I'm going to ask you just to kind of think about your own career now. And maybe talk about, and you may have alluded to this already, but I want to give you another opportunity, just in case there's something else we haven't talked about. What would you say is your most, your proudest accomplishment for your federal career?

Bill Wade: I think probably it would have to be the initiation and the subsequent evolution of that search management stuff. I think that has, looking back on it, you know, 40 years, I think that's probably had the biggest impact on others. Meaning, in that case, lives saved. And when you look at something that you had a part in starting that has resulted in, again, we don't know how many, but we know it's a lot of lives saved as a result of something that you started when somebody came to you and said, "You've got ten thousand dollars. Do a training course." And that's what evolved.

Did I know it at the time? No. But looking back on it, knowing how it's still evolving and that sort of thing, I think that's probably the biggest one.

Bill Wade: Followed closely, probably, by the air quality stuff at Shenandoah. I mean, I think that, if I'm looking at it, maybe this is the way to look at it. Impact on people, saving lives, obviously the search management stuff. Impact on resources and protection of resources, the Shenandoah stuff would probably be there.

Brenna Lissoway: And thinking about the trajectory of your career. I mean, here you are, someone from the Southwest who ended up spending a lot of your time in the east, overseas, doing things like that. How would you describe your career trajectory?

Bill Wade: Purely coincidental and lucky. I don't think I can say that it was hugely planned. I mean, I always knew basically what I thought I wanted to do in the next position. But for instance, when I was at National Capital Parks, and in Yosemite, I had gotten into the park service's mid-level management program. I knew at the time that I wanted to work in a training center. But I never anticipated that that was going to happen real quickly. I had no idea that I would ever accept a job from managing back country in Badger Pass in Yosemite to go on to managing the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial and Jefferson Memorial. That was probably the furthest thing from my mind. But you know, when that came up, it seemed like exactly the right thing to do. And it was one of the best decisions I made. I went to National Capital Region, National Capital Parks. I learned a huge amount of things. I always say part of going to National Capital Parks, the lessons there in many cases were learning how not to do things. Which I think is every bit as important, often, as learning how to do things. So, for that assignment, that was there.

Bill Wade: And then, when I was at Albright, I had absolutely no inkling I would be offered something in New Zealand. But when the opportunity comes, you take it. So yes, did I know I wanted to stay in the ranger division for a while when I got to that point? Did I know that I wanted to work in park management and ultimately a superintendent? Yes. But the path along the way from one to the other, lucky and coincidental in many cases.

Brenna Lissoway: Did you ever have the opportunity in moving from one position to another to have a good discussion or even maybe an opportunity to overlap with someone who was coming behind you to take over?

Bill Wade: You know, I don't think so. Not that I can think of. I have to go back and think a little bit. But I don't think of a case that that happened. I guess the closest that it came to that was when I was at Mather, two of the staff members who worked for me there ultimately became, subsequently became superintendent at Mather. But not immediately following. So that's probably the closest that I ever came to somebody who worked for me or overlapping or anything like that. You know, it just doesn't happen very often.

Brenna Lissoway: It doesn't.

Bill Wade: And it's unfortunate, I think, in many cases. But I suppose in that regard, my career was typical in that it just didn't happen. You know, you leave. You don't even know who's coming in behind you sometimes, much less have an opportunity to overlap with them.

Brenna Lissoway: If you had had the opportunity, is there something in particular that you would have liked to pass on to any of those positions, people coming after you? Would that have been something valuable?

Bill Wade: Yeah, I think it would have been. I mean, I would have welcomed the opportunity. Particularly at Shenandoah, I guess. That's probably the one that comes to mind most readily.

Brenna Lissoway: What would you have said to your successor?

Bill Wade: Well, I think that what would be important is to inform them as to why I did certain things. I would not, I think, be so presumptive to say, "Here's how I think you ought to do things." But a lot of times when somebody new comes in, they're following in the footsteps of somebody that was there that made some decisions. And they don't always have the information about why those decisions were made. So, I think that would be the thing that I would focus on if I was to meet with somebody that was coming in behind me. I would try to explain why I took the trashcans out of the overlooks, for instance. And a lot of other things that you make decisions about. And then just accept that that person is probably going to make some different decisions, and some decisions that are going to change some of the decisions that you made. That's fine. But if they have the benefit of knowing why you did some of the things, I think that's probably the most useful thing that a person can pass on to somebody that's a successor to.

Brenna Lissoway: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. In your long involvement and career with the park service, what do you think has been the single biggest change that the agency's had to grapple with?

Bill Wade: I guess I would have to say that it's a pretty across the board change in the kind of people that are coming into the park service these days, versus back when I came in and even sometime after that. And I think it's, you know, we talk about the different generations and that sort of thing, which I don't completely understand those different generational titles and everything. But I do know that people are coming in now – and not necessarily judging it, I'm just saying it's different – and as a result of that, some leaders and some supervisors are not doing a very good job of managing the people that are coming into the organization now. And I think it's because of this differences in their, a couple of the cultural things, or a commitment thing. I'm not sure what it all entails. I just know that they're different. And I know that it's creating some difficulties with managing people and people are not often, are not completely committed.

And feel like they're not being led properly. And all those kinds of things. I hear that a lot when I'm going out doing this training stuff now from people in the courses. Both how come, "Why am I not able to manage these people now?" or the people that are down there are saying, "Why am I being treated this way by my managers?" And so forth. And that's the thing I don't think the park service has responded to well enough. And you know, there are a lot of examples out there right now of the people not doing things right. And, you know, whistleblower things. And getting stuff in the media. And PEER, Professional Employees for Environmental Responsibility. Some of the stuff that they're taking on. There's just way more of that stuff than there used to be. And I think it's because of the differences in the people.

Bill Wade: That's probably not very well put. I don't know how to explain it any more concisely. But it's just a feeling that I have about all of that.

Brenna Lissoway: And what do you, what, at this point, do you value the most about the park service? About the park system?

Bill Wade: Well I think that you can't go beyond just saying that it's the premier system of protected areas in the world. And at this point in time to have more than 400 areas that we protect on behalf of the American public. And in fact, on behalf of the world. That's about as good as it gets, it seems to me. I'm certainly thankful that I had the opportunity to make it a career or a lifestyle. I often these days introduce myself at these training courses as somebody who's been, I use the word "affiliated" with the National Park Service for over 70 years. And I have been. And you know, it's been a life that, again, I was lucky and fell into certain parts of it. All that sort of thing. But I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Brenna Lissoway: Bill, is there anything else that you would like to talk about in terms of your career, about the agency, anything at all that you feel like is important that we should talk about?

Bill Wade: I don't think so, Brenna. I think that's probably way more information than anybody ever needs or wants. But I certainly can't think of anything else right now.

Brenna Lissoway: Okay. Well, thank you very much for taking the time.

Bill Wade: Well, thank you for taking the time to do it and putting up with me and prompting me some and all that sort of thing. It's been great to get to know you better, too.

Brenna Lissoway: Well, thank you very much.

Bill Wade: Yeah.

[END OF TRACK 3]

[END OF INTERVIEW]