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NPS Paleontology Program Records (HFCA 2465)
Vincent Santucci's NPS Oral History Project, 2016-2024

Vincent Santucci
September 28, 2023

Interview conducted by Nancy Russell, Molly Williams, and Emma Squire
Transcribed by Rev.com
Edited by Molly Williams

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Transcribed by: Rev.com

Transcript

[START OF INTERVIEW]

Nancy Russell:	00:00:02	This is Nancy Russell, archivist for the National Park Service History Collection. Today is September 28th, 2023, and we are here to interview Vince Santucci. No, I always put an S—
Vincent Santucci:	00:00:19	Santucci, like two C's.
Nancy Russell:	00:00:20	Santucci, with the NPS Paleontology Program. Before we get started, we'll go around and have everybody say who they are for the transcriptionist. I'll start with you, Vince.
Vincent Santucci:	00:00:33	Okay. Hi, my name is Vince Santucci. I'm the Senior Paleontologist and Paleontology Program Coordinator for the National Park Service.
Molly Williams:	00:00:42	I'm Molly Williams, intern.
Emma Squire:	00:00:44	I'm Emma Squire, intern.
Katherine Hayes:	00:00:48	Katherine Hayes, intern.
Molly Williams:	00:00:53	If you could please tell us your full name and spell your last name for the transcriptionist.
Vincent Santucci:	00:00:57	Sure. Vincent Luke Santucci Senior. And the last name is spelled S-A-N as in Nancy, T-U-C-C-I.
Molly Williams:	00:01:07	Thank you. Do we have your permission to record this?
Vincent Santucci:	00:01:10	Yes.
Molly Williams:	00:01:10	If you could start off, could you tell us a little bit about where you're from and your family background?
Vincent Santucci:	00:01:18	Oh, excellent. So I grew up in Pittsburgh and I was very fortunate to be able to spend a lot of time with my maternal

grandparents who lived in Oakland, just a few blocks away from the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, and Forbes Field at the time, the home of the Pittsburgh Pirates, being so close that my childhood is heavily influenced by the proximity to those features because I attended undergraduate and graduate work at the University of Pittsburgh, or Pitt.

00:01:54 I spent a lot of time during the summer days when the Pittsburgh Pirates were not in town, climbing the walls of Forbes Field and playing baseball on home plate in the Forbes Field and also on then rainy days, and in the winter spent a lot of time being chased by the security guards in Carnegie Museum's Dinosaur Hall.

Molly Williams: 00:02:20 That said, would you call yourself a dinosaur kid, that you were heavily interested in dinosaurs?

Vincent Santucci: 00:02:26 I was interested in a lot of things. I had an aunt who was a librarian and she worked at a bookstore and once a month she'd let us go down and buy a book. And so from five years old, I fell in love with books and learned the value of libraries and things like that. So, I had interest in so many things. I had a very nurturing family who loved education, history, science. We traveled a lot. We went to lots of national parks. And so I think that influenced me. So I would say that I wasn't a dinosaur fanatic per se, but I loved natural history. I loved bird watching and all aspects of it, but I had a real fondness for paleontology based upon the wonderful exhibits that they had at Carnegie Museum.

Nancy Russell: 00:03:17 Were you an only child?

Vincent Santucci: 00:03:19 No, I had a younger brother. So my goal was to either grow up and become a baseball player, which didn't happen, or a paleontologist. So I feel my life has been very fortunate.

Molly Williams: 00:03:35 You had said that you went to national parks with your family.

Vincent Santucci: 00:03:37 Yes.

Molly Williams: 00:03:37 Could you give us kind of a list of which ones, and if you had a favorite one, and any memorable experiences?

Vincent Santucci: 00:03:43 Yeah, sure. So the one park we went to at least twice a year, coming from Pittsburgh, it was about a three hour drive to Gettysburg National Military Park. My earliest

recollection was being there in 1963, which was significant because that was the centennial, the hundred-year anniversary of the battle. And on that experience, they had opened up the new Cyclorama Visitor Center. It's this 360-degree painting. And five years old, I'm thinking, okay, you see all these paintings and artifacts and things like that showing people in uniform on horseback. And so after we left the cyclorama looking at the painting, we headed towards the Angle, the third day's battle, Pickett's Charge.

00:04:27 And I saw there was a figure on horseback in uniform. I'm thinking, oh, okay, soldier, right? And so as I got closer, I saw it was a uniformed national park ranger, flat hat, and we walked up and I looked up at him, and as he was talking to other people, he looked down at me and he winked. And I felt that was my moment that I was making a connection to the Park Service. And at the time, I didn't realize that my career would wind up going to the Park Service and I'd wind up coming back and living in Gettysburg. I feel I've had a very lucky life.

00:05:06 Oh yes. So lots of trips to national parks. The one that I still can't believe that I was able to undertake is that when my uncle, his name was Luke. Luke's, a common name in our family, my middle name is Luke. When he turned 18 and graduated high school, he got a Volkswagen Bug and he wanted to drive across country. And I don't know why my mother allowed it, but my brother and myself, I was 13 and he was 11, drove across country in the Volkswagen Bug. We probably didn't have $20 amongst all of us, and most of that went towards gas, but we ate a lot of peanut butter sandwiches and we camped in Forest Service areas, which were free. And so, one of our really exciting first stops was in Badlands National Park, and of course, fossils there.

00:05:56 And that was the first time that I saw fossil vertebrate remains in the wild in a natural state. And that was pretty exciting. And so we went on to Black Hills. I met an old man, in a rock shop – a rock shop owner who did a lot of gold panning, and he asked me where I was going. I said, "We're going to Yellowstone". He said, "Well, you know, if you're coming in the east side of the park, go down to the Shoshone River, and if you buy one of these pans, I bet you'll find some gold".

00:06:27 So I bought it and we drove across [Wyoming], we saw Devils Tower, [crossed] over the Big Horn Mountains and

into the east side of Yellowstone. And spending a couple of days there, we camped on the east side of the park where he [the rock shop owner in the Black Hills] had recommended. It was a Forest Service campground. It's called Three Mile Campground. It was three miles outside of the east entrance.

00:06:48 There's another story there. I might as well tell you, that will tell you more about me. But anyways, the days that we spent there were life-changing experiences, seeing wildlife and learning about another great place that's preserved by the Park Service.

00:07:08 I remember coming into Yellowstone and seeing that wooden routed sign thinking how exciting it is to be here. And then when we departed on our last day, and it says, you're now leaving Yellowstone National Park. I'll deny it if anybody asked, but I had tears in my eyes leaving Yellowstone National Park because I made such a powerful connection to that place. Later on in my career, I had the real privilege of working as a ranger in both Badlands and Yellowstone National Park. I've had a pretty good life.

Nancy Russell: 00:07:42 Do you feel like your childhood dreams came true?

Vincent Santucci: 00:07:44 Oh, beyond. Beyond. And I haven't even talked about my children or wife yet.

Nancy Russell: 00:07:50 What about Three Mile Campground?

Vincent Santucci: 00:07:52 So we came in there and we set up camp and were three young guys unsupervised, pretty much all city boys, but did a lot of camping. And so the first night we weren't necessarily prepared for bear country, and so we left a lot of food out, and of course we were rewarded with the "Absaroka Bear Convention" outside of our tent feasting on the things that we had left outside. Well, we basically got into our sleeping bags, zipped them up and waited for the sun to come up. When we woke up in the morning, we assessed the area, and of course it influenced a lot of our conversations with rangers after that, "What do we do to protect ourselves from bears?" And we learned everything there was to know about that at the Boy Scout level.

00:08:44 But I did go out in the morning with the pan and found sand [to silt]-sized pieces of gold. It's like, I'll never forget this moment, and I don't. I have that little vial in my office

and it was just, this is real. This isn't just stuff you read in storybooks. This is a real world, and it's that relationship with the natural environment and all these resources, including geologic. It was very exciting.

00:09:13 And so we spent our days in the park, and on the second day that we came back, and now we were ready to take our comprehensive exams on what do you do in bear country to protect yourselves. I mean, we're out there [at our campsite] vacuuming all these organic molecules and tying things in trees. We were ready [for bears], but I made a big mistake that day because we were already cognizant of bears. And so my uncle, for some reason, overly cautious, sent my younger brother who's only 11 out [of the tent] and said, "Hey, go out and check and make sure that we didn't leave anything out there". And so when he [brother Mark] didn't come back right away again, the 18-year-old [uncle] sends out the 13-year-old [Vince] to go and look for him.

00:09:55 That I went out and I saw his [Mark's] shadow was walking back towards the tent. So what do I do? I decided I'm going to pretend like I'm a bear. And I hid by the tent, and when he turned, I growled like a bear. Little did I know that he had his four-inch knife held up like this, and he came down and ripped me [in the upper arm] and I was hemorrhaging. And it was a pretty serious wound.

00:10:26 So I went back into the tent and I said, "Mark stabbed me." And he [the uncle] said, " Oh, no, he didn't". I said, "Yes, he did, look". And he panicked. But he got cloth and said, "Hold your arm down.[to apply pressure to the wound]" We got in the vehicle. We were either going to drive to Cody or into the Lake Hospital [in Yellowstone], so we decided to go into the park. And he drove quite fast. We almost hit a moose going across Sylvan Pass, that's high elevation, no guardrails in some areas.

00:10:57 But we went into the park to Lake Hospital. The doctor sewed me up [10 stitches], and when I was finished, I walked out, and at the end of the hall before the exit were two park rangers. They said, "Hey, we need to talk to you. Can you tell us?".

00:11:14 They had to interview me to find out if this wasn't a case of domestic violence or something like that. And so they wanted me to write down in my own words what happened. And so I remember sitting there writing and I said, "Well,

my brother stabbed me because he thought I was a bear". And of course they thought that was interesting and all that. And we said goodbye and went on and we didn't tell my mother until we got home.

Nancy Russell: 00:11:39 I was going to say.

Vincent Santucci: 00:11:45 But I have the park archivist looking for that case incident report because she says "If you filled out something, we've got a copy of it". So I'm looking forward to see that someday, some responsible archivist caring for that important family archive.

Nancy Russell: 00:12:11 And what did your mother react?

Vincent Santucci: 00:12:11 Oh my gosh. I don't want to say.

Nancy Russell: 00:12:11 Were you and your brother in trouble when you got home or it was already past?

Vincent Santucci: 00:12:14 Well, my mother was very good. I'll admit this now. When I was 16 years old, I was a good kid. I was a really good kid. I was out with some friends and they had wine and drank it underage and all that, and I got really drunk. And so I trusted my mother so much. She was such a good parent that, I knew I could come back and tell her. Yes, I've been drinking and I'm sick. And she helped me through it. And I was really scared what kind of punishment I was going to get because I'd never did anything as bad as this before. And she says, "I think you learned enough of a lesson. I bet you don't have this problem again". And I don't drink to this day. I mean, that was a really bad experience for me but I was so happy my mother handled it the way she did.

Emma Squire: 00:13:07 Great. So moving forward a little bit in time, you mentioned that you attended the University of Pittsburgh for an undergraduate and master's. What were those degrees in and do you have any other degrees from other institutions?

Vincent Santucci: 00:13:21 Sure. So I went to Pitt obviously because I had a childhood connection to the place, running around the Cathedral of Learning and looking at the nationality rooms and all that. I always dreamed of going to college. And it was no other place that I had thought of other than Pitt because it's there, it's close to home, but it's also a place where my grandparents went to college and other family members. So

there was that kind of connection as well. And so I had entered undergraduate, I actually received a scholarship for Track and Field. I ran track in high school and I did really well in high school. And then I came to Pitt and the competition was really different. And so I retired after one year of three hours a day track practice because it just was burning me out and I was really dedicated to my education.

00:14:21 Just bragging here. I ended my career by attending an invitational Pentathlon, five events, and I took first place and I figured what a great time to retire. So anyways, yeah, you used to run around track. There's the indoor field where we did the indoor track season, and then we ran around the Pitt football stadium, the old stadium at the time. And Tony Dorsett was one of my running mates out there. Do you know the name? He's a Hall of Fame football player that played at Pitt when I was there in '76. He won, broke all sorts of records, at the collegiate level, and then he went on to play for the Dallas Cowboys, but I'll be careful how I say this, but I used to shower with Tony Dorsett.

00:15:18 Again, I don't know if that just knocked us up from PG to R this interview, but it's worth sharing it now. So I began, came into the Pitt thinking, "I'm going to go into the biology program", and I thought I did my homework, but I didn't. And I found out that the department was very biased towards molecular biology, which was a really big thing at the time. And there was really few classes available at the levels that I was interested in, systematics, evolution, anatomy, et cetera. They offered them, but they offered them every other year. And there wasn't enough to really apply yourself towards where I wanted to go [with my undergraduate education]. But where those classes were seated were in the anthropology department. They would teach vertebrate paleontology, mammalian evolution, primate evolution. And so I wind up gravitating where I changed my major to be primarily, my major was in anthropology/archaeology, and my minor was in biology.

00:16:26 It opened up doors because there were good connections with the Carnegie Museum. I was able to work as a volunteer there preparing a fossil dinosaur block from Ghost Ranch, which is a national natural landmark, these early *Coelophysis* dinosaurs [Late Triassic]. That was exciting.

00:16:46 And then I also worked on sorting out cave sediments for small micro mammal teeth from the Pleistocene for a very famous paleontologist by the name of John Guilday. And John Guilday is renowned by any Pleistocene paleontologist in North America today because of all the historic work that he did looking at cave stratigraphy through the last glacial maximum and how species changed because, with the glacial advances, more northern species would push south and be present, and then after the glaciers retreated, then they would disappear. And he recorded all the cycles and I helped to pick those little teeth out. He was an interesting individual because he was a brilliant man, but he contracted polio, and so he was confined. He had a disability, and so his wife had to put the specimens in front of him into the microscope and he would dictate into a tape recorder and he would still publish. But he was a beautiful writer. He wrote for Carnegie Magazine. And so he's part of my educational heritage being able to work with somebody like him.

00:17:57 So I finished up, I became the president of the Undergraduate Archaeology Club [at Pitt] and had a lot of fun, but I saw that everybody said, “You need to start taking more geology classes because you don't want to just be somebody that works up behind a microscope in a museum. You also want to learn how important the relationship is between fossils and the geologic strata”. And so I had the opportunity to take some courses from a paleontologist by the name of Harold “Bud” Rollins, who was one of the best instructors you can imagine.

00:18:31 He was just so organized in his thought and made things so relevant and meaningful that I fell in love with him and said, I'm coming to do my master's under him, and I'm really glad I did. So when I got into the master's program, paleontology is a subdiscipline between biological sciences and geologic sciences, and I wanted that holistic degree. I wanted that holistic background to be able to integrate that. So I'm one of the few people in the history of the University of Pittsburgh that had a teaching assistantship in both the Biology and Geology [Departments].

00:19:09 I taught the comparative [vertebrate] anatomy labs at Pitt to undergraduate students that mostly were pre-meds that they had to get A's on everything in order to go to medical school. So they didn't want to know anything that wasn't going to be on the test. It's not like when you go in a

classroom of third graders who want to hear everything about the latest and greatest, they just want to know it was on the test. And then I also taught physical and historical labs as a graduate student in the Geology Department.

Nancy Russell: 00:19:37 Just to clarify, when did you finish your undergrad and when did you get your master's?

Vincent Santucci: 00:19:47 ‘81 for the undergraduate and then '91 for the master's. I took several years off to go out and work for the [National] Park Service and do field work and things like that.

Nancy Russell: 00:20:02 Which sounds like a good segue.

Emma Squire: 00:20:03 Yeah. So you told us about some early childhood experiences with park rangers at Gettysburg and at Yellowstone. When did you first become aware of the National Park Service as a career path?

Vincent Santucci: 00:20:25 I had thought about it romantically. Boy, wouldn't it be great? But I know it's impossible, but aim high. I shared within our – with you in our conversation yesterday that I was influenced heavily by my maternal grandfather. He was a general practitioner, medical doctor. He went through medical school during the Depression, so he got out right away. He didn't specialize. He wanted to be able to help people right away. And so he was an old-fashioned doctor who did house calls, who delivered babies, who worked in the emergency room, that rode on ambulances, that did surgery.

00:21:05 He did everything, and we learned a lot about him, because he was very humble and modest, at his funeral when hundreds of patients came in and told us about all the things we didn't know, like the woman with four children who came in late one day to get medicine for her child, and he wrote a prescription and he was finishing up. And so he walked down to the pharmacy to drop off some blood samples there and saw the woman. She was crying that she didn't have the money to pay for the prescription, so he paid for it. And many times his pay were bags of green beans or tomatoes. He loved what he did. He loved the ability to help people, and he's the one that told me all the time growing up, “*Never give up on your childhood*”—Sorry—"*Never give up on your childhood dreams and interest in life and learning*”. And I've carried that with me,

and it's served me well. "*Never give up your childhood enthusiasm about life and learning".* Sorry.

Nancy Russell: 00:22:19 That's good advice.

Vincent Santucci: 00:22:20 Yeah.

Emma Squire: 00:22:23 What was your first position with the National Park Service and what drew you to it?

Vincent Santucci: 00:22:27 Yeah, so when I started to have that academic mindset and I'm saying, okay, "what am I going to do after I get my degree?" I'm thinking about graduate school and all this, that I developed a project that I really wanted to work on.

00:22:42 As I was reviewing the literature, I found out that the paleontologists in South Dakota and the paleontologists in Nebraska didn't get along very well. And when they published on similar topics about fossils of a particular time period, they had very different interpretations. And I'm thinking, that's a project that somebody needs to figure out, and I like it. And so because it was pretty much based in the Great Plains and in Badlands National Park, I thought, what if, could it be possible that I could apply, and get a job as a park ranger [at Badlands National Park, South Dakota] to work there and to be able to have an income, a place to stay, and then on my days off, be able to go out and do field work? And I remember the day that I got a call from the chief naturalist [Dave McGinnis] saying, "I like your application. I'd like to interview you."

00:23:35 That came together really, really well. And I began that position in May of 1985. My first meeting face-to-face with the chief naturalist he helped to redirect a lot of my assumptions. I thought, I'm going to come on and there's going to be all these rangers that are paleontologists and I'm going to be able to learn from them. And when I sat down, he said, "Well, my philosophy is that there's a lot to Badlands National Park. There's wildlife, there's 60 species of grass. It's a very diverse floral ecosystem, modern, we have archeology, we have Native American history. We're tied to the Lakota Sioux". He said, "I hire six rangers. One is my geology/paleontology expert, one is my botany expert, one is my Native American person [history ranger]". He says, "Oh, and I just want to let you know you're the geology [and paleontology] guy. I'm thinking, "Oh my gosh".

00:24:39 So I took it very seriously and I spent lots of hours reading everything I could. I took advantage of the fact that it was an active area where there were lots of spring and summer field trips, geologic field camps, that came into the [park] camp[ground]. Where there's faculty members who knew the park geology, that would be teaching it to their students. And so I got the opportunity to hang out with them. They'd stay in our campground, so I'd get to know them in the evening, and then we'd go out into the field [during the day]. And same thing with paleontologists. I would go out in the field and learned it, learned a lot about it by really subject matter experts who knew it better than anybody.

00:25:19 And I communicated with all those legendary names of people like Morris Skinner and John Clark and others who had published extensively and done field work at Badlands to also begin to inquire, tell them about my project, get their thoughts on it. And I've got some wonderful archives that you'll see in Badlands National Park, from things—field notes from 1930s by Morris Skinner when he worked in the exact area that I did my master's thesis.

00:25:51 That project, by the way, was looking at trying to resolve the differences of where they [paleontologists] drew the line between two very important land mammal age boundaries in South Dakota compared to where they drew it in Nebraska. And what made that really fortunate for me in terms of the timing of my life and asking those questions is that I could build on the previous work where they had made fossil collections, where they had mapped and these stratigraphic columns, geologic columns. And I applied a new technology called paleomagnetism [paleomagnetic dating] where you could go in and you could measure magnetic properties with earth's magnetic field and reversals and have a more absolute date. By looking at that pattern of reversals and say, “Okay, we're looking at things that may not be as absolute, but we're trying to correlate those boundaries by using something that's going to be exactly the same in both South Dakota”.

00:26:58 There might be paleoenvironmental changes, ecosystem differences of why the fauna in Nebraska may be slightly different. It might be different habitats, but we applied an absolute technique that allowed us to answer that question. And so I was very proud that my graduate project was featured as the cover article in *Park Science* in 1986.

00:27:26 So hard not to fall in love with the National Park Service, that's for sure.

00:27:31 So very important from so many ways from my academic career where it was the basis of my master's field work. Also beginning to learn about the culture of the National Park Service, the life of a park ranger, what it's like to live in a remote area with a small community of people, and how important it is that you, and the maintenance, and the administrative, and the curator, and the interpreters, resource managers work together. Because you're [the park is] understaffed, you've got a big job. You got to serve the public. You got to protect the resources. And you learn a lot when you're in that setting because you wind up wearing a lot of hats. Just by the fact that you're there the day that the fire starts and you're the first one on scene, you got to learn how to fight fires. And you got to learn how to do a wide variety of things, including communicating respectfully, articulately with the public.

00:28:33 Because of course there's a wide range of views of things out there on any particular topics. And when you're representing the National Park Service and that very, very wonderful uniform, that green and the gray, you don't want to tarnish the reputation of the Park Service by giving somebody an answer that you don't know the correct answer. You honestly admit, that's a good question. I'm going to go ask Ranger B and see if we can get an answer. Or I'm going to do some research and I'll give you a call if you want to give me your phone number.

00:29:05 But it's wanting to help—that friendly ranger—that feels that this visitor is just as important as anyone and that you want to provide them the services that is anticipated from that friendly National Park Service Ranger.

00:29:21 I took it as seriously as I could, and I loved it. I embraced it, and I exercise it [these qualities and values] to this day. It is a privilege to be able to wear that uniform, and there's a lot of symbology. It's like a baseball player putting on the uniform, the Yankee pinstripes. It's a real honor and privilege, and I try to convey that to all the students that I mentor, all the rangers that I mentor. When I tell them about my ring and make sure that you know that the hat band doesn't have pine cones. These are *Sequoia* cones for a reason, and every park ranger should know that as part of our agency's history and legacy.

00:30:06 One example would be is that one of my favorite interpreter programs was that we [Rangers] would go out for an hour and a half and take a specimen of a fossil that we would prepare, do fossil preparation out at the Fossil Exhibit Trail. They had a little shelter that was shaded and it accommodated about 30 people. And you could do an interpretation and talk all about fossils and tell them this wonderful story that's preserved at Badlands National Park. And then there was a very, very nice trail that was there called the Fossil Exhibit Trail. They rehabbed it. And a couple of years ago it won a National Association of Interpretation Award because of its thoughtfulness and design.

00:30:55 There were little plexiglass domes that actually had fossils along the way [Fossil Exhibit Trail], people would break into them and they'd steal the fossils. And so even when they replaced the domes and they put replicas under there, people would break the domes and take the replicas. So I became intimately aware of the fact that there's a resource protection aspect to fossils and as non-renewable resources. [This is an important topic in terms of resource protection of non-renewable fossils. The management of fossils is very different than managing] grizzly bears and redwood trees, where we can make more of those, but we can't make more *T-rexes*. There's only so many out there beneath the surface, eroding at the surface, in museum collections and collection storage or on exhibit.

00:31:41 And so the way that we manage and protect non-renewable [paleontological] resources for scientific purposes, for education, for other reasons, is different than how we manage renewable resources. And so we use that to convey and tell that story. And remind me, you probably have a question about fossil cycad?

PART 1 OF 5 ENDS [00:30:04]

Nancy Russell: 00:32:02 Mm-hm.

Vincent Santucci: 00:32:02 Okay, so I'll go in direction B and not touch upon that. But we would have groups come out, and of course a lot of people loved to learn about the fossils. We had people coming from places like Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, or Gettysburg, driving across country. Sometimes it's their first trip, family vacation, and they've never seen a fossil in the wild. And it instilled to me and reinforced the idea how

great it is to have places like Badlands, where people can have an opportunity to see fossils in the wild. They may have seen fossils in a museum or seen it in a movie like Jurassic Park or in a book, but it's a whole different experience when you crawl on the ground and there's a tooth weathering out.

00:32:50 I shared that experience [with park visitors] and it was so rewarding to hear their reactions and see the expressions of people that wanted to take photographs and all the questions that emerge. Because the kinds of questions that they ask [when encountering a fossil in geologic strata] are different than the kinds of questions that a docent in a museum would get. They're asking things like, "What's the relationship between that fossil and the rocks that it's contained?" They don't [typically] ask that in the Smithsonian. Or, "What is the process that it takes for you to take the fossil out of the ground and make it look it's so beautiful when you have it on exhibit?" Or, "What's the environment in which this animal lived in and how can you tell that from the rocks? And how did the other kinds of fossils that are with it help to tell that story as well?" So wow, what a wonderful experience.

00:33:38 I'm going to jump ahead because of that. And I had the opportunity to work as the Chief Ranger and Acting Superintendent at Fossil Butte National Monument in Wyoming for several years. We'll talk more about that. But in light of what I just shared with you, we had a really cool opportunity there. And I'm thinking that this idea of having places where people can go into the wild and see fossils in a natural state, is really an important job that we have in the Park Service because we have all these [fossil] sites.

00:34:14 It’s like if we want to see a bald eagle, great to see a bald eagle at the National Zoo, right? "Wow, that's our nation's symbol". But how different it is to see it soaring above the meandering Madison River in Yellowstone, in a natural state, in the wild. And so I like to compare that opportunity to see fossils in a natural state, in the wild, as an experience that we offer in the national parks, that you don't necessarily get it in other places and clearly not in museums.

00:34:46 At Fossil Butte, we were able to secure a loan of an extremely rare fossil that comes from these 50 million year old lake beds. And because they were deposited in very low

energy water, quiet water conditions with a high rapid rate of [deposition of very] fine grain sediment, that the preservation of these specimens is like no other. There's a word for it called Lagerstätten, it's a German word, where you have complete preservation like no other. That you have coloration in the wings of butterflies and moths. You have complete skeletons of tiny, little, delicate bones of fish still articulated because they died, they went to the bottom, and then this rain of sediment in this low water condition allowed them to be quickly buried and to be preserved in their entirety [often complete skeletons].

00:35:43 Fossil Butte is really one of the cool gems of the national park. It's a paleontological crown jewel for the National Park Service. I had the opportunity to work there, can you believe it? And so we brought a fossil bat [to put on exhibit for the public]. Do you know how delicate the bones are of a bat? We have complete skeletons. There's a handful of them. The fossil record of bats is almost unknown until you get to the Ice Ages, to the Pleistocene, where there are caves that have collections of bat bones. But what happened before that? Where did they come from? How far back in the fossil record did they go? 50 million year old bats preserved in the Green River, [within] fine grain sediments, complete skeletons. We're getting one of those here because we want to reward those 27,000 people that drive far to get to Fossil Butte near Kemmerer, Wyoming to see and experience this. We have the opportunity that they don't have at the Smithsonian or the American Museum. We have the opportunity to show them one of the most rare fossils in paleontology and walk out the door and make the connection to the [fossil] beds that they come from. I love those conversations with people. I love the reactions of people, the light bulbs come on, the ah-has. You're making a meaningful connection. And that's what it's all about in interpretation, making a meaningful connection, particularly when you're trying to promote resource stewardship.

00:37:17 We don't want to get people so excited at Petrified Forest, about the petrified wood, that they take some of them home in their pocket. And they do that but we want to make sure that our interpretation is tempered with resource protection, stewardship messages. And so I would always catch a person at the right moment when they're saying, "Oh, I forgot my camera, but I'm never going to forget this fossil that I've discovered." It doesn't matter if it's the most

common fossil on the planet, it's their fossil. It's their discoveries. Maybe the first eyes in 30 million years that have looked at this thing.

00:37:51 And that's the moment that you get them. You roped them in here, they've had that experience, and you say, "you know, we talk to the public and we want to make sure that they recognize that we don't want to cheat the next family that comes by that are going to have little kids that may find that [fossil and share the] experience". And it works particularly well if they have their own children and are proudly showing them what they found, first fossil they've ever seen in the wild. We want to convey to them that let's leave this experience for other people. That's what national parks are all about.

00:38:32 Some researchers can come in under a permit and [have the permission to collect a fossil], but we want the opportunity for people to see things in that natural state, to have that experience that they can't have in the Smithsonian and elsewhere. And so I think that's really important for us, and that's what I share with the students that I mentor and the rangers that I get to chat with. When we begin to discuss Petrified Forest, remind me to tell you a story about the Junior Ranger badges, that relates to this story. As you'll find out, I'm a risk-taker and I do things that may not be the norm of the moment. And there's a culture within the National Park Service where there are norms and there are things that are less than norm. But I think that I've been around long enough that I've heard [the statement], "Think outside the box." And so think outside the box is kind of like, okay, it's kind of pushing the norm, the boundaries of the norm. And so I like that. And to me, that word [equates with] leadership. And if we're going to take paleontology and take it to the next level, we want to do that with some leadership. We want to do it with some innovation and new ways.

00:39:42 One of the most important parts of my career are the days that I get to talk to the public and share that experience for the first time they saw a fossil, because that's where we can make that meaningful connection and hopefully preserve fossils through [sharing these moments and experiences]. Because they'll leave that park and they'll go on to another park and now they get it. They may understand it. So if they're leaving Petrified Forest and they had to take the fossil out of their pocket and put it back, that they'll go onto

Grand Canyon or Mesa Verde and realize, hey, it's not a good idea to take that pot sherd or that mineral specimen, et cetera.

Nancy Russell: 00:40:22 But I think at Badlands you did have experiences with people illegally collecting. And how was that addressed?

Vincent Santucci: 00:40:36 One of my most difficult and favorite stories all in one. So I would go out [into the field at Badlands National Park] on my days off and if I wasn't with a professional geology team or field camp, I would be taking some of the road guidebooks out to localities where they had conferences and they guided people around. And I found these places, sometimes with great difficulty because there's not roads that are developed or marked, but it was a discovery, to be able to get to these localities. It was [sometimes a test for] survival. "I made it alive. I'm going to get home tonight." [That] sort of thing. But to be able to read this description of these very important localities and stand at [that locality], it's like, wow, breathtaking.

00:41:26 I love the history of paleontology associated with the National Park Service. And the story of Badlands National Park is a really incredible one. Fur traders that were out there before scientists and before the military, they were collecting things and they were taking them back and they were selling them to people that bought them in St. Louis. And there was a doctor named Hiram Prout that liked fossils, and he would publish on them. And he would buy fossils that were collected in the White River Badlands from Alexandra Culbertson and other people who worked for the American Fur Company.

00:42:03 And so there's such a great story about the beginning of the history of the science of paleontology tied to a national park in Badlands. And there's an important [fossil] specimen in the Smithsonian that is a jaw of this big mammal called a Titanothere that was collected and published in 1846 in the American Journal of Science. And those 10 paleontologists in the New World [at that time] all read it, all got excited, all wrote to each other. So there's an archive connecting their excitement, writing to Hiram Prout who published it, the doctor in St. Louis saying, "Where did you find this? Who collected it?" And it ties in this incredible story that we don't have time today, but we could do it another time, if you wanted to mark it down to come back to this. It links the first director of the Smithsonian,

Spencer Baird, and Joseph Leidy, the paleontologist at the Academy of [Natural] Sciences [of Philadelphia], and a few other people into these wonderful communications about setting up a party to go west across the Mississippi to see what's out there.

00:43:12 And so they [scientists] had their first glimpse [into the western fossil beds] by reading this report, this little publication by Hiram Prout. [This history of paleontology began prior to the fossil feud of paleontologists] [Edward Drinker] Cope and [Othniel Charles] Marsh, if you know that story [from] the 1870s [and] the dinosaur wars. This was pre Cope and Marsh. This was the early first ventures into the western United States with the intent to collect fossils. And as we know, the big fossil beds are west of the Mississippi.

00:43:46 I'd go out into the field at Badlands National Park on my days off. One of the [classic fossil] sites that was on my bucket list for Badlands was to get out to the Titanothere graveyards. That was [in] the south unit of the park, the south unit of the park was added to the park and so Badlands was originally established as a national monument. It was later upgraded, re-designated as a national park when they entered into agreement with the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and Lakota Sioux. The most fossil rich [portion of the badlands] is on the reservation. [There was interest in expanding the boundary of Badlands National Monument to include the south unit.]

00:44:20 The Lakota Sioux used the south unit area [primarily] for grazing and hunting and other reasons. [An agreement was established that essentially supported the expansion of the park boundary to include the south unit. In exchange the] Lakota would share [a portion of the park's] entrance fees. [The Lakota also asked for some input into the management of the south unit]. And require that any rangers [hired to] work in the south unit would be Lakota Sioux. This would create some economic opportunities for the Lakota and they will retain rights to graze and hunt [on these lands].

00:44:56 And so that's been [over several decades] the relationship [between the Lakota Sioux and the National Park Service]. It has been back and forth for a while. [This was] particularly [noticeable] when the commercial market for fossils start going up. Some of the leadership from the tribe

[would suggest], "Well, there's gold in those Badlands." It's [the White River badlands] really extraordinary [and an important fossil locality]. Those are the areas where the old paleontologists from the 19th century explored. And there's etched drawings and field notes that show [the early fossil] localities. [Researchers are working] hard [to try and relocate some of the early fossil localities] where they [early explorers] stood and where they collected.

00:45:33 So getting to the Titanothere graveyards was very important to me. Prior to getting there though, I had multiple occasions where I'm out there [in the field at Badlands] on my day off and I find one or multiple individuals who are illegally collecting fossils. And I'm thinking, "Oh, come on. Everybody knows you can't steal fossils from a national park. You can't hunt. You can't pick up arrowheads. This is a national park. How do they not know this?" So the first time I encountered somebody doing this, I rushed back to [report this to the] chief law enforcement ranger, Lloyd Kortge. And Lloyd was a great guy. He was old school. He had been around for a while. And I run into his office and said, "Lloyd, let's get the rangers and get out there and get these bad guys stealing fossils." And he'd smile and he'd say, "Santucci, come in here. Calm down for a second. Sit down. I got to get some information from you." So he goes on to say, and he'd stand up and he'd put his hand on my shoulder. He'd say, "Santucci, you ain't from around here. Are you, boy? Where are you from? Pennsylvania? We're in South Dakota. Things are a little bit different here." And so he [Lloyd] went on to explain to me, he said, "We're understaffed. We've got almost a million visitors. We get people that are speeding through this park, that they're killing wildlife. They're rolling their vehicles over, sometimes injuring or killing themselves. We've got a lot of front country issues, that if we're going to pull rangers to go off in the back country, we got to have a pretty good certainty that, by the time we get out there, there's going to be somebody there."

00:47:14 But he [Lloyd] had been there [at the park] for a while and he found out something that also influenced his decision-making on getting in his vehicle with the lights [flashing] and heading out to [find] the bad guys. And that was that the local magistrate, federal magistrate, in Wall, South Dakota was a fossil collector. And anytime they [rangers] would try to bring somebody in there [accused of stealing

fossil from the park], it would get thrown out because of the bias of this individual who had the authority. He was an obstacle in the judicial system. And his rationale was to say [paraphrase], "I can't fine anybody or find anybody guilty until the day that you tell me that your park is surrounded 100% by fences that are marked every 50 feet, that say you're going into a National Park Service area, and that the collection of fossils is illegal and there's penalties. And until you do that, I'm not going to find anybody guilty of fossil collecting in your park."

00:48:20 So after I heard him [Lloyd], I went home that night, I rolled around and thought, "That's very troubling." But I didn't know where to begin to deal with this issue. But after another half a dozen times, "Hey, Lloyd." Getting the hand on my shoulder, "Santucci, you ain't from around here, are boy, where are you from?" [of witnessing individuals involved with fossil theft and reporting to Lloyd] that I slowed down on my visits to Lloyd until the day that I went to the Titanothere graveyard. And this was one of the days that changed my life. Lloyd counseled me and advised me [during our visits], and he said, "I understand where you're coming from." He said, "That's what I want to do. I want to protect our parks and resources too."

00:49:11 But he said, "I also don't want to have to come out there with a search and rescue party and find you because there's some bad people out there. And if they're stealing fossils in the park, they're probably not the most upright people. And so never confront these people. Never tell them that you work for the Park Service because the federal government's not beloved by some." And he said, "But what you can do that could be helpful, is that if you can discreetly mark down vehicle descriptions and license plate numbers." He explained to me what it meant [to make observations that are] in “plain view”. So if you walk around a vehicle and you can look inside and you can see fossils, rock hammers, do it discreetly, mark all those down, who knows? Maybe that information may be useful someday. Other than that, watch yourself. [Be smart, and don’t put yourself in danger.]

00:50:02 So I knew all the permits that were issued [by the park to researchers], and when I arrived at the area that I believed to be the Titanothere graveyard, based on the two tracks that I followed for miles into the wilderness, that I felt, "Oh, this must be it. But curious there's nobody that has a

permit to work in the Titanothere graveyards. I wonder what's up here?" [Two vehicles were parked in the area that near the Titanothere graveyard]. So I walked around the vehicles, saw that there were fossils, in plain view, took notes, and then climbed up on a ridge [to look around]. And eventually I saw two individuals that were working independently, working in two different areas. And I observed them for a while and they didn't notice me. Again, remember, I'm in plain clothes [not wearing the ranger uniform]. One individual, the younger of the two individuals, when he saw me, he clearly didn't want to have any communication with anybody. And so he made an evasive move and disappeared into the Badlands.

00:50:59 And so I watched the older individual for a while. He was a taller man, elderly, had a cowboy hat, and he was engaged in [what I refer to as] “shopping behavior”. So that is, he's walking around looking at the ground and occasionally picking something up and throwing it aside or putting it in his pack. I said, "I'm going to go out and see what he's doing." And so I climbed down, and eventually when he saw me approaching him, he gave me a very warm, friendly grandfatherly, I'm a sucker for the grandfatherly stuff, "Hello. How are you doing? Are you having any luck collecting fossils?" I said, "Not yet. How about you?"

00:51:38 And so I was in listening mode, and he began to tell me his story. He said, "Well, yeah, I'm a fossil collector and I've been doing this for a long time. In fact, I've been doing it here in Badlands National Park, even though I know it's not legal." So there's your intent to the magistrate. "I know it's illegal, but the damn National Park Service, you know what they're doing? They're allowing these fossils to erode away. They're doing nothing with them." And so in his level of moral reasoning, he justified saying, "I'm rescuing fossils." He really believed that that's what he was doing, with the additional incentive that he'd been doing it to sell the fossils. He's been doing it for 25 years as a single means of income, and he's a very wealthy man. I thought, "Lloyd, don't leave your office. It's getting late. Be in your office when I get there."

00:52:37 And so I did a lot of listening. My adrenaline was surged, and he said, "Well, look, if you're interested in fossils, I can help you out. I got a camp set up in the town of Scenic. I got my trailer there. I got any kind of fossils you want. Bring money. I can sell you fossils. Or what I do now that

I'm older, now that I can't get around and collect like I used to, is that I take people out for safaris. So if you pay me some money, I'll take you out and you collect your own fossils." And I said, "Wow, that sounds really exciting. Can we meet in a couple of days?" He said, "Yeah, I'll look for you on Thursday."

So you know what I should give you?

Nancy Russell: 00:53:27 What?

Vincent Santucci: 00:53:28 My field notes for all this.

Nancy Russell: 00:53:29 Oh, yes.

Vincent Santucci: 00:53:30 From the time.

Nancy Russell: 00:53:30 Yes.

Vincent Santucci: 00:53:32 I hadn't thought that that's something you have to have.

Nancy Russell: 00:53:35 Yeah.

Vincent Santucci: 00:53:36 Oh my gosh, that's great. Mark it as sensitive. So I will admit, since the statute of limitations is beyond any concerns here, that I broke the law driving back [to headquarters], exceeded the [posted] speed limit to get to Lloyd before the end of the day. And so I pulled into the visitor center, ran down the hall, his lights were off, his doors were closed, and my heart stopped because in the culture of the Park Service, there is a hierarchy. I'm like, he's way up there [high in the chain of command]. He's the chief ranger. I'm just a lowly little seasonal ranger here, park ranger, and do I go to his house? [That was a difficult decision that I needed to make at that moment.]

00:54:21 But I did it. I went to his [Lloyd's] house, knocked on his door, he opened the door. He didn't say a word. He just smiled and nodded and said, "Come on in." Took me into his den. And he says, "Go ahead, Santucci. What do you have?" I said, "Lloyd, before you put your hand on my shoulder, please listen to me." And I told him the story and his reaction was different. He said, "Vince, this is important. I'm going to call your supervisor. I would like for you to meet with all of our [the park's] LE [law enforcement] and the LEs [rangers] from the Buffalo Gap National Grasslands Forest Service. I'm going to call them all in tomorrow and I want you to do a briefing. I didn't

sleep that night. I was so excited thinking, "This is it. They're going to listen."

00:55:12 And so I [took this very seriously and] did this big elaborate presentation, and it was pre-PowerPoint and all that. So I had to make photocopies, where I cut things out and glued them onto paper and then photocopied them. But this was a really important day in my life and for the Park Service, for the things that should be happening that haven't been happening. And so I did the presentation [which generated lots of good discussion and planning.] The plan was that I was going to go out with another paleontologist who was more knowledgeable to identify things, and we were going to go there undercover with the idea that we've got a pocket full of money and talk to Mr. Watson, Frank Watson, and remember that name because he's going to come up several times.

00:56:05 We wind up arriving on that Thursday, and I think it's a Thursday, it might be another day. But for some reason, that came into my mind. And we met with Mr. Watson.

Nancy Russell: 00:56:18 At his trailer?

Vincent Santucci: 00:56:19 At his trailer [in Scenic between the north and south units of Badlands National Park]. Friendly as can be, but also a salesman. And in addition to showing us fossils, where he had misidentified quite a few of them—for somebody who had been doing this for 25 years, come on!—but he had lots of stories, and that's typical of the pre-FBI seizure of the T. rex Sue approach because the more information that you could [use to] sensationalize a fossil, you can ask more [money] if there's a really cool story associated with something. It's not just the superlatives, the oldest, the biggest, the most well-preserved, but there's all these cool stories associated with it that, you know, Chief Sitting Bull collected this from Agate Fossil Beds, that adds to the value.

00:57:07 So he [Mr. Watson] pulled out his scrapbook, and the scrapbook was really interesting because he had photos of him with people. He had letters of “Thank you”. He had receipts. And the thing that caught my attention right away was a newspaper clipping from the Rapid City Journal, that was a local newspaper, that had a photograph of a young man sitting on a six-foot marine turtle, an *Archelon* turtle. And when I was taking [a course in] vertebrate

paleontology, I remember learning about this specimen, this huge marine turtle, the largest turtle in the world, six feet diameter for its carapace. What a cool specimen and how—it was collected and sold to a museum in Europe. It's like, "Oh, it's a shame."

00:57:58 Well, here I'm looking at a newspaper clipping and I'm thinking, "What is this?" He says, "Oh, that's my specimen." And I said, "What?" He says, "Oh, I found that specimen in the park." Of course, I had to regroup. I had to keep calm. And I'm thinking, "Tell us a story about this. This seems—" Well, he went on to say, "I knew this was going to be a very important specimen, and so I couldn't get it out [of the ground] myself without damaging it. I needed help. And so I turned to my friends in the Black Hills, Peter Larson and the Black Hills Institute." Now, how do we know Peter Larson and the Black Hills Institute? Because they're the ones that collected Sue in 1991, the *Tyrannosaurus rex* [that became the center piece to the highly publicized criminal and civil case during the 1990s.] They [Black Hills Institute] were, and still are, the world's largest commercial fossil dealer. They're internationally known. When the FBI said that they were investigating Black Hills Institute [during the 1990s], because they viewed—they were sort of like the Mafia, the kingpin. They were going after RICO charges: racketeering, influence, corruption, organized crime. I didn't really know much about them [Black Hills Institute] at the time, but I soon did. I absolutely was incensed as a paleontologist and as a lover of national parks, that I needed to learn more about this. [This eventually led me to enroll in a National Park Service law enforcement training program at Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania.]

00:59:35 And so he [Mr. Watson] said that, "Yeah, Peter Larson." The world's largest fossil dealer, the president of this business, Black Hills Institute, he and his guys came into Badlands National Park and helped to collect this fossil. And they helped to prepare it and helped to arrange to have it sold. Now, it sold at that time in 1976 for $35,000. At the time, that was the most that any fossil ever sold in the world.

01:00:03 It wasn't until Sue [sold for] eight and a half million dollars in 1997. That was noteworthy amongst people that cared about discussions of fossils and information.

01:00:21 [Returning to the meeting with Mr. Watson at his camp in Scenic]. The plan was to not buy anything, but to entice him. To say, “We want to go out on a fossil dig with you”. And so we made arrangements to meet with him on another day on federal land at a specific location and we went back [left Mr. Watson and went back to headquarters]. A lot to think about, a lot to share with the LE. [On the day we scheduled to meet with Mr. Watson], the ranger said we need to be late intentionally because we need to watch him [Mr. Watson] for a while and see what he does. Because we want to see reasonable suspicion or probable cause that we saw him, on federal land, collect a fossil and put it in his vehicle. This would allow us to write him a citation and have a cleaner case. And it has to be a law enforcement officer that has to make that observation. I can't do it, and any of us can't do it. You need to be commissioned to do that.

01:01:20 And so went out [on the day we were scheduled to me Mr. Watson. He was observed by the law enforcement ranger collecting fossils]. He [Mr. Watson] admitted to that ranger everything he told me, “Park Service is letting them [fossils] erode away. He's rescuing fossils, doing it for 25 years, single means of income. He's a wealthy man”. He was handed a mandatory appearance [a citation by the LE ranger]—I have a copy of that citation by the way—mandatory appearance to appear before the magistrate in Wall. That's another issue, but mandatory appearance. So it would be left up to the magistrate. The assistant US attorney was called because of all of the aspects that were understood about this particular case to say, "Hey, we think this magistrate might throw this out, but we think this is too big of a case."

01:02:10 So US attorney was involved, showed up on that date to listen to what had transpired. Mr. Watson, although he stole fossils from a national park for a long time. Honest man, because he told the magistrate exactly what he told us. "Fossils are being left to erode away. I'm rescuing them from a national park. I know it's illegal," on and on. So the assistant US attorney was aware that, okay, we've check-mated the magistrate because somebody [Mr. Watson] just admitted committing a crime in a national park. This magistrate cannot throw this case out. And so it turns out a lot of excitement to see what's happening [in the courtroom]. Is this guy going to get a life sentence? Is he going to go to the electric chair? What's going to happen to

him? And the magistrate ruled, 25 years of [unauthorized fossil] collecting [in Badlands National Park], Mr. Watson received a fine of $50.

01:03:17 Think about that. So it was $50 [fine] and then it was a $25 nolo contendere victim assistance fee or something like that. He paid a total of $75 for 25 years of collecting, including a $35,000 specimen [the fossil marine turtle]. What was the obvious question in my mind? Questions, how could this happen? How are we ever going to deter fossil theft with the escalating commercial market for fossils if all we can do is give 25, 50, $75 fines, that is not a deterrent.

01:03:52 And so, that was the time that I realized [there was a need and a void] in the National Park Service that needed to be addressed. I didn't know how it was going to happen. I didn't know what I could do. But the Chief Ranger Lloyd said, "You know what I think, Vince? You should do some ride-alongs of the LE Rangers. Talk to them, find out what it is they do [as National Park Service law enforcement rangers]. Ask them questions about training because we have archaeologists that are commissioned that assist with our ARPA, Archaeological Resource Protection Act kind of investigations. We have nobody [serving that role] for paleontology." And so I did that [participated in some ride-alongs with the LE rangers] and I really enjoyed it and I learned a lot. And there's a whole different mindset and culture within the law enforcement community. Sometimes that is well recognized and sometimes that it's not recognized because the way that they operate sometimes has to be quiet because they don't want to compromise techniques that they use to gather information. [This work often involves sensitive issues]. But I got invited [to get a peek inside the work of a NPS law enforcement ranger] and an open door into— and I won't call it a fraternity because there's men and women—but it's like that mindset that you get the secret handshake and that I was being encouraged to go in a direction because there's a need and we just experienced it. [I was encourage to step up, gets some training and contribute to an open niche in resource protection tied to fossils.] They stated, “Do it, do it”. And so I did it. [I enrolled in the NPS Law Enforcement Training Program at Slippery Rock University when I returned to Pennsylvania to complete my Master’s Thesis at the University of Pittsburgh].

01:05:15 And so when I went back in late 1986 to finish writing my master's thesis, I looked into a seasonal law enforcement training program at Slippery Rock University, which was just north of Pittsburgh. And I called and I spoke to the chairman of the department [Dr. William Shiner], who's one of my heroes. I mean, he was like my second grandfather. He's the one that founded that department. He's the one that got the certification to have a seasonal law enforcement training program from the Park Service. Very, very well respected Dr. Shiner. And I sat down and I explained to him, I told him the story I just told you, and I said, "Here's what I want to do for my agency and for my career." And he said, "You're in the program. You don't need to apply. You're in the program. I'm accepting you. There'll be some paperwork you'll need to fill out as a formality and all that. I want you in my class." And it was just such a great experience, a great learning opportunity.

01:06:23 And one thing that I was very proud of after I completed that class is that several years later, Dr. Shiner went on sabbatical and I was back in Pittsburgh taking care of my mother who was terminally ill. I was at Petrified Forest [National Park, Arizona] and I came back and took a leave of absent, it was under Clinton's new Family Leave and I took advantage of that. He [Dr. Shiner] called me and he said, "Vince, there's not a lot of people I could call to do this, but you're one of them." He said, "I have the seasonal law enforcement training [class] scheduled. I'd like you to coordinate that class while I'm on sabbatical." And it's like, what an honor. And it was a great experience for me because I needed to understand things at an academic level to be able to train it and teach it and take the experiences that I had as an LE ranger at Petrified Forest and things that I had done. And so that was another gift in life that I benefitted from.

01:07:19 So anyways, I completed that [the NPS Law Enforcement training and was eligible for a federal LE commission]. During that time because I wasn't working for the federal government at that time, per se, every DNA molecule in my body was incensed at the experiences that I had at Badlands National Park. Are we okay here?

PART 2 OF 5 ENDS [01:00:04]

Nancy Russell: 01:07:41 Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Vincent Santucci: 01:07:41 Okay.

Nancy Russell: 01:07:43 I'm just watching the meter.

Vincent Santucci: 01:07:44 And so obsessively, as you've already experienced in other dimensions, that I kept thinking about this, there's things we've got to do. We need greater protective legislation [for fossils]. We need a paleontologic resource law, particularly with the escalating commercial market and what we're already seeing. [This is particularly true for the protection of fossils from] national parks, this isn't BLM land. This isn't Fish and Wildlife Service land. This is Park Service land. And that area is sacred. And so I decided I'm going to start publishing a newsletter called *Park Paleontology*. It wasn't officially sanctioned by anybody. It was something I just felt I needed to do [increase communication on the issues and challenges facing the protection of fossils on NPS and other federal lands.]

01:08:26 And we used a little logo that I'll show you at some point, and I would write these [short] articles and there would be one section called Fossil Forum. This would be my opportunity to advocate for the greater need for protective legislation [for fossils]. There were other articles [in the newsletter] about a new fossil discovery or a new visitor center opening to interpret fossils. But not having a lot of money [I funded this newsletter out of my pocket] I went out, I created this, I typed it on a computer, printed it out, photocopied it with utilizing glue to paste the cutout drawings and things like that. I had a little cartoon that I produced called “Footnotes in Time” to talk about [and share ideas related to] a variety of issues [on fossil and fossil management]. But I would send it out. I would send it out, it was like 120 people. There was a lot of bureaucrats, some I'd never met. Randy Biallis. Sent it to him. Other people, I sent it to Mike Soukup and other people. And once in a while, people would write back to me. There was one day that I received a call on the phone from the superintendent of Petrified Forest because I did an article interviewing the staff at Petrified Forest on their petrified wood loss. And he said, "Vince, hey, I found this in my mailbox this morning. It's a newsletter that you put together. My name's Gary Cummins. I'm the superintendent at Petrified Forest National Park." He said, "Can you tell me about this newsletter? Who's paying for this? Is this Park Service budget?" I said, "Oh, no, no. It's something that I generate on my own and I sent out." He said, "Oh,

really?" And he said, "Tell me about yourself." And he said, "I've heard that you're completing a graduate degree in paleontology and you're getting a certification [training for NPS] as a law enforcement ranger." He said, "That's an interesting combination. It's the kind of combination that I'm looking for at Petrified Forest, because people are stealing our petrified wood."

01:10:24 And so we [Gary and I] had several conversations, but he got to the point and he said, "Can you send me a resume? Can you send me this? Can you send me your transcripts?" And he had the AO [Administrative Officer] call me back and he said, "Vince, would you be interested in a job? We could hire you because of all of the information that you have [provided] and your grade point average is high," that with the master's degree, they have something called the "Outstanding Scholars Program" at the time [a hiring authority]. He [the AO] said, "If you want to work at Petrified Forest as their first ever official paleontologist that does law enforcement [as a] collateral duty, we'd also have you do museum curation. I think the superintendent wants to hire you."

01:11:06 And so talked to my family and we did it [decided to accept this opportunity at Petrified Forest NP]. So I finished up my master's thesis. I got my commission. I was certifiable. I filled out all the paperwork, the background investigation. I got approved for a federal commission, and we packed our bags and we went to Petrified Forest in May of 1991. And so that's a breaking point. If you want to take a moment to take a break or—

Nancy Russell: 01:11:37 Can I follow up on a couple things first?

Vincent Santucci: 01:11:37 Yes, please.

Nancy Russell: 01:11:37 So, the rare giant turtle proven to come from National Park Service land sold to an institution in Europe.

Vincent Santucci: 01:11:51 Yes.

Nancy Russell: 01:11:52 Were ever any attempts made to get that back or the institution recognizing that they just bought stolen property?

Vincent Santucci: 01:11:58 Nope. No, because it could always happen. Okay. Our eyes were set on a couple things that kept us busy, and one was working towards legislation because we had people in

Congress that were helping to draft bills. We had people in the professional societies that were drafting legislation. And so we felt this is a bigger goal to try to attain [federal legislation to protect fossils on NPS and other lands]. We don't know if we'll ever get it, but we put a lot of time and energy into that.

01:12:33 I was recruited before I worked [full-time] for the Park Service to be the co-chair of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology Government Liaison Committee. We made trips to Washington, talked to congressmen, lobbied [for fossil protection legislation]. Of course, when I took the job at Petrified Forest, I had to stop that. I couldn't lobby. But we put a lot of effort in addition to the newsletter to rally support, to open up that communication. [And to increase awareness within the NPS for the need for legislation to help the NPS protect non-renewable fossils]. And then once I got my commission, I then got pulled in pretty quickly into the *Tyrannosaurus* Sue investigation. So that took me by surprise. That kept me busy. And then my mother called me one day and said she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, and our world turned upside down.

01:13:25 [Back to the question on the fossil turtle stolen from Badlands NP and sold to the museum in Europe. Looking at the return of this specimen could possibly be something that could be considered in the future. But it was not as important as pushing for stronger laws to protect fossils preserved on federal lands and in national parks]. However, there will be lots of legal limitations, statute of limitations, on and on. It would take a lot of energy and a miracle to do that right now. It's well taken care of in a museum. And so that's probably more important than having it physically located in the United States, but there could be lessons learned. There's the book called Petrified. So I've told you about that. I have a book, a manuscript for a publication of a book called Petrified. Petrified [having a] dual meaning. One is petrified in terms of the fossilization process and petrified in terms of the fact that I went through things [difficulties] during my career, some of which I'll share with you, that really scared the bejesus out of me, that made me wonder who are the good guys and who are the bad guys and need to look over your shoulder occasionally.

01:14:26 And so that will be captured in this book. However, I can't publish it now for a variety of reasons, for legal reasons, and for common sense reasons. I probably would lose my

job because there are things that are critical of the National Park Service that were bad, including illegal activity that went on [by a couple of high level DOI employees] that the Department of Interior wanted to keep quiet, so don't want to—I got a bit of work to do with some archiving of things before they cut me loose. But I'm hoping to publish that either upon retirement or after I pass away, because that will alleviate me from the administrative, maybe criminal action and certainly civil action by the people that are identified and named specifically in the book. But I want to know that I've already added the three of your names. I can add your name too for your patience and enduring the story that in my will that when the book is published, anybody who was kind enough to be patient to listen to the story will get a copy.

Nancy Russell: 01:15:35 Did you guys have any other questions before we take a short break?

Molly Williams: 01:15:40 I don't think so.

Nancy Russell: 01:15:42 Okay. We'll take a short break.

Molly Williams: 01:15:52 On the topic of the Petrified Forest, you did briefly discuss some of your duties and your experience there and how you were offered the position. It was a national monument in 1906, and there was a lot of fossil studies going on in the 1850s, and you were hired because of the issue with theft of petrified wood and other resources. How would you describe the state of the park's fossils and the Paleo program after you left Petrified Forest or how it was changed during your duration there?

Vincent Santucci: 01:16:32 Okay, thanks.

01:16:34 So when I arrived at Petrified Forest in May of 1991, had a chance to meet the park staff and superintendent, had to go through a lot of training and things like that. But the first week, the superintendent takes me into Holbrooke to do an interview on the [local] radio station. He [Petrified Forest superintendent Gary Cummins joined the interview, introduced me, and] says, "Oh, I'm proud that I've got a paleontologist on staff here, and we want to let the community know because the community economically is really dependent upon tourism." And so [as I listened to Gary speak], I didn't know what he had with his sleeve, but he did have things up his sleeve.

01:17:17 So during the course of the conversation, they were talking about my background. They were talking about the issues of petrified wood theft that occurred there, the souvenir collecting particularly, and how the superintendent brought me on with this unique background to try to help the park with that. So he wanted to introduce me to the community because it's a small community.

01:17:40 But during the course of the conversation then, he happens to say, and I think he had this planned because I had not heard it before. He said, "And I want to let you know that I'm very proud. I'm the only superintendent that has hired the government's only pistol packing paleontologist." And that caught on. And then there was a lot of media that picked up on that. There are some books that published [referencing] that [identity]. And so I hear that quite frequently in my career.

01:18:09 And there's a famous photo by a National Geographic photographer, I should probably share a copy with you, that has a picture of me featured on it in uniform with my firearm, standing on a butte where we got permission to take two skeletal mounts of Triassic vertebrate fossils, an aetosaur and *Postosuchus*. And we got permission to take them off exhibit and to carry them out at night and to put them on the buttes, [so photos could be taken at] the crack of dawn's light, that the National Geographic photographer [Louie Psihoyos] was able to get that photograph that he wanted.

01:18:47 And so when we brought it up the superintendent, he kind of smiled, but he trusted us and said, "Here are the conditions if you do it, that you have to wait and take them [the replica skeletons] off of exhibit after the park is closed, after the visitor center's closed." So Petrified Forest is one of the national parks, not monuments. It's one of the few national parks that's a day used area only. They can't have people in there when they shut the lights off because the petrified wood will disappear [even more] quickly. So people, they would have to leave the park at a certain time, exit the park, and then not come back until the next day. So our instructions were that we can do this if we get the specimens off of exhibit after the park's closed and have them returned the next morning before it's open.

01:19:33 So we thought we could do that. It might be more difficult for the opening, but we'll get it done. We'll make it happen.

		And so we did that. And the only thing that we failed to know was that the maintenance guy that cleans that visitor center in the morning, who had been off for several days, never read the morning report and had no idea [the specimens would be moved]. And because we [the park] worked a lot with the local sheriff's office in Apache and Navajo Counties, they [maintenance man] didn't call the park rangers. They immediately called the sheriff's office and [the deputies came to the park to investigate]. We're out there seeing these lights flashing [from the sheriff's vehicles in the distance], coming into the park, going to the visitor center. So it was a little embarrassing from that perspective but we got the specimens back before the visitor center opened and had a lot of explaining to do until somebody could confirm that we weren't making all this up.
Nancy Russell:	01:20:27	Well, good on the maintenance guy for noticing it and calling it in.
Molly Williams:	01:20:30	Yes.
Vincent Santucci:	01:20:31	Yeah, absolutely.
Nancy Russell:	01:20:33	Worried about a museum theft. Good on him.
Vincent Santucci:	01:20:35	Yes. So anyways, that [National Geographic] book has sold well, it's very popular. Louie Psihoyos is the photographer. It's called Hunting Dinosaurs. I may try to see if I can find a copy and buy it and donate it to you because it shows paleontologists from all over the country. It shows Anne Elder and Dan Chure and Scott Madsen from Dinosaur National Monument, et cetera. So it might be nice to add to your collection, but I haven't lived down the pistol packing paleontologist thing.
	01:21:08	So anyways, the responsibilities were very big for me as a new rookie federal commissioned law enforcement officer because I had a lot to learn. You just can't come out there and say, "I'm going to do law enforcement part-time". And then things go wrong, like a traffic stop that you do because somebody's speeding. Turns out that there's a man and a woman and a cute little child, and it [dispatch] comes back when you run the 10-29-24, this [individual has a] felony. There's a warrant for his arrest. And I'm thinking, "Oh my goodness, I'm going to ruin this little child's vacation."

01:21:49 And I didn't like that part of the job at all. I didn't like the day that it was nighttime, it was dark, and all of a sudden, the alarm inside the concessioner Fred Harvey [at the Painted Desert end of Petrified Forest NP] went off, and I was the only LE ranger on duty that night. And having to figure out—I saw that the back door was open and I had to go inside. I was really nervous. And that's one of the times you have to take your firearm out because you don't know who's in there.

01:22:22 Anyways, those were parts of the job I didn't really love, but had to do it [as situations presented themselves]. But I love the resource protection [aspect of the job]. I got called in to support a lot of parks on questions that they had addressing fossil theft. I developed training programs and—remind me to talk about the Albright-Wirth grant that I got [applied for and was awarded to develop paleontological resource protection training modules] for that later on back in the late nineties. But I train a lot of law enforcement rangers [who often never had previous training related to fossil crimes and investigations]. There was great interest [in fossil resource training]. I mean, these people, [in general rangers] are committed to protect their resources, and they're incensed when these kinds of resource losses occur in their park. So there was a demand for that [paleontological resource protection training].

01:23:04 I went to the two week wonderful—last time it was offered—the two week Curatorial Methods class at Harpers Ferry Center [when I started working at Petrified Forest NP in 1991]. Came back from Arizona to do that. Learned a lot. [About how the NPS approaches management of museums and collections which influence my perspectives on this issue throughout my career]. Very impressed on what the Park Service capacity was to deal with museum objects and their conservation and all the rules that apply to cataloging and data management and records, et cetera. So that influenced the beginning of my career. It made me very diligent in terms of how I practice. There are procedures that you want to follow because if you don't do your work now, somebody down the road will be impacted.

01:23:52 And then the person that I was supposed to work [in tandem] with, Carl Bowman, he was the chief of resources prior to my arrival there, and he was supposed to work with me. [Carl would work on the overall natural resource program responsibilities] and I would focus mostly on

paleontology, museum collection, and law enforcement. But he left a month before I arrived [Carl was offered a position at Grand Canyon National Park] And so I immediately inherited the chief of natural resources [responsibilities] as well. It was a very active park [in terms of natural and cultural resources management]. We had 35 researchers that first year, not just doing paleontology, geology, but they're looking at endangered flora [wildlife, and other projects]. We were out working with the State of Arizona [Game and Fish] to look at this desert pronghorn population, this little relic southern extension of the pronghorn population from the Great Plains, and to be part of a team that's flying helicopters and dropping nets on pronghorns—and these are fast running animals—capturing them and holding them down and taking blood draws from them.

01:24:54 It's like, this is really cowboy stuff [aspects of the work]. This is fun. And so anyways, very enriching, very fulfilling, very rewarding, and diverse life. But my primary focus was to support paleontology to try to deter the souvenir collecting that was going on at the park and to support other interests that came in from the National Park Service related to the protection of non-renewable paleontological resources.

01:25:27 So I'll share with you the story about the Junior Ranger badges. So these are the kinds of things where you're a little bit of a risk-taker. [This was a situation that you ventured a little outside of the norms]. Because the interpreters [park rangers] are very protective of their Junior Ranger badges. And I got to ask them, "Can I have some?" And there's rules. The kids can't get them unless they do X, Y, and Z and complete certain activities. And I got to take the—

01:25:50 The day that I did the law enforcement training with the park rangers, I put some of the Junior Ranger badges in my pocket. And these are all veteran, experienced people. And again, I'm a rookie. I need to make sure I recognize where I am in that hierarchy [The training was attended by rangers from the surrounding parks in Arizona] But they invited me and they asked me to put on a [fossil resource protection] training. And so we did the classroom thing but I also had scheduled a field exercise [along one of the trails in the park] because I wanted to convince them that you serve a very important role in resource protection. And it doesn't

always have to require giving somebody a citation. I strongly advocate this. [My hope was to convey the value of using our communication as an effective tool in resource protection. My underlying message to the veteran law enforcement rangers was that writing a citation is not always the best outcome and we should utilize other tools to promote appropriate stewardship by visitors to parks. This should include education as a means to convey the types of activities and behaviors that are appropriate when visiting a national park]. I advocate this when I teach at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center or at a 40-hour refresher for LE. Use the tool that you have that's [typically] different than the tools that are used by highway patrolmen, and that is, it's called education. It's [it incorporates] discretion. There is so much value in talking to the public. Part of our role is not just enforcement of the law, but it's prevention of crime. I advocated [this] there [to the rangers at Petrified Forest NP] because the park [rangers] were writing tickets right and left [to visitors attempting to collect souvenir pieces of petrified wood]. And I wasn't as inclined to want to write tickets because I didn't want to ruin people's experience [and seeking education to promote stewardship behavior]. If I'm going to write a ticket, it should be something serious because it's a reflection of this uniform, and I need to protect the reputation of this uniform. I always—and advocate always—you [referring to park rangers] need to be as respectful as you can because it's not just you talking to them, it's you in a uniform talking to them. And it's mandatory, [this relationship with the public is important].

01:27:49 So that I said, "We're going to have an exercise and I would have everybody in plain clothes. Don't bring your weapons. You want to just fit in. We're going to go down to Crystal Forest [the rangers would distribute themselves along the trail] and we're going to walk around. And when I come in later and—I want you to just observe that when I take my hat and do this [wave it], observe closely." And so what I would do is, I would walk around and almost invariably you might see a family where somebody picks up a piece of petrified wood and they may even put it in their pocket. I wanted to use this exercise to demonstrate the importance, the value, and the benefits of not writing a citation all the time.

01:28:40 And it so just happened that a family, with a couple of kids and adults, and one of the kids picked up a piece of

petrified wood, put it in their pocket. Took my hat off, [casually] walked up to them, saying, "How are you doing? My name's Vince. I work as a ranger here. I'm from Pennsylvania, and this place is so cool. What do you think of it? Where are you from? Have you ever seen anything like this? Blah, blah, blah. We have dinosaurs here with the petrified wood."

01:29:07 And so I leave no indication to them [the family] that I suspect that that child put that wood in his pocket. But I do take the opportunity to reach in my pocket and say [to the child], "And by the way, [we] need your help. Because we have visitors that come here and take this petrified wood. They take it home as a souvenir. And we don't want that to happen because we want all the kids and families that come tomorrow and the next day to have the same opportunity to see what you're seeing. And so I'm going to deputize you. I'm going to give you one of these Junior Ranger badges, and I want you to talk to your family and go back and tell your classmates in your school and remember how important it is that we behave certain ways and don't collect things when we're in national parks."

01:29:58 Of course, they're [the children are] thrilled to have this little badge, as you've probably seen. [Similarly, the parents appreciate the gesture with their children].

01:30:03 And after that I turn around and I thank them for their time, and I leave and I drive off. When I meet up with the rangers afterwards, they all come back and are excited to tell me that child that put that fossil wood in his pocket, you know what he did after I left? He took it out of his pocket. Not only did he put it back down, he was looking for the spot where he picked it up. Why is that important? We could have ruined their day by writing a citation [although it was within our authority to write the citation] and we could have had the reasonableness to write the citation, but where's that going to get us? [How will that help us to protect park resources]? Writing a lot of citations and getting a lot of people angry [will certainly upset, ruin their family vacation, and perhaps generate some negative feelings towards the federal government or even the National Park Service ranger]. We turned it into something positive. [A teaching moment and with a positive outcome].

01:30:54 We deputized a couple of kids [invested a couple of 50 cent plastic badges], that hopefully they'll take those lessons

[with them] when they go to Grand Canyon, Mesa Verde and they realize, “Hey, we're in a national park. We learned from that ranger that we shouldn't collect these things, so we're not going to pick the flower, [collect the pot sherd, or disturb wildlife]”. We're not going to do those things. Hopefully that occurs, one kid at a time, one family at a time, one school group at a time. I think that there was some buy-in from some of the LE rangers [who observed this visitor encounter] that yes, we need to do this more. It's at the cost of a very inexpensive little thing that helped us to do that, so I took the liberty to share a couple of plastic badges to help our resource protection messaging.

PART 3 OF 5 ENDS [01:30:04]

Nancy Russell: 01:31:38 Because they didn't do the junior ranger exercises.

Vincent Santucci: 01:31:40 Yeah, but to me, the return on that badge [was priceless].

Nancy Russell: 01:31:43 I say that lesson is actually a much better junior ranger lesson than whatever crossword puzzle, or whatever it was in the Junior Ranger book.

Vincent Santucci: 01:31:52 We didn't compromise any respect in that conversation. We garnished stewards to help us with our job, which we’re outnumbered [Preventing crime is an important part of our job].

Nancy Russell: 01:32:03 There is no malice in the heart of that kid picking that up. He didn't know, there's an education piece. There is that difference between the commercial fossil hunter, that's going to do what they're going to do until they get caught, family enjoying their time.

Vincent Santucci: 01:32:24 Yup. So a couple of stories of things to answer your question that we undertook during my tenure between 1991 and 1993 [at Petrified Forest], when I wasn't distracted by the Sue investigation and then later distracted by the fact that my mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer, pancreatic cancer, that we did some things. One of the things is [a notable achievement during this period] that we applied for and received money from the Pacific West region, Western region at the time, to do a fossil wood [loss] study. Paleontology doesn’t get a lot of money [in the National Park Service, especially during the early 1990s]. The people that sit on the [project proposal] review committees that make the decisions [on awarding funding],

“money could go here", they’re all [frequently] ecologists and biologists. Where do they give the money? To where their comfort zone [proposals that are more familiar to them]. So, [historically], it's real hard to get money in the Park Service for paleontology. We do it, but it's not easy. We got it at Petrified Forest and we wanted to do a social science study looking at visitors' attitudes and perceptions before they come into the park and how it influences their behavior when they make the decision to take a piece of petrified wood.

01:33:34 When you [visitor] drive into Petrified Forest, you have to come through an entrance station on either end; north or south end. And when you come into that station, the entrance fee people [collectors] tell you, they verbally, with every family, "Just a reminder, no collection of any items including petrified wood during your stay here". They give them a written brochure [that are available] in several languages. There are signs everywhere at the entry station and once you get into the park, every trailhead, "No collecting". So we wanted to do a social science study to see what kind of information we could get through visitor interviews [our plan was to work with academic social scientists to design and implement it] that could help us to understand what were the levels of moral reasoning that led somebody to say, "I don't care about those signs. I'm taking a piece of petrified wood." And so it was a very informative study and lots of things we learned. But there were things [aspects of the study] that were really problematic that helped to perhaps create confusion in the public. And that is the very, very influential [the fact that] Fred Harvey concessionaire had a big concession operation in Petrified Forest, restaurant, gift shop. You know what they [visitors] saw [for sale] in the gift shop?

Nancy Russell: 01:34:50 Fossils!

Vincent Santucci: 01:34:51 Petrified wood.

01:34:52 There's a price tag on it [the petrified wood being in the Fred Harvey gift shop] What kind of message is that giving to the visitor saying, "Hey, these are valuable things you want to take home. By the way, they cost money". What does that do for the mindset of somebody that doesn't have a big wallet or a credit card limit and they're out in a remote little area [of the park] and they’re seeing thousands of pieces of petrified wood and thinking, “Nobody's going to

miss these. I can get a bunch of really nice souvenirs for my family and they're not going to cost me a dime. Nobody's going to know because nobody's out here going to see me and there's plenty of wood, nothing's going to happen". Of course, what comes on in my mind, the story that we'll talk about soon, Fossil Cycad [National Monument], how a unit of the National Park Service was abolished because we didn't manage and protect the fossils that were [exposed at the surface at the monument].

01:35:49 So that was one of the big challenges that we had, giving people that impression that there's a dollar value, there's a souvenir value, to these [non-renewable natural] objects. The wood loss study, we have it published. I think I have a copy in the Petrified Forest archives that you'll soon see, we'll probably have it scanned too which hopefully make you happy and we'll get that to you. But it was done by Virginia Polytech. Joe Roggenbuck [a professor from Virginia Polytech] was the principal investigator. They do a lot of natural resource social science [research coordinated by Roggenbuck] where they do surveys. For example, we found that, well, there was a lot of Germans [visitors] that were [observed] taking the survey said they were inclined to take petrified wood, because "We saw this magazine in Germany that talked about the park and about how people had souvenirs that they collected there" and they thought maybe that was the thing to do.

01:36:48 But there's a lot of people that it's a family tradition. Grandma and grandpa have a piece of petrified wood from their visit at the park and mom and dad and now it's our turn to get our souvenir so we can put it on the mantle of our house. There's a lot of that kind of thing. I classify the kind of paleontological crimes at Petrified Forest at that level is that these are souvenir collecting and it's very different than the kind of [systematic] illegal collecting that commercial fossil dealers [engage in at] Badlands where they're reviewing the scientific literature trying to find out where these important [fossil] localities are. [It was disturbing to learn of these cases]. And they go out there and they know where to dig [even within National Park Service areas] and they know what's valuable to take to the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show to sell. [This is a concern regarding the protection of these sensitive fossil localities when scientific information was being used by commercial fossil hunters].

	01:37:42	We probably should talk about the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show with Petrified Forest, if now is okay, we can do that. We also want to digress and talk about the Sue investigation. But we also want to talk about the community in Holbrook [and their interests in the park]. Maybe I'll start with that and then remind me to talk about the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show. What I came to learn and what was part of Gary Cummins' motivation [to hire a park paleontologist] was that prior to my arrival at Petrified Forest, [during the 1980s] there was a real heyday for paleontology [at Petrified Forest National Park]. It [important fossil discoveries] got a lot of people excited. Not only at the park, the superintendent, the chief ranger, the resource management staff, the interpreters, but also the local community. Because in the mid-1980s, University of California, Berkeley, the Museum of Paleontology had teams working in there and they were digging and they were collecting and they were finding a lot of good stuff and they were taking them back [to Berkeley for preparation, identification,] and studying them. But they found a dinosaur.
	01:38:54	There's something about dinosaurs. I like mammals myself, but people are captivated by these large prehistoric monsters. It's like growing up [during the 1960s], I loved monster movies and I loved dinosaur movies. There's this fascination with these very prehistoric monsters. So the discovery led to communication with the Park Service saying, "Hey, we got a really important discovery here. Not only do you have these very odd reptiles that lived during the Triassic that were non-dinosaurian, but here we've got [documented early] dinosaurs and we have this specimen that they nicknamed Gertie".
	01:39:43	I think it's—one of the first animated films was done by Winsor McCay. [Emma is nodding in the room] You know about this? The name of the movie was “The Dinosaur Gertie” and was a little animation of a sauropod. That's good that you know that.
Emma Squire:	01:39:56	It was based on, has a relationship to, a Vaudeville act.
Vincent Santucci:	01:40:00	Yes. Yeah. I don't know, 1912 or something like that [during that time period]. But anyways, they nicknamed it “Gertie”. They really promoted it [Gertie] to the media, to the point where they over sensationalized things. It turned out to be not scientifically factual, it turned out to be an

embarrassment to the National Park Service because not only did every national [and international] media outlet, NBC, CBS, ABC, PBS, BBC come for a press conference, where the Berkeley paleontologist and the Park Service are standing there in the mid-eighties talking about the discovery of Gertie, this important earliest known dinosaur in the world. When you put the superlatives on there, you'll see that in paleontology all the time. Biggest, longest nose, longest nose, sharpest teeth, [the oldest] are superlative [that capture public and media interest]. The oldest of anything, particularly dinosaurs, is going to catch the media and the public attention. It also caught the attention of the people [and businesses] in Holbrook [the closest town to Petrified Forest National Park] thinking, "Oh my gosh, people are going to come". If you announce it, they will come. Earliest known dinosaur, we need to add an addition to our hotel to accommodate the worldwide tourism that's going to come here [to see Gertie].

01:41:28 So huge enthusiasm [with the local community], support, falling in love with the park. They may have hated it before, but thank you, park, for all you're doing to promote this. The superintendent who was part of all that left [took a new position at another park] and Gary Cummins [new superintendent] came in and new chief ranger, new chief of resources; they all got subtle hints from the scientific community. “What are you talking about? You don’t have the oldest dinosaur. There’s older dinosaurs from South America. Why is the Park Service making this claim?” So, Gary Cummins didn’t disclose that to me until after I got there but he said, “I want you to fix this." He said, "We have been asking Berkeley [in part] based on the requests of the city, that they want to get this dinosaur back here on display so that the crowds come and stay in their hotel and buy their gasoline and buy their souvenirs."

01:42:33 [There was] tremendous pressure by the community, the business community, et cetera, on the park to do this. So Gary gave me some very big [important] issues to deal with [as the new park paleontologist]. One of them was that we were involved in a very ambitious general management planning effort, where part of that it was focused on creating this Triassic ecosystem visitor research center It was a park [boundary] expansion, doubling the size of Petrified Forest. Really ambitious undertaking that had some congressional support. So Gary and myself were heavily involved in that [the General Management

planning], but we were sidetracked in trying to deal with getting the specimen of Gertie back to the park, designed and put it on exhibit and [develop a plan to] break the news to the community. That they're thinking dinosaur. So what are they thinking? Huge, complete articulated skeleton.

01:43:37 [During the 1980s and all the excitement related to the discovery of Gertie, the leadership at Petrified Forest contracted paleontologists at Berkeley to create for original

Because of all the excitement and momentum about the paleontology, the Park Service invested a lot of money in making original casts. Four of them, complete skeletal casts of the Triassic prominent figures [from the park. These included the first skeletal mounts for an aetosaur, phytosaur, the dicynodont *Placerias*, and *Postosuchus*]. Two of which we took out onto the butte, with the idea that this would be the only place in the world that you could come and see skeletal mounts of these four very unusual creatures. And that was a cool idea. It's not just a, "here's another mammoth skeleton". This is the only place in the world so they [Park Service] invested a lot of money.

01:44:42 Well, when I got on board, guess what I found out? That the casts and the molds that they had—under all the contracts, they're not allowed to make replicas—[staff at] Berkeley was making replicas and selling them to other institutions [without the knowledge or consent of the National Park Service]. I inherited this! I'm trying to get my start in the field of paleontology and I'm making a lot of enemies really quickly, including the town of Holbrook, the people stealing petrified wood, and then the big name people at Berkeley [one of the most respected paleontology institutions in the world who I was getting into a controversial breach of contract issue with]. So we had big [sensitive] conference calls with solicitors threatening legal action against Berkeley. We had to go [to California] and get the molds back to stop that [the unauthorized casting], not letting it go further. [Molds can only be case a few times before they are no longer useful]. We [also] need to get Gertie back. So we use that leverage to get Gertie back. Turns out that Gertie wasn't even in UC Berkeley's protective museum curatorial facilities. It was in one of the paleontologist's—whose fell out of grace [at the Museum of Paleontology].

	01:45:50	His name's Rob Long, who's the one that made the claim of the world's oldest dinosaur. It was in his garage. [We learned the Rob no longer was employed at the Museum of Paleontology and he had the skeleton of Gertie at his home. This all needed to be corrected immediately and] so we got it back and we talked with big people in the university about this and attorneys talked and everything. [And we worked out a deal with the Museum of Paleontology to get the specimen of Gertie back to Arizona along with the molds to the skeletal replicas]. I was sitting at my desk at Petrified Forest on a day that I looked out and there was this tremendous violent thunderstorm on the horizon [at the park]. We were getting hail and there were snow flurries and things like that. [Then] up pulls up the UPS truck [into the parking lot behind the visitor's center, sprinted into the back door] and he said, "Oh, here, I have a box for you." It was a little keyboard box. He says, "Oh, here, can you sign this?" It [the return address] said, Rob Long, California.
	01:46:48	I'm thinking, "This is Gertie? This is all there is of Gertie?" [I had not seen the skeleton or Gertie previously and did not know what to expect]. They put it in a keyboard box and that's how it was packed. So I opened it up, looked at it, assessed it. I took pictures of it and I said, "I got to go up and tell Gary [superintendent]." So I took it [the box] up to Gary and I said, "Well, good news and bad news. We got Gertie back." When he said it, a bolt of lightning struck the building.
	01:47:24	He [Gary] just shook his head and looked at it. He said, "The thing about this, I knew it would be a cold day in hell before we get Gertie back with all the storm out". We had to break that news to the community, because of course we've crushed them on all of these. It's not the oldest dinosaur. It's not this complete big skeleton, it's these tiny remains [that fit inside a keyboard box]. So those were some of the things I had to endure during my tenure at Petrified Forest.
Nancy Russell:	01:47:57	So were you also being called on for law enforcement? You mentioned Sue, do you want to segue to that?
Vincent Santucci:	01:48:07	Yeah, one more quick museum related thing.
Nancy Russell:	01:48:09	Oh, sure.

Vincent Santucci: 01:48:10 I inherited a mess. The first cabinet that I opened that had fossils in it, it was a tall cabinet with shelves that opened like this [Vince gestures], shelves that all collapsed and nothing was labeled or marked and everything was co-mingled. But amongst that, I found this really cool looking plant, that I'd never seen anything like it. The world's expert on Petrified Forest Triassic plants was named Sid Ash. He had worked there [in Petrified Forest] for 30 years; well-known. When Sid visited the park, I was so excited for him to come [see the unusual specimen]. I showed it to him and he said, "Vince, this is really an important specimen. It's probably new to science." It's an old Triassic cycad plant and it's named *Androcycas*, “manly cycad”, because it has reproductive parts. *Androcycas santuccii*. I like the manly part with the Santucci. [Sid published on this new fossil plant and named it].

Nancy Russell: 01:49:12 Now, did you name it?

Vincent Santucci: 01:49:15 No, I had nothing to do—I didn't even know until after it was published. That's typically normal, that you don't tell anybody until something is official [described and published]. Whenever you name a new species, whether it's a modern biological species or a fossil species, it has to ascribe to the international guidelines for taxonomic nomenclature. It has to have a unique name. It has to be described in the scientific literature, in a peer reviewed journal where people can look at it and say, oh no, this isn't new. This is related to X, Y, or Z. So there's all this criteria and it has to have a unique name. So I only knew about it after it was published.

Nancy Russell: 01:49:55 Is Ash the one who published it?

Vincent Santucci: 01:49:58 Sid Ash, yeah, and there's a copy of it [in the archives] you don't have to scan. One of the distractions that came forward during this time is that the Cedar Pass District Ranger [Stan Robbins] at Badlands National Park and myself began communicating. He was new there and he said, "Vince, I'm trying to learn all about the history of law enforcement incidents here. What kind of responses are we doing, our motor vehicle accidents and resource crimes?" He said, "I've got a big file here on paleo resource crimes and it's almost all [prepared] by you. I'd like to talk to you about this”. So that's where we became good friends. We talked a lot. I told him everything that I told you here. I told him about some work that I had done undercover, where I

went with some paleontologist, Bill Wall, to the Black Hills Institute to try to find out what is this place? How are they connected to potential collecting at Badlands National Park?

01:51:11 Because this business, the Black Hills Institute of Geologic Research, research is a disguise for what they really do. It was [it is] alleged that they got their start selling minerals from localities in the Black Hills and White River Badlands fossils because they're everywhere. They're sometimes good complete skeletons that are easy to collect and prepare and they make nice [lucrative] sales objects, particularly for wealthy [actors, businessmen, or] Wall Street executives that have a lot of money to burn. In terms of the world of commercial paleontology, there's some big name people that collect fossils. Bill Gates is a fossil collector. He can afford it. What's the actor from National Treasure?

Nancy Russell: 01:52:05 Nic Cage?

Vincent Santucci: 01:52:07 Nic[holas] Cage is a big fossil collector, Leonardo DiCaprio, and they kind of got in some trouble in regards to purchasing some specimens out of Mongolia that were [seized by the FBI and] repatriated. Anyways, there's a lot to those stories. I started talking frequently with Stan [Robbins] at Badlands and he became more and more interested. So I told him about the time that I went in undercover at the Black Hills Institute and we were met and hosted by one of the staff there, Bob Farrar. He's been there for a long time since the beginning and still is there. He's in all the television shows on Dinosaur 13. So he [Bob] took us on there [on a behind the scenes tour of Black Hills Institute] thinking that we want to buy White River [fossil] specimens. The paleontologist that was with us, Bill Wall, had a collection where he did in the past buy specimens, where he [Bill] was assured that it [specimens] was legally collected and he uses them in a teaching study collection [at Georgia College and State University, in Milledgeville, Georgia].

01:53:14 So he [Bob Farrar] took us in and he said, "Oh, I want to show you something." Bob Farrar said, "I want to show you something at our loading dock that just came in." We went in there, it was a really nice *Archaeotherium*, it's like a [Oligocene] pig skull from the White River Badlands. It wasn't prepared yet. It was in a jacket. Bill Wall started

asking questions. He said, "Well, if I purchase this, how much locality [and stratigraphic] information do you have on it? Because if I published it, I need to have that information. It's part of the metadata that's essential to make it a scientific use of specimen." Bob smirked, and he basically said, "Well, there are times that people are out there collecting, sometimes looking for things that we have on our wishlist, and they'll bring them in and we'll accept them, no questions asked".

01:54:08 So what does that mean? What does that tell you? This business is not concerned about whether specimens are legally collected. They're not responsible. They're not worried about accountability of whether they're being illegally taken off of Park Service land. So that was a take home message. I shared that with Stan and also pointed out that, my gosh, I've been at the American Museum, at Smithsonian, and places, they got a better prep lab at the Black Hills Institute. [Probably due to] the revenue they bring in. They've got all this great field equipment, backhoes, and everything; really impressed. They had a gymnasium that they bought that they had these very well-designed shelving that could accommodate a lot of weight from the floor to the ceiling. So I shared that with Stan. Stan was bold enough to also go undercover there.

01:55:03 [I mentioned to Stan,] just say, "Hey, I'd like a tour of the place and might be interested in buying fossils". They didn't know who he was. So he came back with the same experience. I told him that in 1985, when we found Mr. Watson and took him to the magistrate, that there was a request that went to the FBI [seeking assistance with investigating the Black Hills Institute]. "Hey, we need your help. We've got this big commercial [fossil] dealer that we've got evidence that has been stealing [fossils from] out of Badlands National Park". They declined involvement indicating, "We don't have time for that kind of stuff. We deal with homicides, kidnapping, [and cases such as the] Wounded Knee incident".

01:55:49 So once Stan came on, Stan started contacting them and reaching out to them. I guess I started talking to Stan back around 1998 or so. There was a couple of years where, reach out to the FBI for help [but there was consistently] no interest. [It was not until 1991, that] they called us and said, "Hey, Santucci and Robbins, you keep bringing up stealing fossils and the Black Hills Institute in the same sentence.

We just got a call from the Cheyenne River Falls Indian Reservation about a T-rex that was stolen off of Indian lands. If you help us, we'll help you".

01:56:40 It's like, this is where we want to be, because we want their help with things that are beyond our jurisdiction with the Black Hills Institute that we suspect [may help the Sue grand jury investigation] and have some evidence on. We [Stan and I] don't care about the dinosaur, but we'll help you [we recognized the opportunity to join the investigation that may have mutual benefits including to issues important to the NPS]. And so, I got pulled in and Stan got pulled in to the grand jury investigation after this case was initiated. Just some background, that when you are a federal law enforcement officer and you're called in to help the FBI or another jurisdiction, then it has to go through a rigorous paperwork exercise [approve process]. Where the Department of Justice had to reach out to the Department of Interior and get permission, because essentially if I'm pulled into an investigation like that, I no longer work for the Park Service during the tenure of that investigation. So my supervisor can't call me and say, "Hey, you need to tell me what's going on," or, "You need to come back [to work in your NPS position]".

01:57:38 No, the Secretary [of] Interior's office has signed off on this [request from the Department of Justice] that they know that they need to protect those assets that they're bringing in [to support an investigation]. It took about 30 days for the paperwork to get processed, I have some communication with the Regional Chief Ranger who's coordinating with WASO. Once I got the letter of confirmation [to join the investigation], I needed to let my family know and made arrangements and flew to Pierre, South Dakota, where the US Attorney's office is located. Before I got there, there was a phone call that had a bunch of people on, [regarding the investigation] prior to the seizure. The US Attorney at the time was very ambitious. He thought he was going to make a name for himself on this particular case because there was a dinosaur. So he wanted to move. He didn't want to wait until he had everybody mobilized.

01:58:38 So the only contribution I made to the conversation was [the recommendation] that if you're going to seize the dinosaur, make sure you seize the business records, because we [this was my belief] believe there is likely evidence and intelligence in that, that they're going to look at other

crimes and they may be tied to Badlands National Park and we'll need them. [The idea that the Black Hills Institute business records would disclose information and business practices involving fossil crimes beyond the Sue investigation and there may be information or evidence pertaining to other crimes and including fossil collection]. [There was a basic sense that, "You're going to help us, we're going to you, seize the documents". Well, they did. They seized the documents [and they proved to be incredibly important]. There are several documentaries that show it [attempt to tell the story of the "Sue" investigation]. Dinosaur 13 is the most recent one. I'm happy to bring a copy next time I come and you can watch it and there's also [a] NOVA special that was done [called "The Curse of T. rex"].

01:59:24 Anyways, I get to Pierre, South Dakota, get introduced around [to the investigative team], and the first thing I have to do is I got to [review and] sign a bunch of paperwork. I meet with the SAC, that's the Special Agent in Charge, that's the lead FBI officer that I'll be working for. Then the US Attorney, the Assistant US Attorney, David Zuercher, and they wanted to segregate me out and have a separate conversation, bringing me in. How it began is, "Santucci, you've been bugging us for a long time, [contacting our office for several years seeking help with some fossil investigation]. Why do you want to be involved in this investigation? We need to know. We need to know everything, and you need to be candid about everything. Is it that Peter Larson and his team have been messing with your wife?

02:00:09 Do you have some personal vendetta? We want to make sure there's no conflict of interest. That you want to be here to support this investigation for the right reasons". They don't want any dirt to come up that could compromise their case down the road when they [the defense attorneys] try to discredit them [members of the grand jury investigation].

Nancy Russell: 02:00:22 Fair enough.

Vincent Santucci: 02:00:22 Yeah.

02:00:23 So they went on and they made me sign all this paperwork. They made me sign a letter saying that I'm working for the Justice Department on this particular case, and that anything that I learn during the course of this investigation,

I can never divulge, I can never ever take action on regardless of what it is. And I'm thinking, "Oh, I want to be here. I want to help this. This could benefit us in the park service." Signed away, not a second thought. "Thanks for the invitation."

02:00:54 And so then the second part of the interview goes forward. And this is all in a book called Petrified. And through the course of the conversation, they said, "Hey, can you tell us what this is?" and they threw a file across [the desk] to me and it had my name on it. And I opened it up and I look at it, and there's a bunch of little sticky notes with a lot of really negative, nasty things they're saying about Vince Santucci on [sticky notes attached to] a copy of my *Park Paleontology Newsletter* I published in the late 1980s. And I'm thinking, "Who are these people [this person who wrote these notes] and why don't they like me? And I thought I did a good job on this." I was really, [felt a bit] insulted. I'm thinking, "What is this? Going through this, there's a lot of stuff about me."

02:01:40 And at the bottom of the stack was [a copy of] my law enforcement sensitive background investigation when I applied for my federal law enforcement commission. And of course, heartburn and my heart stopped for a few seconds, thinking, "What is this?" Because on the first pages of that document, it [clearly] says, "Do not proceed if you do not have the right clearances. You will be violating Privacy Act and other laws". There's three pages of, "Don't go further" and then there it is, in my handwriting, everything that I've applied, the interviews of people, that [traffic] citation that I got that one time is in there. It's all there.

02:02:21 And I knew that blood had drawn from me [I experienced an unsettling feeling], and I looked at them [SAC and Assistant U.S. Attorney] nervously [and confused] and said, "What is this?" And they said that, "This file was found in the seized documents from the Black Hills Institute." So I needed time to compose myself, figure, "What do you mean by this? I can't understand. This is all protected information".

02:02:46 That's when they proceeded to tell me that, "Remember that what you learn you can't ever use regardless of what it is. And that's why you signed this paper because of this kind of stuff. But there's more of it that you'll learn about and

you'll see. And we're going to move forward because we view this case and we accept this case because we don't think it's just a theft of a dinosaur case. We think that this is a case that they might be able to prosecute under racketeering, influence, corruption and organized crime: RICO."

02:03:25 They said, "We're dealing with the world's largest commercial fossil dealer [who] works internationally." They said that the way that they operate is like the mafia, like the Godfather, that smaller businesses [commercial fossil dealers] are dependent upon being able to do business with them. And there's a lot of bad things that are going on in terms of [white collar crimes], customs violations, in terms of theft of fossils internationally. And we think we've got a big case here.

02:03:53 And I thought, "Wow. Well, that's a little ambitious. I don't know if I'm sold yet, but I'm really upset [and uneasy] about the circumstances of my background investigation [being in the files of Black Hills Institute]." And so they said, "Don't worry about it. If we are able to do anything with it, we'll come back and we'll tell you something, that it's resolved. You may not know what happened, but we'll tell you."

02:04:16 So it turns out that for just that part, I'll bring closure to that, that you know, we worked there [on the grand jury investigation] months and months. Stan Robbins and myself were the first ones in the building and we were the last ones to leave every day. We absolutely helped to make those cases. I was the only person that had both a law enforcement background and paleontology. And I understood the resources because, yeah, I did my master's research thesis on beds that they're talking about [where the unauthorized fossil collecting was documented]. And I knew the vernacular, I knew the taxonomic names, I knew the stratigraphic names. None of the FBI agents did.

02:04:54 There was a [large] team of investigators that were there that were supporting [this investigation]. There were agents that were looking at IRS kind of violations, customs violations, white collar crimes and all of that [other elements of criminal activity]. But Stan and myself and then a couple of other people were involved in the resource crimes that was overshadowed by a dinosaur, which we didn't really care about, but they needed our help and we

helped to make those cases. [The criminal investigation did not focus on Sue, rather it was focused on the evidence obtained on criminal activities by the Black Hills Institute. The civil case was focused on the dinosaur, primarily on the issue of ownership of the fossil].

02:05:23 But in those many, many seized documents, it's what we anticipated, and more and more and more.

02:05:34 I was so impressed. Again, I was young in law enforcement. I didn't know [that some of] this stuff could happen [and learned a great deal through this experience]. And particularly way back then. With artificial intelligence now, anything's possible, but what I was observing then was way pre-internet and sophisticated technologies.

02:05:54 They had agents that were clerical that they would have us go ahead and fill out score sheets [forms to compile data extracted from seized business records]. So if we're reviewing a file and we have a document that everyone had a number on, that we would code, we would [record categories of information] put the date, we would put the name of the person that wrote the letter, the name of the person it was sent to, and then important facts in there, like names of fossil localities, jurisdictions, et cetera. [Each document was assigned an evidence number and we would identify the information compiled for each document]. And then they would enter all that into a database. So, if we wanted to find all of the fossil catfish from Badlands National Park documents, we could put it in and do a query and they'd say, "Oh, here's seven of them".

02:06:38 That was the case that was my case [the Badlands fossil catfish and one that proved to be important in the criminal investigation]. That was the most important case in my mind because of the fact that it was a clean case [supported by good documentary evidence]. I didn't really care about the dinosaur per se. I didn't really care about the customs violations, tax fraud, falsification of customs paperwork and all that. I cared about the Park Service specimens.

02:07:07 And so, again, they pulled us into all kinds of different cases that we consulted on [that involved] BLM land, from Peru [which was a disturbing case] and on, and on. This was the case that I attended to [Badlands fossil catfish]. And I went through, and it started off one day, I found a receipt from the Black Hills Institute that was to Lance

Grande, a friend of mine, who works on Green River fish. I knew him from Fossil Butte, his work there. That he had purchased some catfish [from Black Hills Institute that was] from Badlands National Park.

02:07:40 Now, why that's important, why a paleontologist [familiar with fossil at Badlands NP] would see that, that no one else would, is because there's almost no fish preserved in the White River Badlands [they're exceedingly rare in the strata]. Of the 270 species of vertebrates [documented from the sedimentary strata], there's [almost] no fish because of that depositional environment. It wasn't conducive.

02:07:59 And people have been collecting there since the 1840s, right? Back in the fur trader days. There's so much known about that very rich fauna. There's no fish. That they're saying that there's fish specimens from the Badlands caught my attention for no other reason than that's kind of cool [it adds a new dimension to the fossil record for the park]. But then it was sold and it was sold to Lance Grande. This was something we needed to look at.

02:08:25 And so we found several more documents, but when we did the query, we got seven documents that couldn't have more cleanly pulled together a case that you could have [potentially] a felony conviction. And we did. And we did!

02:08:38 So during the grand jury process, as you know, the grand jury [investigation can result in a federal criminal] indictment. And they did an indictment [against the Black Hills Institute]. It was a 27 count indictment, mostly white collar crimes, and there was a couple of fossil [theft] cases.

02:08:51 Now, what you may not know, and if you watch any of these documentaries on the Sue case, you'll see that there was this contingency of people that would protest against the federal government. [Some view federal employees as], we're fat, lazy, overpaid people. But Peter Larson was brilliant in terms of his disinformation campaigns [to the media and public] that this case evolved into the public eye—that the people were collecting fossils so that they could build a [dinosaur] museum in the Black Hills for kids were being charged with these bogus crimes by these overzealous federal people wasting taxpayer money. And so we had to contend with it.

02:09:46 So there were [many individuals who engaged in] protesting in South Dakota at the Black Hills Institute during the time of the seizure and at the South Dakota School of Mines once the dinosaur was seized. Got a lot of press. You know, these are kind of quiet states and so this is a big issue. The world's largest T rex, most complete T rex, seized over this legal dispute. And so it made a lot of headlines.

02:10:18 And because we [members of the investigative team] couldn't say a word them, the media was biased. The big bad government [can be a marketable and popular topic. And so we had to endure that [one-sided information campaign]. I, at times, felt at risk, just like Cassidy Hutchinson does, based on some things that were happening in this remote part of the world that I wasn't from around there, I was from someplace else.

02:10:49 So anyways, the propaganda campaign was pervasive, and it influences all the documentaries that you'll learn about if you watch them and if we get chance to talk about them. So we were under a lot of pressure, even from politicians, to say, "Hey, look, you need to stop burning money away on this." Particularly conservative minded people. "This is a waste of [taxpayer] money. Our constituents are being burdened by this. Our kids are losing a museum over this. This doesn't look good. You need to bring this investigation to a wrap."

02:11:28 And so the Assistant US Attorney came to us and said, "Look, we're going to deal with all the white collar crime stuff, those are going to be easy, but the fossil stuff's going to be more difficult to convince a western jury of a conviction, particularly if we're talking about fossils coming from BLM or Forest Service land, which are areas [federal lands] where we mine for minerals and we graze cattle and we extract timber and other things. They're not going to find that [collecting fossils on BLM] as a problem. They need to find a case in the [National] Park Service land. Santucci, you're the one that needs to make this case." And so we invested every bit of our energy to develop that case as cleanly as we can.

02:12:13 And just so you know, that was one of the indictments [that went forward] was the fossils stolen from Badlands National Park, which led to the first felony conviction for fossil theft in the United States' history. No kidding.

Nancy Russell:	02:12:30	Very cool.
Vincent Santucci:	02:12:31	Yeah. Yeah. We don't mess around. I got a cast of the catfish. I can bring it over as a Show & Tell one day.
	02:12:44	There's a lot more to that story that you'll have to read in Petrified, but it's an important one.
Nancy Russell:	02:12:51	Okay. But so then the catfish fossils were seized. And then did they come back to the Park Service?
Vincent Santucci:	02:12:57	Yes. Yes. And there are many layers to the complexity of that, you know, talking to museum curators and chain of custody.
	02:13:08	Because the Field Museum bought them [the fossil catfish] unknowingly, paid for them, had title to them because they thought that they owned them. And it came down to the fact that the Park Service agreed that the specimens could stay at the Field Museum. And Lance [Grande] is currently describing to name those as a new species.
	02:13:36	We spent a year and a half, heated [semi-contentious] discussion with the curator at Badlands National Park who didn't want to give the Park Service [catalog] numbers to it, because it was stolen, because it came off of tribal land [in the South Unit], that the tribe should issue that. [Eventually] the numbers were issued. It was an overzealous curator who wanted to be very dogmatic and not compromise with anybody. [But this issue was resolved allowing the fossil to be formally published].
	02:14:09	So does that answer your question?
	02:14:14	Okay.
	02:14:16	So we'll all celebrate when it's published, huh? And we'll know the backstory.
Nancy Russell:	02:14:22	So is there any—I think this is a good place to leave it for now. Does anybody have any follow-up questions or anything final you want to add?
Vincent Santucci:	02:14:31	Yeah. The final note is that we went on and that that case adjudicated. So there was a separate—this is really important. There was a separate civil case and there was a separate criminal case.

02:14:43 Again, the Park Service didn't really care about the civil case. We supported it as we could, but that [the focus of the case] was the legal issue of ownership of the dinosaur. It had to do with Tribal Trust land, very complicated land issues.

02:14:54 The federal government prevailed. The specimen went back to the Native American that the lands it came from. He wound up selling it through an auction and it sold for eight and a half million dollars, made a lot of press, publicity, [and is] internationally known. It's [Sue is] on display at the Chicago Field Museum. It was [purchased through] a partnership between McDonald's and Walt Disney World to be able to give the funds to the Field Museum so it would remain on exhibit in this country.

02:15:22 So that's it.

02:15:23 There have been several documentaries. There's lots of news media in regards to this [case], probably thousands of newspaper clippings, [a few law journal reviews], and things like that. But there were several specials. As I said, there was a NOVA special that was done, and then there was a more recent, Dinosaur 13.

02:15:48 It's probably worth sharing this. So the producer who created Dinosaur 13 [Todd Miller] first contacted me and said, "Vince, this story of Sue isn't final because the true story hasn't been told. There's so much one-sidedness about this whole thing. Would you be willing to talk more candidly and tell some nonsensitive information that would allow us to [better] complete that story in a documentary? We want that unbiased [narrative]. We think it's an important one to tell".

02:16:21 I had to run it all the way through the chain of command [including WASO public affairs], got permission to talk to them. They said, "Anything short of embarrassing our agency, you can share with them as long as it's factual and substantiated." [and instructions to avoid any discussions that would be sensitive in nature or involve any controversy]. And so I did. I trusted him. I went forward. [Todd Miller seemed sincere about his interest to tell the untold story and I trusted him].

02:16:36 He had not interviewed Peter Larson yet [when he traveled to Gettysburg to record my interview]. He's a real smart,

he's a nice guy. He does really good work, this producer. [I shared information regarding the encounter with Frank Watson at Titanothere Graveyard from 1985, where Watson specifically reported that the Black Hills Institute assisted him with the collection of the *Archelon* turtle specimen from the park. This and other information never made it into the film. At the time I interviewed with Todd, he expressed his appreciation for me sharing this information that he felt would be very important to include in his film].

But when he went to meet with Peter Larson—this is the genius [and charm] of Peter Larson. If you see him on film, and you will, or you talk to him [in person], he seems to be like a really down to earth, simple guy. [Peter presents himself as a simple person who grew up in rural South Dakota where fossils in his backyard]. [He seems sincere when he states that he] doesn't care about money, doesn't care—and he just wants to go play in the dirt and collect fossils all day. But realistically, he's a genius in manipulating people's perceptions on things and [promoting] disinformation. He did so in the media during the grand jury investigation and the criminal trial, and he also did it with the producer of Dinosaur 13.

02:17:29 And so how he did that, was he said, "Oh, well, you're going to produce this documentary. Are you going to pay actors to reconstruct the discovery and the digging out and the preparation? What's that going to get you? How would you like to have the original films of when we discovered it and pulled it out of the ground and prepped it and mounted it?" [something that is historically incredible]. He said, "That's where you're going to get awards and you're going to get a million dollars to sell this production." It's like, "Wow. How lucky." He films everything he does. And I can share with you lots of other stories down the road, not part of this interview, related to that, the films that we viewed in that context.

02:18:20 But anyways, Peter Larson said [paraphrase], "I have the copyrights to these. There's some great stuff, hundreds of hours of filming. It's yours at no cost if I'm a co-producer and I have last rights of refusal what goes on that film". [Todd shared with me that he was able to use the original videos of the Sue discovery and excavation in exchange for this].

Molly Williams: 02:18:41 Oh.

Vincent Santucci: 02:18:42 Well, you know what he did? He cut out [almost] everything that I said [and also cut almost] everything that the other investigators said. [And when I spoke with Todd in Park City, Utah, after the film premiered at Sundance, he apologized to me. He admitted that he compromised telling the full story about Sue in order to use those original videos that Larson offered]. So it told his [Larson's] story of this victim that was beat up by the big bad federal government and all he was trying to do was build a museum and he wound up going to jail.

02:19:01 And he co-mingled the criminal and civil side, which are separate cases. [An aspect of the film that was also compromised which diminished the integrity of the film and included misleading information]. The criminal side is the bad stuff that they did that led to criminal charges and felony counts. [The activities associated with the Black Hills Institute. These were the charges that emerged from the Grand Jury Investigation and associated criminal indictment. These criminal charges were largely unrelated to the dinosaur Sue]. And the civil side was completely different, it was ownership of the dinosaur. [This was addressed in separate litigation and hearing]. And they [Dinosaur 13] co-mingled them as if he went to jail because of the dinosaur. Which he never did.

02:19:22 If you ask a thousand people out there today, unless you have paleontologists in that crowd, zero people are going to know because of the effective disinformation. [The reaction by some in the vertebrate paleontology community was that Dinosaur 13 was not a documentary, it was a fiction portraying Peter Larson's book "Rex Appeal". Todd failed in telling the untold story related to Sue in his quest to produce a film that sold for over a million dollars. He achieved the million dollar prize and an Emmy Award].

02:19:33 So I was—Go ahead.

Nancy Russell: 02:19:35 I was saying, how much jail time did he get?

Vincent Santucci: 02:19:37 I'm sorry?

Nancy Russell: 02:19:38 How much jail time did he get?

Vincent Santucci: 02:19:39 Two years, I think. 15 months, 16 months, or something like that. It was mostly for white collar crimes. Nothing to

do with the dinosaur. [Dinosaur 13 was misleading on this fact].

02:19:51 So I remember getting a call from the producer saying, "Vince, I got some good news. We got accepted to premier at the Sundance Film Festival, and I got tickets for you if you want to bring any family members." So he didn't elude to me that he changed this documentary significantly.

02:20:13 And so when I met with him, I shook his hand, I said, "Congratulations," on and on. He said, "Vince, we'll want to talk after the film. I don't want to talk now, I don't have time, but there's some things you need to know because we had to change the film." So I had my daughter, Brianna. I guess she was about 15 years old. We go in the film. And of course, there's a lot of people in there that are in [attendance from] the commercial fossil world. I'm not their favorite person [I may not be so popular to those in the commercial fossil industry] and so I wanted to make sure I sheltered my daughter from anything like that. But I suspected people would be on their best behavior at Sundance.

02:20:55 And so the film goes on and I'm watching it, and it tells the story of [Peter Larson] this victim to the point where people around us, including some woman right behind me, was sobbing when they were talking about poor Peter Larson when they were ready to bring him into jail and he broke his leg and he fell. And they were out loud [groaning] and moaning. And I'm thinking, "Oh my gosh." And I'm getting down in my seat lower and lower because [I was feeling uncomfortable being viewed as] the bad guy on the other end of that jail term.

02:21:33 So it [Dinosaur 13] is a horribly biased [and misleading] production. It is not a documentary. If you look at posts online by the scientific community, they said, "This is a farce. This is disinformation. This is not a documentary. It does not tell the story as it alleged to." But it got a lot of press. [And an Emmy. Dinosaur 13 won the 2015 Emmy Award for Outstanding Science and Technology Programming at the 36th Annual News and Documentary Emmy Awards].

02:21:54 At the end [of the premier], they're [Todd Miller] calling up all the people that participated in the film, the producer, and they spoke and they thanked everybody. And Peter

Larson's up there, standing ovation for this poor victim hero. And I'm just sitting there, and they [Todd] said, "And Vince Santucci, we'd like to acknowledge." I'm sitting in my seat and I'm thinking, "What do I say? I work for the Park Service, I represent the green and gray." [I cautiously stood and extended the following reply], "Congratulations for your production. Thank you. I hope we can get the rest of the story out someday." And that's all I said. So anyways, big disappointment. The only thing that the producer put in there he said, "I want you to notice that there was something in there during a scene right after you speak," that they have a scene at the Badlands. Beautiful, scenic shot. And it said, "The National Park Service began investigating the Black Hills Institute in 1985." That is the only thing in there [that was a clue to an underlying and otherwise untold story].

02:23:06 Now, why is that important? Sue wasn't found until 1991. 1985 was Watson [Titanothere Graveyard and the *Archelon* turtle].

Nancy Russell: 02:23:14 Mm-hmm.

Vincent Santucci: 02:23:15 We thought, "Oh my gosh, nobody has picked this up. Nobody has put two and two together." He put that in there as that was the only token and gesture he did for us, thinking that somebody may ask that question, "Why was the Park Service investigating Black Hills Institute [in 1985] if the dinosaur wasn't found until 1991? It doesn't make sense. It's inconsistent with the entire story that's being told here."

02:23:40 So you'll see that I sigh. I had been invited to the various screenings of this, including—

02:23:51 Oh, well, let me just tell you this. The producer was right. He was smart. Within six hours of the premier, he was offered $1 million for the theatrical rights in the United States for Dinosaur 13.

Nancy Russell: 02:24:06 Wow.

Vincent Santucci: 02:24:07 It paid off for him [Todd Miller].

02:24:09 He had several offers that he didn't relinquish, that there was a television rights contract that he was going to get and then there was an international film contract. So who

knows what he got, but he got the television contract. We don't know what the amount was.

02:24:25 But I got invited by Anderson Cooper to come to the television premiere on CNN. They got the rights to premiere Dinosaur 13 outside of the theater on television for the first time. And I went to New York [in December 2014], and I was on stage with Anderson Cooper, the producer [Todd Miller] and Peter Larson. They were sitting there. You know, buddy buddies. And there's an audience of kids out there. They [CNN] brought in high school students to interview us.

02:24:54 And Anderson Cooper interviewed us, and again, I had to be very careful. I had to be professional. I couldn't be sour grapes. I couldn't say, "You didn't do the right job here." And so we answered our questions carefully, clearly, and respectfully.

02:25:13 And thank God that there was a kid and—a student when they got around to asking students questions that—It was the most important part of that entire thing. And this was [captured] on television. We got this recorded. The student asked Peter Larson [the perfect question], "How do you know where to go to dig fossils?" And I'm listening, "What's he going to say?" He said, "Well, one really important place is we go back and look at the old scientific literature, and they used to publish dots on maps where fossils were found. And that's a clue for us to look for places."

02:25:52 That's exactly what we've been talking about all along in the development of the Paleontological Research Preservation Act, that we have to have a confidentiality level [to protect sensitive fossil locality information]. Sensitive information should not be disclosed by agencies just for this reason alone. But to have the world's most successful commercial fossil dealer state on national TV that how we know where to go look for them is we look at the old scientific papers with the dots on it. Thank you, Peter Larson. That's the best thing you've ever said. And we all lived happily ever after.

02:26:29 And we brought that up when we were promoting the need for PRPA to be passed into law.

Nancy Russell: 02:26:36 Well, that's going to be a longer story.

Vincent Santucci: 02:26:37 Yeah.

Nancy Russell: 02:26:37 So we'll leave it here for now.

Molly Williams: 02:26:39 Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]