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Rick Smith
October 30, 2012

Interview conducted by Lu Ann Jones
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NPS History Collection
Harpers Ferry Center
PO Box 50
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
HFC_Archivist@nps.gov

ANPR Oral History Project

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[START OF TRACK 1]

Lu Ann Jones: So I always start out just by saying that this is Lu Ann Jones, and I'm here with Rick Smith, and we're in Indian Wells, California, at the Rendezvous of the Association of National Park Rangers, and it is October 30th, and this is our interview for the Oral History Project. So, thank you very much. And do I have your permission to record this?

Rick Smith: Yes.

Lu Ann Jones: Thank you. You know, I always feel like the origin stories, where people began, are always so important to figuring out who people become in the National Park Service. I know a little bit about your background but just, can you tell me about where you grew up, what your family did?

Rick Smith: I grew up in Michigan and went to high school, I got a B.A. in history from Albion College in Michigan, taught school for six years, junior high English, and then went back and got my master's degree and finished all the coursework for my doctorate in English Literature. And all that time I was working as a seasonal park ranger in Yellowstone, and then I had a little bit of trouble with the draft, so I went into the Peace Corps to avoid the draft, and I taught at the National University in Asunción, Paraguay, in the faculty of philosophy, where they teach literature, and came back and looked around for a teaching job, but sort of halfheartedly, because I'd figured out by then that I liked my summer job better than my winter job, and went back to Yellowstone one more year as a seasonal park ranger. And the newly appointed superintendent of Yosemite drove through Yellowstone on his way to the park and said that he had permission to hire some winter seasonals in Yosemite, which was relatively unusual. And he hired me, and I went there and, later in the spring of '72, I took the Federal Service Entrance Exam and got a permanent job in Yosemite. I was there for five and a half years. From there I became an instructor at the Albright Training Center and was there for two years and went on to the Division of Legislation in Washington, D.C., where I was again for two years and where I met my wife. She was a Park Service employee.

Rick Smith: And I then went to be the Assistant Superintendent of Everglades National Park. Was there three years and went to Philadelphia, where I was the Associate Regional Director for Operations. Was interviewed by then-director Mott and was selected to be the superintendent of Carlsbad Caverns and Guadalupe Mountains

National Parks.¹ At that time the two parks were combined under a single superintendent. That's no longer the case. My wife went to Albuquerque because she couldn't find a job that was acceptable for her in Carlsbad, and so I subsequently applied for and received employment as the Associate Regional Director for Operations again in the old Santa Fe Regional Office, and after two years in that job, the Regional Director Cook transferred me over to be the Associate Regional Director for Resources Management.² And the charge there was to try to get all the Cultural Resources people singing off the same page with the Natural Resources people. And it took me about a year and a half or two years to get that done. And that was a real steep learning curve for me because I'd never really had much to do with Cultural Resources in my career, and so I had to learn all about ethnography, archaeology, anthropology, conservation, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. So, it was a fun assignment.

- Lu Ann Jones: Well how did you, let me go back and what did your parents do?
- Rick Smith: Ah, they were both – my mother was a teacher. She went back to teaching fulltime after we were semi-old enough to take care of ourselves. And my father was a director of a YMCA.
- Lu Ann Jones: So, what kinds of things, were there certain activities that you did as a kid that might've—
- Rick Smith: Well, we always went camping. We always did those kinds of things, and I have faint memories in my mind of seeing state park rangers and seeing other people like that and saying, "You know, that would be really a neat job." And so, when I applied, you know, this was before the days of seasonal registers and all that kind of stuff. You applied directly to the park, and I did, to Yellowstone, and, I don't know, about a month later or so, I got a letter from the chief ranger saying, you know, "Report on June 25th." So never having been in Yellowstone before, mind you, I loaded up all my Bermuda shorts and my t-shirts and things like that and drove out to Yellowstone, and the day I arrived there it was snowing, so I knew I'd brought the wrong stuff. And was there for the next ten summers.
- Lu Ann Jones: Hm. What were you doing there, and how did that job change over time?
- Rick Smith: Well, I was a protection ranger, and again, much before things like the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. I can remember them telling – they gave me a pickup and said, "You go on patrol." And I said, "What's patrol? What do you do?" "Well, you look for

¹ William Penn (Bill) Mott, Jr.

² John E. Cook.

stuff that's going on that's not right." "How do I know what's not right?" They made a copy of Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regs, Study this tonight. And they said, "Oh by the way, there's a handgun in the glove compartment. Don't use it until you need it." And I said, "How do I know when I need it?" And they said, "You'll know." So it was, it wasn't probably until my third or fourth summer that we began to have a little bit more systematic training in law enforcement and that kind of thing.

Lu Ann Jones: Were there people who were called law enforcement rangers at that point? Or were they all called protection rangers?

Rick Smith: Well, yeah, no. There were no law enforcement rangers. They were all called protection rangers or interpretive rangers. And so there were – I don't much care for the term law enforcement rangers to begin with, but those of us who had a pistol in the glove compartment were protection rangers, then those people who gave the evening programs and guided the walks, things like that, were interpretive rangers. I remember one summer in Yellowstone where the decree came down that the protection division had to give one evening campfire a week, and of course the permanents were scared to death of talking in front of people, so they immediately shoveled that off to all the schoolteachers who were seasonal rangers. And one time we decided to show people who had come to the evening program how to pack a mule, and so we packed a mule and made all the explanations about butterfly knots and all that kind of stuff, and then the guy who was narrating said, "Now Rick will lead the mule out as if he's going to a fire." And I got about two feet outside the campfire circle, and a black bear ran right in front of us, and the mule spooked, and the last thing people saw of me were my feet being dragged down a trail. And it was kind of embarrassing.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, what kinds of calls did you go on? Or what kinds of infractions did you see at that time – so we're talking about the mid- '60s, right?

Rick Smith: Oh, well, we talked about, I mean, you saw pretty much everything. You saw, you know, disorderly conduct, you saw all kinds of traffic violations, you saw natural resources violations of one kind or another. We were pretty strict, because of the grizzly situation, of having campers put away their food, and so we had those kinds of violations in the campground and things like that. But I mean it was not much different, I don't think, than it is now, except that we didn't have anybody like the guy come in to Mount Rainier and shoot Margaret Ayers [Anderson].³ But it could've

³ Ranger Margaret Anderson was killed during a traffic stop at Mount Rainier National Park on 1 January 2012.

happened. And it did. So, it was certainly, in my judgment, not as complex a law enforcement situation as I later found at Yosemite in the Valley, which was not always all that good.

- Lu Ann Jones: Mmhm. I mean, I assume that part of that is Yellowstone is not close to a major population area, I mean, you have to make a real effort to go there.
- Rick Smith: Yeah. Part of that. But part of it, I think, it's more family oriented. And the third thing is I was in Yosemite in the early '70s when a lot of California teenagers came. That's where they first came to get high, that's where they first came to get drugs, that's where they first came to get laid, whatever it was, and so we had a lot of those kinds of issues.
- Lu Ann Jones: Mmhm. Well, before we get to you even joining permanently, I mean, you liked your job as a seasonal, but what did you know about the Park Service as a bureau?
- Rick Smith: Before I became a seasonal?
- Lu Ann Jones: No, but kinda early in your career?
- Rick Smith: Oh, I mean, they wouldn't even allow me to go to Albright Training Center, because they said, "You've been a seasonal for eleven years. You already know that stuff." And so, I never got the opportunity to go to the Albright Training Center for the introduction to National Park Service Operations course. But, you know, I knew pretty much what there was to know by then.
- Lu Ann Jones: Yeah, I am interested in your experience with the Peace Corps, and there does seem to be a fair number of people in the Park Service who have the Peace Corps as their background, so how did you end up making that decision?
- Rick Smith: Well, as I told you, I was having a little bit of trouble with the draft.
- Lu Ann Jones: What do you mean by that?
- Rick Smith: Well, I'm not sure that that's worth going into right now, but—
- Lu Ann Jones: Okay.
- Rick Smith: I was gonna be drafted.
- Lu Ann Jones: Okay.
- Rick Smith: And I preferred not to be drafted, and there was the option of, early on, to going to the Peace Corps and to provide service to the country in that way other than going to Vietnam. So, I did that. And I think the reason that there are so many ex-Peace Corps volunteers in the Park Service is it attracts the same kind of people. These are people that want to do something good for the world, are

interested in helping others, who are interested in public service, who have a desire to make a difference, and so I think that there's sort of a natural progression there between Peace Corps and Park Service. And, you know, for a long time, the Peace Corps and the Park Service together were one of the biggest international resources management teams anyplace, because the Office of International Affairs in Washington had someone permanently assigned to the Peace Corps. And they did the training and that kind of stuff.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow. So, when you came back from the Peace Corps, is that when you went to Yosemite and you decided at that point?

Rick Smith: Yes. No, no, I went back to Yellowstone for one summer and didn't really know what I was gonna do. It was real hard to find a teaching job in those days, for one reason and another. And I wasn't going to go back to Michigan, so when this guy drove through on his way to Yosemite, I said, "I'm yours." And that was that.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, had you ever been to Yosemite before?

Rick Smith: No.

Lu Ann Jones: So, what did you think of it when you arrived?

Rick Smith: Ah, I couldn't believe it. I mean, it's a stunning place, and it's a very busy place. Much busier than, you know, particularly in the Valley with, you know, only seven square miles and thousands of people there. It's a much busier place.

Lu Ann Jones: Mhm. So, who were some of the first people you met when you got to Yosemite?

Rick Smith: Well, there were a lot of guys that were there who were about ready to leave. Mr. Hartzog, after the Yosemite riots, did sort of a cleansing operation there, so there were a lot of new people coming in, but I met people like Don Utterback and Tom Wiley and people who were there, Bill Worthington, and then right on their heels came what affectionately became known as the Yosemite Mafia, which was people like Butch and Walt Dabney and Roger Rudolph, myself, Dan Sholly, etcetera. And we were all pretty much there for five and a half years, six years, and some people even longer than that. And got to be pretty close-knit. And we had two superintendents. We had Lynn Thompson and then we had Les Arnberger. Both of 'em were great guys.

Lu Ann Jones: Mhm. So how did you add to your skills, I mean, presumably by then you'd developed into a pretty good protection ranger. How did you—

Rick Smith: Well, the big thing in Yosemite was, that I developed that I didn't have in Yellowstone, the two big things were, you know, I don't know exactly what to call it but search and rescue techniques. You know, most of the time in Yellowstone it was search, but a lot of times in Yosemite it was rescue – people off ledges, cliffs, etcetera. The other thing was emergency medical services, which I was lucky enough to go to Camp Lejeune in North Carolina to take the Navy Corpsman's school and came back, took the national exam for the register of EMTs, and I was able to do that. And, you know, those were, you know, I'm sure I improved my law enforcement skills somewhat and things like that, but they were already pretty well honed. But what I didn't have much experience in were those two things.

Lu Ann Jones: Well how would you describe how law enforcement had changed at Yosemite post-riot versus what you understood before the riot?

Rick Smith: Well, that's a real good question, because when the new superintendent came in, Mr. Thompson, he brought in three deputy directors because Mr. Hartzog, Director Hartzog, says, "This has gotta work this time." And the guy who was sort of over interpretation and protection and resources management was John Good. And he hired Jack Morehead as the chief ranger, and they developed a concept which was called, for lack of a better term I guess, low-level law enforcement. In other words, you took the least amount of action that was necessary to correct whatever problem there was, and that made a lot of other rangers in the United States very uneasy because – protection rangers – because they were more used to doing a higher level of law enforcement, but Jack Morehead said, "Look. What we're trying to do here is solve problems. We're not trying to pump up our arrest record or whatever it is." And I think that that was the biggest change. Unfortunately, I think, that's sort of gone downhill now. You know, I hear protection rangers want to be called law enforcement officers or they want to be called officers and not rangers. One guy was ordered to go to search and rescue school, and he said, "I don't do search and rescue. I do law enforcement." And, you know, it doesn't seem to me that the Park Service is served very well by that narrow a specialization. Whereas we were more what I'd call generalist rangers, where I might not be able to tell you what every flower is in that patch there, but I can tell you most of 'em and I can tell you where to go to find out what the other ones are, and generally a lot of people don't care very much about that anymore.

Lu Ann Jones: Mhm. So I've, and again, I've read about the riot, talked to Butch Farabee yesterday, so I guess I'm trying to understand the difference between the people who were causing trouble in Yosemite, and it's also a time where a lot of people the same age

are coming there to backpack and to really enjoy the out-of-doors, and so were these one and the same groups? Were there some overlaps—

Rick Smith:

Yeah, I think there were some overlaps but, by and large, the people that were in the meadow, in Stoneman Meadow, were let's call 'em non-traditional visitors who, instead of wanting to get up and hike at six o'clock in the morning, wanted to party until six o'clock in the morning, and, you know, I think that the Park Service wasn't very well prepared to deal with that. I'm not blaming anybody, it's just that they got caught up in the times, and when the chief ranger or superintendent or whoever it was ordered the meadow closed at seven o'clock at night, how do you close a meadow? And the charge across the meadow with rangers on horseback was – I wasn't there – but I mean it was obviously a miserable failure and they had to call in people the next morning. But I think the response to that, that is to say, for the next two or three years we really worked hard at, you know, providing something for non-traditional visitors to do, to try to talk to them about the value of parks, to try to discuss with them why Yosemite was important and that kind of thing. We had special interpreters who led non-traditional campfire programs and things like that where we didn't want the families to go to that! There were lots of times some bad language and things like that. But, I mean, the point of it is, is that I think we over time defused that situation, and I don't think that we had to go to the extremes that Yosemite did right after the riot, where they stopped cars at the gate and turned Volkswagon vans around and that kind of thing. We could serve the public, and yet at the same time we could make sure that, that if you wanted to hike at six o'clock you didn't sleep next to somebody who wanted to party until six o'clock. And so, I think we were relatively successful at doing that.

Lu Ann Jones:

Mmhm. What does that phrase Yosemite Mafia mean to you?

Rick Smith:

Well, it doesn't mean much to me at all, I mean, it just means that it's a group of people that were there at the same time. The first time I heard it was, I think Butch will tell you something different. But the first time I heard it I was selected by Director Whalen to be the co-director of the first Alaskan Task Force, where we went up and established a National Park Service presence in the new national monuments that President Carter created in Alaska. And they told me, "You can take 21 rangers." And Director Whalen said, "You come into Washington, get the list of all the protection rangers, you pick the 21 best, and then call the superintendents and say these guys are going to Alaska, and if anybody gives you any crap, tell 'em to call me." So we went in there and I was at the Albright Training Center at that time, and we selected the 21 guys,

went in and showed the list to the Deputy Director, Ira Hutchinson at that time, and Ira said, looked at the list, he said, "I don't want the whole goddamn Yosemite Mafia up there." So that's the first time I'd ever heard of it. Now, you know, and it's subsequently become part of the folklore of the Park Service, and a lot of those people went on, you know, to have very prestigious jobs, I mean, Dan Sholly, Chief Ranger of the Park Service, Jim Brady, Chief Ranger of the Park Service, Walt Dabney, Chief Ranger of the Park Service, you know, superintendents galore, you know. So, it was in some places I'm sure it wasn't looked at as kindly as I look at it [chuckles]. It was a good group of people.

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhm. Mmhm. Well how did you begin to envision I guess a career path in the Park Service or kind of how did you begin to see yourself as—

Rick Smith: Well, you know, that's pretty easy to answer. You know, I was a little bit older than a lot of the guys I worked with in Yosemite, because I'd been in the Peace Corps, I'd taught for six years, I wasn't right out of—

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Rick Smith: —out of college and things like that, so when I got too old to want to wrestle drunks in front of the village store or when I got so old that I arrived at a rescue site five minutes after everybody else, I said, "I gotta find something else to do because this isn't going to work." And there was an advertisement for a position at the Albright Training Center. I applied for it, was selected and, once I did that, I knew that my career as a protection ranger was pretty much finished, and that I had to be looking for other things to do. And my idea from then on was to find the greatest variety of jobs that I could find so that I would know as much as I could know about the Park Service. That's why I went to Washington, DC. I wasn't immediately enamored of going to Everglades, but I'd never been in the southeast, I'd never ever seen the Everglades, and I thought, "Well, you know, this might be kinda fun." And I'd never been in Philadelphia ever, and I went to the regional office there. I'd never been in New Mexico when I went to Carlsbad, so I mean, you know, it was "Let's see what's next."

Lu Ann Jones: Well what were you teaching at Albright?

Rick Smith: Well there were three instructor positions. One was protection, one was resources management, one was interpretation. And I was the resources management person.

Lu Ann Jones: So, what kinds of things did you—

- Rick Smith: Well, we, you know, in those days we didn't necessarily teach so much as we coordinated the week that, in my case let's say resources management, was being spotlighted. So, if I had somebody come in and talk about the National Register of Historic Places, I would have Marcella Sherfy come up from Washington. Or if we were talking about archaeology, I'd find an archaeologist. There was usually an archaeologist at Grand Canyon that would come in and talk to the students. The idea was is that it wasn't that I knew so much about resources management, but that I knew where the resources were to make sure that the students understood. I mean, we did a lot of teaching like history and mission of the Park Service and things like that, but then the specialty areas we got a lot of help.
- Lu Ann Jones: Mmhm. Now at that point were people still coming for the 12-week intake school?
- Rick Smith: Uhuh.
- Lu Ann Jones: Yes. And so, I mean, that just sounds like heaven, to be able to come—
- Rick Smith: Well, it was heaven. And they brought their families and it was a wonderful experience. I mean, I think if you asked almost anyone here that went through Albright, some of the best friends that they ever had in the Park Service were the friends that they had, they made at the Albright Training Center.
- Lu Ann Jones: Mmhm. Mmhm.
- Rick Smith: And I think it's a shame that we can no longer afford to do that because it really gave the class, the participants, a sense of what the agency was, what was important to the agency, what the agency's culture was, and things like that. Which you don't get now in Fundamentals or you don't get in the short classes that they have now. [Coughs.] Excuse me.
- Lu Ann Jones: Yeah. So we, at the training I did last month at Mather Training Center, one of the people we interviewed was Martha Aikens, and she was talking about her intake class and, as you said, some of the best friends she had, and it seemed like it really with that kind of depth of introduction to the Park Service it really did prepare people to do a whole host of things, as opposed to just one thing.
- Rick Smith: Yeah. I mean, we have people who, I mean, you've got a new AO who's learning how to rappel. You've got a new protection ranger that's forced to give an interpretive program. You know, those kinds of experiences, to me, are invaluable, because you're providing a variety in depth of experience that you just can't duplicate in a short period of time. And moreover, they were living

in, for twelve weeks, you know, one of the greatest national parks in the world. So, I mean it was a win-win.

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhm. Well, it sounds like in that job that you really began to hone administrative skills. I mean, a lot of what administration, part of that is knowing where to go for the, putting people together, bringing the right people—

Rick Smith: Right. Well, the other thing was is that, in those days, each of the instructors got six or eight students that they were supposed to mentor during the session, and that's where I learned almost everything I know about mentoring, that's where I learned almost everything I know about supervision, and almost everything I know about how to deal with people, how to deal with difficult people, how to make sure that you understand that you don't treat everybody the same, you treat them equally but not the same, and a lot of that stuff I wouldn't have known, had I not had that experience.

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhm. What did you learn about mentoring? I'm always fascinated with people's mentors [inaudible]—

Rick Smith: Well, I guess the big thing I learned is you gotta shut up and listen. Most of the, a lot of the mentors that I've seen want to talk about "This is what I did, this is what I did, this is what I did," and that's not the key. The key is "What are you doing right now?" So, you have to listen, and you have to be objective, you have to be totally transparent and honest with your mentee, and you have to understand that there's a difference between a mentor and a sponsor. You're not a sponsor.

Lu Ann Jones: What's the difference?

Rick Smith: Well, the big difference to me is that a sponsor is usually in your chain of command, and that's the person who helps you get the next job. A mentor is usually not in your chain of command, and who helps you puzzle things out, who helps you understand what's happening, who helps you or provides you hints in what you might do in this particular situation, and I've seen too many mentors get those roles confused, in my judgment.

Lu Ann Jones: And what are some negative consequences of those confusions?

Rick Smith: Well, the big confusion is that mentee is confused. "What are we doing here? Are we trying to get me a new job or are we trying to help me do my job better?" That's why almost everybody who's been in my chain of command that's asked me for mentoring that I've said, "Look, take a look at the park, find somebody whom you admire, find somebody whose career path has followed the same kind of career path that you're thinking of, and then follow them.

Now when it comes time to get you another job, I'll help you do that, but I normally don't want to do both things at once."

Lu Ann Jones:

Well who are some of your mentors or people that you really admire?

Rick Smith:

Well, going back to Yosemite, Jack Morehead and John Good were inspirational. Mike Lamb, who was the director of the Division of Legislation, probably taught me more about how the Park Service runs, and where all the secrets are hidden. Jim Coleman, who was my regional director in Philadelphia. Bill Whalen taught me about the exercise of power. And Don Castleberry, who was my deputy regional director in Philadelphia, taught me how to use it gracefully.

Lu Ann Jones:

Mmhm. Can you give me an example of the exercise of power and the use of it gracefully?

Rick Smith:

Um, sure. The, when you have to tell a person, an employee, that he or she is not performing up to par and that you're going to put them on a performance improvement plan, there are sort of two or three ways to do that. You can do it gruffly or you can do it gracefully, and that's the kind of thing I mean. Or at a public meeting, where somebody, an irate citizen, is taking the Park Service to task, you can either abruptly cut the person off or you can do it gracefully. That's the kind of thing I mean.

Lu Ann Jones:

Well did you learn those lessons kind of by observation or by more direct—

Rick Smith:

Ah I think most of 'em I learned by observation, I didn't, you know, I was lucky enough to not be in a position to be disciplined too often [chuckles] and so, but I watched them do it to other people, and I was always very impressed with how they did it and how they were able to turn what looked like certain defeat into something that sort of smelled like victory. I mean, you know, I don't want to overstate that, but kind of thing.

Lu Ann Jones:

Well when you go to – how did you move from Albright to the Legislative Office?

Rick Smith:

Well, that was an interesting thing. I applied for a job in the Office of International Affairs, 'cause I could speak Spanish, I was a perfect candidate for it, and the guy who was running it at that time, Rob Milne, who just died by the way, really wanted me, so he selected me. And the Deputy Regional Director told him he couldn't hire me because he needed to hire a Hispanic for that job, so evidently Mr. Milne convinced the Deputy Director, "How about if I interview everybody again?" So, I flew back to Washington to be interviewed, and this was a funny story. Rob Milne closes his door and right before he closes his door, he tells

his secretary, “No phone calls. I’m in an interview.” Just like your sign up there. And we weren’t in there for three minutes and the phone rang. He picked up and said [makes annoyed sounds], then he said “What? Who? Right now? Okay.” Put down the phone, he said, “You have a tie?” I said, “No I didn’t bring one.” So he went out and borrowed a tie from one of his workers, and we went over to the Deputy Assistant Secretary, no, the Assistant Secretary’s Office of Fish and Wildlife in Parks, who had the president of the Senate of Panama in his office and he needed a translator. And we were driving over there, and Rob said, “Are you up for this?” And I said, “Yeah, I think so.” So, we went over there, and I translated for, I don’t know, 45 minutes and then the guy left, and the Assistant Secretary said, “Who are you?” I said, “I’m Rick Smith.” “What are you doing here?” “I’m applying for a job.” “What kind of job?” “In the Office of International Affairs.” He said, “Are you gonna get it?” I said, “I don’t know.” He said, “Well, goddamnit, whoever they hire oughtta be at least as good as you are, if not better.” So, he said, “Rob, you stay here for a minute.” Sent me out in the hall. About five minutes later Rob came out smiling, said, “He called the Deputy Director and said, ‘Hire that guy.’” So, I was hired.

Rick Smith: So then I went to Grand Teton National Park for President Carter’s presidential visit as part of the protection detail, and while I’m there there’s a radio call said, “Rick Smith, you have a call from the Director on hold.” So, I went in there and it was Director Whalen, for whom I’d worked in Yosemite. He says, “Oh, I hear you’re coming to Washington. I said, “That’s right. Got a great job. Office of International Affairs.” He said, “That’s not what you’re doing.” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “I want you in the Division of Legislation.” I said, “Bill, I don’t want to do that.” And he said, “Are you tellin’ the director no?” So that’s what I did.

Lu Ann Jones: So, what kind of legislation did you work on? And about what year is this?

Rick Smith: Well, we worked – this would’ve been in ‘78. We worked on, my two regions were at that time the Pacific Northwest Region and the Western Region. So, I was in charge of all legislative initiatives for those two groups, the Redwood Act, the making Channel Islands a national park, that sort of thing.

Lu Ann Jones: So how did you learn to do that?

Rick Smith: Um, you had to be a real quick study, and there were people there like Mike Lamb, to help you understand what you had to do. And I can remember being absolutely horrified the first time I had to go up and testify in front of Congress. And it was in front of the

legendary Phil Burton from California. And it was for a park that he was interested in and we didn't want it, because it was too expensive. So, he said, "What does the Park Service say about this?" And I said, "Mr. Burton, we don't think that the proposed park has enough value in terms of its resources to be considered a unit of the National Park System." He said, "Young man," and he looked over with his glasses over my head, he said, "Young man, the Congress of the United States will decide what's important. You just tell me how much it costs!" So, I mean, you know, you learn pretty quickly under those kinds of circumstances.

Lu Ann Jones: [Chuckles.] Well, how many people were in that, I've heard Marie Rust talk about that she was in that office for a while, but how many people were there?

Rick Smith: Well, there was – each person had two regions, so at that time there were ten regions. There were five what they call legislative key men, and then there was a wilderness guy that worked on all the wilderness legislation, and then that was during the time that the big push was on to create the new areas in Alaska, so we had four or five people in there working on the Alaskan legislation as well. So, I mean, and we had, across the hall from us, was what was called Legislative Affairs, and they were the ones that doled out the letters to people and said, you know, "Get this back in by two o'clock this afternoon" and stuff like that. I always kind of thought that was funny because, you know, here I was, been in Washington for six months, worked most of my career in the west, and I'm writing letters for the Director to sign, and it suddenly occurs to me, I'm writing policy. If the Director signs this, that's policy. And so, you know, it was kind of overwhelming.

Lu Ann Jones: Mhm. Well what difference did it make, I mean, to be at the Washington office to come there from the park experience. How did that give you a different perspective on—

Rick Smith: Well, I think at that time they tried to, of the people that were in that office, they tried to mix people who had park experience with people who had hill experience, so that the parkies weren't overwhelmed by the drama of the hill, and the hill people didn't say stupid things that didn't make sense to the parks. So that's how it went.

Lu Ann Jones: So how long did it take you to feel comfortable on Capitol Hill and doing that part of the job?

Rick Smith: Uh, the two years I was there! [Chuckles.] I mean, you know, I don't know that anybody's ever comfortable with that, testifying in front of Congress. I mean, it's so brutal. But writing the testimony, you know, a lot of times we wrote testimony that the Deputy Director or the Director gave, and that wasn't hard. I mean, you

just, it was a format to follow and you just wrote what you thought, and they changed it if they wanted to and that was the Park Service's testimony.

Lu Ann Jones: Well what was your wife – did she work for the Park Service, too?

Rick Smith: She worked in Human Resources Division in the Washington Office. In fact, probably the first person I met when I was in the Washington Office because I had to go down and make sure my health insurance was right and all that kind of stuff, and she was the person that managed that kind of thing.

Lu Ann Jones: So, were you married by the time you went to the Everglades?

Rick Smith: Ah, we got married about a week before we went to the Everglades.

Lu Ann Jones: Well what did you think of the, I mean, had you gone down there to interview before you took the job?

Rick Smith: No, no.

Lu Ann Jones: What did you think of that?

Rick Smith: Well, I can tell you very specifically what I thought of it. I drove into the park the first day, and I was uncomfortable. I couldn't figure out, you know, I mean, I wasn't worried about the job. Jack Morehead was the superintendent. I'd already worked with him before, so I wasn't worried about our relationship. What was it that was giving me this creepy feeling? And, when I parked my car at the headquarters, I suddenly realized that I could not name one living thing that I'd seen. And I said, "Oh, this is gonna be fun." And there's a lot of stuff to learn and, you know, the water management system, the whole thing, that's a very complex ecosystem. So, it was a very, very interesting three years. And Jack was gone a lot. He was on one task force or another, and so oftentimes it ended up that, you know, I had to make decisions that he normally would've made, but we survived.

Lu Ann Jones: Well what were the key duties of an Assistant Superintendent at that point?

Rick Smith: Well, at that point, the Assistant Superintendent supervised the Chief of Protection, the Chief of Interpretation, the Chief of Resources Management, and the Chief of Maintenance, and the Superintendent supervised me and the Chief of the Research Center, so that's how the supervision. And then he did most of the external stuff and, because of the nature of my job, I did most of the internal stuff. And that seemed to work very well for us.

Lu Ann Jones: Mhm. Well, what were some of the key issues that Everglades was dealing with at that point?

Rick Smith: Well, the sort of like the crown issue in Everglades always is how much water and at what time. And so that, and it was all controlled by a series of dikes and gates and things like that upstream, you know, which makes Everglades kind of a unique park in our system, because it's one of the few downstream parks that we have. So almost everything bad that happened in the water happened before it got to Everglades, as opposed to starting out in Everglades and then going. And so, one of the key issues was to secure a seat at the table when water management decisions were made at Everglades. And you know it, Jack Morehead did one of the smartest things I've ever seen, I really admired him for this, and I'm not sure that I would've thought of it. But he, when it looked more and more difficult about getting that seat, he told his interpretive staff, "I want you to tell the water story of Everglades in every public forum that we have. I want it told at evening campfire programs, I want it told on nature walks, I want it told on everything," and within a year we had a seat at the table, because the people of south Florida demanded it. And another key issue in Everglades was invasive species. Now this was before the pythons and all that kind of stuff but we had three or four plants that were crowding out the native species, we had scarring of the bottom of Florida Bay from motorboats and things like that, I mean, there were a lot of issues that – and at that time, Jack supervised Big Cypress. We had a unit manager there instead of a superintendent. And I supervised the unit manager at what is now Dry Tortugas.

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhm. I mean, that's a huge operation there.

Rick Smith: That's a, the only bigger one is Yellowstone.

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhm. Well, was Marjory Stoneman Douglas still a presence then?

Rick Smith: She was still alive then.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, she lived a long, long time, but yeah. Yeah.

Rick Smith: I've got a funny story to tell you—

[END OF TRACK 2]

[START OF TRACK 3]

Rick Smith: —about her [Marjory Stoneman Douglas] too. After she, you know, after a while she was really deaf, she couldn't hear anything, and we were at a public meeting and we were testifying against Florida Power and Light's proposal to burn higher sulfur content oil in one of their generators cause that would create more pollution, and Everglades was a Class I airshed. So the increments allowable under that are very small, and so when they called on the park to testify, I stood up and began my testimony and about three minutes later she said to her person who always helped her, Has

that nice Mr. Smith started talking yet? [Laughs.] And I'd already been talking three minutes. So yeah, she was quite a lady.

Lu Ann Jones: Mhm. Mhm. Well, how did you go from there – I mean, I'm just fascinated because people in the Park Service, they make these transitions often in their careers, it seems like, more often than in some other places, other kinds of places of work. So how did you make the transition to that Associate Regional Director position?

Rick Smith: Well, you know, it was pretty easy, because in the first place Jim Coleman, who was Regional Director in the Mid-Atlantic region or the old Mid-Atlantic region at that time, had also been the superintendent at Albright when he hired me, so he knew me. And, since I'd already been supervising maintenance and protection and interpretation, I mean, you know, those were the same things that the Associate Regional Director of Operations supervises in a regional office. So, I mean, it wasn't a really steep learning curve. The really steep learning curve in Philadelphia was to learn how to get along with all the people who worked in Cultural Resources, which I'd never had much experience with, and then all the people who worked in the external programs. Again, coming from a park, I'd never had much experience with those kinds of things, and so that was somewhat difficult, but other than that, you know, it was pretty much the same old stuff.

Rick Smith: The steeper learning curve maybe was when I got to Guadalupe and Carlsbad, when I had to figure out how not to be an Assistant Superintendent and how to be a Superintendent. And, you know, in those days, and I guess it's a little better now, there was no training, there was no, I mean, you know, "You're a superintendent, sink or swim." And so you just had to figure it out, and you know Mr. Cook, who was the regional director, was 350 miles or something like that away in Santa Fe, and he wasn't available to come down and hold my hand and stuff like that. And that's where your relationships with the other superintendents of the region really come into play, so I had a couple really good friends who were superintendents down there, and I could call them and say, "What do you do when this happens? Or how do you handle this kind of situation?" And you find out pretty quickly whether their advice [chuckles] is any good or not. But I mean that's what, it was important for me to be able to figure that out real quickly, because I didn't want the park to sort of languish in sort of a static position for too long without, you know, I didn't want to make a bunch of decisions right away, but I didn't want to postpone them, either. So, it was important to have those guys.

Lu Ann Jones: Well was there also, so there was some informal information sharing. Was there any formal meeting of superintendents?

- Rick Smith: Oh yeah, we had a formal meeting every year, and you know they were, that was mostly ‘This is the budget for next year, these are your new performance standards, these are that sort of the other thing’. I mean, a lot of good stuff went on in the halls and at night and stuff like that, but I mean those weren’t nearly as important as the information they were sharing.
- Lu Ann Jones: Well how did you – I mean, I’ve often heard that, you know, superintendents were kind of the rulers of their parks, and what was your thinking about what a superintendent was and about a superintendent’s place in the Park Service?
- Rick Smith: Well, I mean, ‘course I’d watched Jack in Everglades, so I had some idea about that, and then, you know, shortly after I got to Carlsbad, Mr. Cook called me up and said, “You know, I consider you and Jim Carrico,” who was the superintendent of Big Bend at that time, “I consider you to be the two senior superintendents of this region, and I want you to act like it. And when people call you up, you know, respond to ‘em and things like that.” Ah but, you know, personally I don’t think it’s rocket science, I mean, you know, you gotta make sure that the park functions, that your staff is responsive to park visitors. You know, we started a new thing there at Carlsbad that evidently had never been done before, but when we got a complaint letter, I would call the person up, instead of writing, you know, some nonsense letter, you know, I’d say “What’s the problem here?” And, you know, “Why were you complaining? I need to know more about this.” And so, I mean, you just, I think you, you know, keep the park under budget, make sure that your employees are content, get your performance appraisals in on time, do all the things that you need to do to make sure the park is functioning properly.
- Lu Ann Jones: Oh, go ahead.
- Rick Smith: No, go ahead.
- Lu Ann Jones: No, I was going to ask what were some of the management issues that you had there in terms of—
- Rick Smith: Well, Carlsbad, the big management issue is ‘How do you protect the cave?’ And we went through four or five iterations of how to do that. And how do you interpret the cave? And so, we used to give people little radios, and when they came to a wire that was buried in the ground, said, “You’re now in front of the Rock of Ages,” and stuff like that. And they were wearing out. I said, “Do we have any money to replace there?” “No.” And so I went to the concessioner, I said, “I want you to rent these things for a dollar apiece for adults and fifty cents for kids.” And the kids’ ones, you know, said cute little things like “Now we’re coming to the darkest part of the cave where your parents often get lost, so hold onto

their hands.” And, you know, very soon we had enough money to replace the whole radio system. I mean, you’ve just gotta, I think you just have to be alert to those kind of opportunities and make sure that your park is not, doesn’t fall victim to “This is the way we’ve always done it in Yellowstone.”

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhm. Mmhm. Mmhm. Well do you think that that’s something that the Park Service might have a tendency to do?

Rick Smith: Oh, I guarantee that. I guarantee it. In fact, I think it’s one of our greatest failings. But it’s hard to, you know, the Park Service is a very conservative organization, and it’s hard to shift the Park Service, and it’s hard to shift a park, and so you’ve really gotta make sure that the conditions are ripe, that you’re absolutely convinced that the way you’re shifting it is the correct way to go, and that you’ve got two or three people who will support you on the staff, and that’s what it takes. Takes, and then you can do it.

Lu Ann Jones: Well where do you think the levers are in the Park Service for change. I mean, is it the Washington level, the regional level—

Rick Smith: No.

Lu Ann Jones: Where are those places where things change?

Rick Smith: I think the only change that’s ever meaningful comes from the bottom. And that’s one of the problems with the Park Service. It still feels its old military heritage and decisions come from the top down, and they’re hard to implement, because oftentimes the people who are making those decisions don’t know what the reality is on the ground. Whereas the people who are actually working in the parks or working in programs, because I don’t want to forget the programs in the Park Service because they’re equally important as the parks, they need to, I think, they are the ones that need to initiate the change.

Lu Ann Jones: Well do you think people above are open to hearing those kinds of suggestions?

Rick Smith: Ah mm, they are sometimes, and they aren’t sometimes. Um I think there’s one regional director, two regional directors or maybe three right now that are very open to that. I think John Wessels in Intermountain Region, I think Chris Lehnertz in the Western Region, I think Mike Anderson or whatever his name is in the regional office in Omaha are very open to that.⁴

Lu Ann Jones: Is that Mike Reynolds?

Rick Smith: Mike Reynolds, yeah. But I’m not certain that the other ones are that open to it.

⁴ Michael (Mike) Reynolds.

- Lu Ann Jones: Well, looking back on your career, was there a time in the Park Service where you felt more optimistic than other times, in terms of confluence of personnel, of evolution of events, or kind of what was the mix that made you feel optimistic?
- Rick Smith: Yeah. You know, I've felt pretty good about the Park Service from, say, the time I was first a seasonal, 1959, that was during the Eisenhower administration, for crying eye, up until about, I don't know, '88. And then we began to mess around with organizational structures, we eliminated two regions, we established those horrid systems support offices, all that kind of stuff, which, in my humble opinion, made the job more complicated than it did to help it. And it began to, I really got not optimistic when President [George W.] Bush and Secretary [Gale A.] Norton was in office, when most of the decisions, it seemed to me, were almost a hundred percent diametrically opposed to what oughtta be done or what should be done in park management. And that was at the time, of course, that we started the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees. And I can remember Bill Wade, myself, and Mike Finley went to the National Press Club in Washington and gave a press conference, did a press conference, criticizing the Bush administration for what it was doing, and we got home and people started calling us, saying, "Jesus, that's good stuff. How can I be a part of this?" And, you know, now we have, I don't know, 890 members or something like that, so that's really been gratifying to see people respond to it.
- Lu Ann Jones: Well one, I'd like to talk to you about that some more, but I don't want to miss out the opportunity to talk about ANPR, since this is the sponsoring organization for this.
- Rick Smith: Okay.
- Lu Ann Jones: And how did you, I think in one of the interviews that you had sent me, you had said that was one of the proudest moments in your Park Service career.
- Rick Smith: Well, it, you know, I can remember in 1978, I was at the Albright Training Center and a guy from Yosemite called me up and said, "You know, we're thinking about getting together in Grand Teton National Park and havin' a couple of beers and talkin' about the good ol' days, and all that kind of stuff," and I said, "I'll be there." And, if I remember correctly, 35 of us showed up. And we had a great time and toward the end of the thing we started to talk about – as we always did – about issues, and we decided we oughtta try to form some kind of organization. So, we elected Butch Farabee as the first president, and I think it was probably when he was out to go to the bathroom, and then we started to pass the word along. And the second Ranger Rendezvous was held at Estes Park, in Colorado, where I was selected president, and it's gone on from

there. And I think it probably at one time had a lot more influence than it does now, although Jarvis is a life member of the Association, but I don't see him here. And, but I mean I think it's been good for the Park Service to have a group like the Association hanging around and nipping at its heels and trying to remind it of what's important and what isn't.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, can you think of some examples of kinds of, I think you said in that interview that you kept some directors honest, and some particular issues, I think about earlier on even or just, you know [inaudible].

Rick Smith: Well, for instance, housing was always a huge issue, and you know a director would come in and say, "By god, we've gotta charge more for housing, because it's costing us," and we'd say, "Wait a minute. Let's look at the comparables." And that's one way of keeping 'em honest. Another way of keepin' 'em honest is when we used to testify in front of Congress. And, you know, I don't think anything probably gets the attention of the Park Service any more than an employee organization who testifies in front of Congress. "What're they doing?" And another way to keep 'em honest is through *Ranger Magazine*, where things are said in there that I assume Director Jarvis takes some umbrage at, but it's a way of lettin' him know how the people who work in the parks think. And all those, I think, are ways to keep people honest. And I can't, you know, I don't know what the future of ANPR holds. I know it can't be what I wanted it to be, but it's got to be what these young kids who are here want it to be, and it bothers me quite a bit to see that the attendees are older and grayer all the time and not as many young people are coming to it as they used to, but we just have to deal with that.

Lu Ann Jones: Mhm. Well, what did you think it – did it become at one point the organization you wanted it to be?

Rick Smith: Oh yeah, I mean, you know, during the time I think from – we were still pretty new, probably only had 140 or 150 members when I was president, but during the time that Maureen [Finnerty] and Dick Martin and Rick Gale were president, I think it became a real force and, you know, and I think it was good for the Park Service. It has, I think it has some way to go right now, and it'll be interesting to see how it evolves.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, what difference – in the various positions that you were in – what difference did it make who was director of the National Park Service?

Rick Smith: Well, at first, hardly any, you know. I mean, you know, when you're a GS-7, all you're worried about is getting through your eight hours and that's it. But I think, beginning at about GS-11

stage, you can begin to feel the impact of decisions that the director makes, not only in relationship to policy, but in relationship to budget, in relationship to personnel and a whole host of things like that that the director decides that has a direct impact on your operations. And certainly, as a superintendent, you know, there's only one guy between you and the director, and that's the regional director, and he or she is in charge of implementing what the director says. So, what he or she says is extremely important to a superintendent. I mean, it's hard to overstate the impact that, I mean, you know, the director is quoted in a piece of paper, in a newspaper article, and, you know, ten minutes later—

[END OF TRACK 3]

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Lu Ann Jones: Okay it's moving now. I don't know what happened with that there. [Inaudible.] So, any thoughts about that?

Rick Smith: Yeah, well, one is to stay relevant. Always reminded of the kid who asked why he doesn't spend more time outdoors, and he said, "Why do I want to go outdoors? There's no place to plug in my computer." Number Two is engage the public. It used to be that superintendents' public engagement responsibilities ended by going to the Chamber of Commerce meeting once a week. That's no longer good enough. You've gotta be out and about, and you've gotta make sure that your staff is out and about. Number Three is conduct your business as openly and transparently as possible, nothing hidden from the public, no surprises. "This is what we're gonna do, this is how much it's gonna cost, and this is when we're gonna get it done." Just be honest with 'em. Number Four is to take care of your employees, make sure that you treat every employee like that employee's gonna be the next person in your job. I always wanted employees who wanted my job because that meant they were eager and aggressive and wanted to ascend in their careers. Another thing is to do what's necessary to keep the park administratively in shape, but don't do more than you have to do. Another thing would be to make sure that you keep your regional director informed of what's happening. I don't mean to call him or her every day or every other day, but that. And get to know the people who represent your district in Congress. Get to know your two senators. Get to know the mayor. Get to know the people who are important to the future of the park, and don't think that they're gonna come to you, because they're not. You've gotta go to them. And make sure that your planning documents, to the extent that you can make them, are up to date and that chart a path that you think you can follow. Please make an annual operating plan every year, so that your division chiefs – and make that with

them, don't you make it, make that with them, so it becomes their annual operating plan, not yours, and they can then believe in it. Well, just, I mean, you know, just I guess it's just to be the best superintendent you can possibly be with the [chuckles]—

Lu Ann Jones: [Laughs.]

Rick Smith: —pitiful resources that you have. That's it, yeah. I've seen a lot of bad ones. Whew. Terrible.

Lu Ann Jones: Where do you think the Coalition is gonna go, in terms of what its mission is, the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees?

Rick Smith: Well, the coalition is obviously different than the ANPR. It's made up of most all retirees. We have four or five goals, one of which is to protect and defend the parks and programs of the National Park Service. Another one is to become a viable nonprofit organization. It, you know, it's interesting, I think I said in one of the things I sent to was that I was the second president of ANPR, was the second president of the International Ranger Federation, and I was the second chairman of the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees. So, the coalition is, I think its big victory was to beat back the changes to the management policies. I personally believe that those changes would've gone through, had we not leaked the contents of 'em to every newspaper in the United States. You know, we've been on superintendent Wenk at Yellowstone about snowmobiling, on Secretary Salazar about the oyster farm at Point Reyes, won a huge court case just recently in Big Cypress and will, I assume, we were instrumental I think in probably helping Superintendent, former Superintendent Murray to make his decisions at Cape Hatteras about no RV use on the beach.⁵ So, I mean, I think that we've done pretty well and we caused the superintendent at LBJ to get a month's leave without pay. For, how about this? Staging battlefield reenactment of the Vietnam War at LBJ. How does that sound? LBJ. I mean, what drove LBJ out of office? So anyway, you know, I think there's been a lot of things that we've done good, we've done well that reflect well on the Coalition.

Lu Ann Jones: Mhm. You know, you reminded me of this whole part of your career that's the international part of your career. What, I mean, I know the Peace Corps was a huge influence, and so how did you get involved with the International Ranger Organization?

Rick Smith: Well, you know, I spent lots of time in Latin America before and since retirement, acting as a conservation consultant, and they had a meeting in Zakopane, Poland, for crying eye, to see if there was any interest in forming an International Ranger Federation. So, I

⁵ Dan Wenk, Ken Salazar, Mike Murray.

went to it. Went to the bathroom and got elected vice president. Was the vice president for six years and then, in South Africa, was elected president. But the major part of my international experience has been in Latin America. And I've sort of had a nice little niche. There's a lot of people that know more about managing parks than I do, there's a lot of people who speak better Spanish than I do, there's not very many people that know as much about both those things as I do. And so, and I worked for, you know, organizations like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and Interamerican Development Bank and the Peace Corps and the Nature Conservancy and things like that, as a part of my consulting. And mostly it's been working with rangers, trying to make them understand what it is that rangers do and how they act and how they talk and how they treat visitors and things like that. It's been very rewarding for me. I don't do as much of it anymore, primarily because my wife is retired now, and I'd just as soon not be gone as much as I was a while ago, but I just finished training some turtle rangers in Nicaragua that, it was an amazing event. So, I mean, this is all good stuff. I like to do it. You know, I think I've been in every South American country – Spanish-speaking South American country – except Venezuela and been in every country in Central America as a consultant. So, I mean, you know, been a very good time for me. And, you know, I retired in 1994, so I've had a lot of time to do that. [Chuckles.] And my goal now is to be retired as long as I worked, so I've got 14 more years for that!

Lu Ann Jones: What do you enjoy best about retirement? Or maybe I should ask what you missed the most about work?

Rick Smith: I mean, well, you know, what I like about retirement is doing things at my pace, when I want to do them, and having time to devote to things like the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees and ANPR and things like that. Those have been a big part of my life for a long time and, you know, I mean, ANPR isn't quite as big a thing now because like I said it's gotta be what young people want it to be, but still it's a lot of fun to come and see old friends, stuff like that. I mean, I hardly ever see Farabee, and yet we worked at no more than six feet apart when we were in Yosemite, so.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, like I said, I've enjoyed the parklands list that – you are the one who's moderated that?

Rick Smith: What?

Lu Ann Jones: The parklands list. The discussion list?

Rick Smith: When's that?

Lu Ann Jones: On the internet?

- Rick Smith: Oh, Parklands Update.
- Lu Ann Jones: Yeah, the Parklands Update. Yes.
- Rick Smith: Yeah, I'm the moderator. And that's been fun, you know, and one thing about it is that I probably know more about what's happening in Park Service now than I did when I was an employee, because I mean, you know, I read all these books before I send 'em out. And gee whiz, I get that, like every day, I get a dose of NPS. And we have about 360 people now on that Listserv, and so it's, you know, modestly successful.
- Lu Ann Jones: Like I said I'm—
- Rick Smith: We have a lot of, you know, what's kind of cute, is we have quite a few students on there, who write and say "I'm a Park and Rec major at Clemson" or "I'm a blah blah blah somewhere else. Can I join?" And I always let 'em join. Then when they graduate, they write and tell me "I don't want to be on it anymore." [Laughs.] So, it's fun.
- Lu Ann Jones: Well, you do a good job passing the news around.
- Rick Smith: Yeah.
- Lu Ann Jones: Well, are there other things that you'd like to talk about before we wind up this afternoon? Things I've overlooked that you think are important for this particular interview?
- Rick Smith: No, I think you've covered the interview, the things that I think are important, pretty well. I would say that the opportunity to work for the Park Service was a great gift to me, and I'm always shocked when people say, "Well, where did you work?" "Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Everglades." "Gee!" And, you know, I forget sometimes I guess the kind of awe that those places inspire in people, and it's something that I'm not sure we should forget, because – and it's easy to. We can become all caught up in budget sequestrations and stuff like that, but a lot of people are still pretty blown away by standing on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon or looking up at El Cap or whatever, and so I mean, you know, it was a real gift to me, and I don't regret, I don't think, one single moment. There were sometimes when I was less happy than others, but, I mean, you know, generally speaking it was a tremendous career and I'm very thankful for the opportunity to have done it. And I can't, you know, I can't imagine, you know – just think, I was a seventh-grade English teacher. Let's just think, if I'd done that till 1994, that would've been 34 years, and the problem was, is that every year the students are the same age and every year you're older. And I knew that wasn't gonna work, and so it was just time to find something else to do. I loved teaching, but it was time to find something else to do.

- Lu Ann Jones: Well there are many ways to teach. People often ask me if I miss teaching, and I say I feel like I teach every day in one way or another. There are lots of ways to teach.
- Rick Smith: Well, of course, I mean, you know. I mean, even when you do something really law enforcey, like make a car stop, you're teaching people, you know. And so, yeah. And, you know, my goal with my protection rangers always was that "You have to be an adequate sidewalk interpreter, and if you aren't, you're in the wrong park," because you've got to be able to know all the major trees, the major plants, stuff like that, in this park. And if you're interested only in writing tickets or stuff like that, go someplace else. 'Cause we don't want you here. And had a few that did and that was okay. You know, there was more where they came from. And so, yeah.
- Lu Ann Jones: Well, I have to ask you, when you were in graduate school and you were studying literature, what were your favorite, who were your favorite writers, what were you focusing on?
- Rick Smith: Well, I had ah, my dissertation was gonna be on some obscure 19th- century English critic of poetry, and I can't remember his name now. My favorite poet was John Donne. My favorite fiction writer was probably Thomas Wolfe. But, you know, I was there at Michigan State University for almost two years, and I left at the end of the spring semester to go work for Bobby Kennedy, and I worked for him in Indiana and then, when he won Indiana, I went to South Dakota, and I was worked there on the Pinedale [Pine Ridge] Indian Reservation, trying to get the Indians out to vote for Bobby Kennedy.
- Lu Ann Jones: Interesting.
- Rick Smith: And was there the night that he got shot in Los Angeles. And so it was, you know, and then went on to Yellowstone and worked the summer with this dragon of the draft board hanging over my head, and geez, right before I thought all was lost, I get an invitation to go to the Peace Corps. So, I called the lady who was the secretary or the chairperson of the draft board. I was from a small, rural draft board, Grandville, Michigan, and I was the first draft resister they'd ever had, and I said, "Mrs. Knight, will you let me go to South America?" And she said, "Just to get rid of you, yes!" [Laughs.] And so, I went to South America and she said, "But you'll have to carry your draft card," because I'd sent it back to 'em, and I said, "Okay." Cause my attorney told me, he said, "Well, look, you either go into the Peace Corps and carry your draft card for two years or you're gonna go to jail, I mean, you know, there's no two ways about it. So, if you think that you can do some good for your country by being in Paraguay and working

on Peace Corps – great. If not, you know, you’d be in jail.” And that didn’t sound very good to me. And so, I to the draft, or off I went to Paraguay.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, how, where did that, you know, the idea of resisting the war, is that something, a family—

Rick Smith: No, God no!

Lu Ann Jones: Or just—

Rick Smith: Oh, my family was horrified! Horrified. You know, it’s something, the decision, I didn’t make a big deal out of it. I didn’t write letters or anything like that. I just put my draft card in an envelope and sent it back to my local board, and about a month later I got a new draft card that said I was 1A-Delinquent, and then about a month later I got a letter saying report for a physical in Detroit at such-and-such a date, and by then I had retained an attorney, and I said, “Doug, can they do that?” He said, “No.” He said, “First of all,” he said, “They can’t do that. They’ve got some procedures involved.” So then, and then right at that time, fortuitously, the letter comes from the Peace Corps. And I think my draft board was just happy to get rid of me. They certainly didn’t want any stain on their honor, and so, off I went. And it was a great two years and revolutionized my life.

Lu Ann Jones: So, you were there ‘68 to ‘70?

Rick Smith: ‘68 to ‘70, mm. And it’s, I came home in November ‘70. They put away in those days \$75 a month, and at the end of your service, they gave a check that was your readjustment allowance. So I flew back home, put my skis on the back of the car, and I skied every major ski are in the west till I ran out of money, and then went back to Yellowstone and got my job there, and that was my eleventh summer there, but I mean, you know, was a pretty good deal. Luckily lift tickets weren’t as expensive as they are now, or I would’ve been done in about two weeks. But it was fun.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, do you think the people, say, who came to Yosemite and they were disruptive, for example, do you think that you had any common ground with them in a sense that – do you think that they were sort of as thoughtful as you were in thinking about the draft and the war or was—

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Lu Ann Jones: —there an opportunity for common ground there or, even though you didn’t sanction their behavior in that particular place or?

Rick Smith: Um, well, I mean, I think that we need to be careful to not characterize me as being real thoughtful. I think we need to say

that, you know, in 1968 people were doin' that kind of stuff and I got caught up in it, and I'm sure I probably thought it through, but I'm not sure that I thought it through as carefully as I might've, because it would've been a lot easier had I not done that. But I mean I think that, you know, you just, I don't think that anybody during that time can be characterized as overly thoughtful or thoughtless. I mean, people made decisions based on their emotional reaction to what was happening in Vietnam, and I don't think that anybody, you know, I didn't have anybody, I didn't have a girlfriend cheerin' me on, I didn't have anything like that that said, "Oh, you oughtta, you know, stop this!" None of that, I mean, you just, people did it, and, you know, some people probably did it and never heard anything. And some people did it like me, and got away with it in a way, and some people went to jail, and some people went to Canada and, you know, I don't think anybody thought very much about it. I think they just did it. It was sort of a visceral reaction to what was going on. Ah I don't want to pose as being over thoughtful [chuckles] about this. It's not something that, it's – you know, it's not something that I'm particularly proud of. On the other hand, I don't shy away from it. I did it, there's no denying it. My parents were mad at me for six months, and so I, you know, it was particularly bad when my middle brother, who was three years younger than I, got drafted, went into the Army, and went to Germany to drive tanks. You know, my mother'd say, "You know, here's Phil. He's, you know, protecting the country, and you're turnin' in your draft card?" It wasn't all that comfortable, and, you know, we got along pretty well together, by and large, and so it was not easy. And so.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, these were interesting times.

Rick Smith: Oh, gosh, I mean, you know, really interesting.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah.

Rick Smith: And you know the problem, you know, of course, is I was on a university campus. If I'd been teachin' seventh grade someplace, it might've been a lot different, but there was a lot of activism on the college campus and, you know.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah.

Rick Smith: Crap happens.

Lu Ann Jones: Mmhm. Mmhm. Did your wife retire from the Park Service, too?

Rick Smith: No, she – when we went to Florida to work in Everglades, as the Assistant Superintendent – she could no longer work in the park cause she'd have to work for me. So she got a job at the Homestead Air Force Base, which was later blown away by Hurricane Andrew and then, when we went to Philadelphia, she

got a job with an outfit called the Naval Aeronautic Engineering Services Unit or something like that, and she got to fly all over the world while I went to Allegheny Portage and places like that. And then when we moved to New Mexico, she got a job at the Kirtland Air Force Base, so she was able to – and then she started two businesses. She had a temporary staffing business for a while, and then one day she came home after we'd sold the business, and she said, "I'm going to start a new business." I said, "What're you gonna do?" She said, "I'm gonna open a salon and spa." I said, "What do you know about that?" She said, "I've been goin' to one for thirty years." And so, we opened one, and did pretty well. And so, and then she sold that, and now she's retired. And I don't think, my guess is that her entrepreneur days are just about over. I mean, she's quite a bit younger than I am. She's 62. So I mean I don't think, I mean, it doesn't necessarily mean they're over, but I think the lust has died down a little bit, and she's not quite as eager about those things as she used to be. But she was a, you know, pretty big deal in the Park Service, I mean, you know, she was called up on the third floor of the Department of the Interior all the time to talk to the Associate Director for Administration, and she was a lot bigger deal than I was. God, you know, I was nothin' compared to her, and so.

- Lu Ann Jones: Well, you have been very gracious to take so much time this afternoon—
- Rick Smith: Oh, well, it's been my pleasure.
- Lu Ann Jones: It's just a pleasure to meet you after hearing about you and seeing the email list, etcetera, so it's just been a real pleasure. I'm going to, I can fill out, if you'd fill out this part, again, it's gonna be a gift to the Association and to the Park Service, so if you could sign on this line and maybe fill out the full name.
- Rick Smith: Okay, I don't have my glasses with me. I'm a little sorry about this. So, you want me to sign here.
- Lu Ann Jones: On the, that second line, mmhm.
- Rick Smith: Address?
- Lu Ann Jones: Mmhm.
- Rick Smith: [Redacted] Date is – what is today?
- Lu Ann Jones: The 30th.
- Rick Smith: Wow. Tomorrow's Halloween isn't it.
- Lu Ann Jones: Wait a minute. Yes. Today's the 30th.
- Rick Smith: Wow. All right, do I need to do anything else?
- Lu Ann Jones: I think I can fill out the rest of that.

Rick Smith: Well, thank you.

Lu Ann Jones: You're welcome.

Rick Smith: You were a very skillful interviewer, and I appreciated the time that you spent with me listening to a lot of ga-ga.

Lu Ann Jones: [Laughs.] It's not ga-ga. It's very interesting. I think it will be interesting to put all of these interviews together.

Rick Smith: Oh, I'll bet. Now, you said you were inter—

[END OF TRACK 5]

[END OF INTERVIEW]