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Mary Bradford
October 29, 2016

Interview conducted by Lu Ann Jones
Transcribed by Teresa Bergen
Digitized by Casey Oehler

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Harpers Ferry Center
P.O. Box 50
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
HFC_Archivist@nps.gov

ANPR Oral History Project

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The narrator was invited to review and correct the transcript, but did not respond to the request.

Audiofile: BRADFORD Mary 29 October 2016

[START OF TAPE 1]

Lu Ann Jones: We'll do a little sound check here. I start out asking people, well, first of all I'll say, I forgot to do this yesterday, I was in such a rush. This is Lu Ann Jones, and we are in Santa Fe, New Mexico. It's October 29th and I am with—

Mary Bradford: Mary Bradford.

Lu Ann Jones: And do I have permission to record this interview?

Mary Bradford: Yes, you do.

Lu Ann Jones: Okay. Thanks.

[END OF TAPE 1]

[START OF TAPE 2]

Lu Ann Jones: I usually start out just putting people in place and time, and asking where you were born, when you were born and some basic family background.

Mary Bradford: That's actually always the most difficult question for me to answer, because I was raised as a military kid. So, where I was born, Chicago, I only lived there till I was six months old. And where I lived, I went to, I think, 13 different schools in my life. So, I moved every year and a half, two years, growing up.

Mary Bradford: My family was me, my two younger brothers, and my parents. Stayed together throughout all the moves and all the transitions around the United States and occasional postings in Europe and the Middle East.

Lu Ann Jones: So, what branch of the service?

Mary Bradford: Navy. My father was a naval aviator. He'd been a fighter ace in World War Two. And loved flying planes off carriers in the middle of the ocean for some reason, so that's what he did. And then as he moved up, I watched him move up in management and end up more at a desk and less flying. So that's what I saw.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, how do you think that background as a military brat, so to speak, affected how you developed and just who you became?

Mary Bradford: Well, I married another one. And I met him in college in Munich, Germany. University of Maryland had a campus in Munich, and I attended that. There's some other people in the park service who went there, too. I met my husband there, and he was an air force brat. Between the two of us, we both liked to move around a lot. And we like change. We thought about that the whole time, which is

what kinds of things can we do with our lives that will give us the opportunity to do what we're comfortable doing, which is trying new things.

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. So, what different places did you live in the United States and abroad?

Mary Bradford: I lived in, I was born in Chicago. I lived in Rhode Island, Norfolk, I lived in El Paso. Actually, the first time I went to White Sands, I think it was, it made a big impression on me. I was five years old, and I watched the last of the V2 rockets being shot off there at White Sands. My dad was a test pilot, test pilot out of there. We lived in El Paso, but they flew them over New Mexico because it was considered a wasteland. And if you bought it, you would be down in a wasteland. Which was, I always thought, it seems an unusual thing to do when you have a wife and three kids. (laughs) But that's what he did.

Mary Bradford: And I lived in California, in the San Diego area. Dad was at Miramar Naval Air Station. Jacksonville, Florida, went to school there. Went to two years of high school in Beeville, Texas. That was where I really got my first jobs, because military families get lots of opportunities to see things, but we don't have much money. So, you learn to work early.

Mary Bradford: Madrid, Spain, is where I graduated from high school. I went to college, as I said, in Munich, Germany. My parents were stationed, again, in Turkey. Ankara, Turkey. Later, in Wiesbaden. They moved around. Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: I'm going to turn this a little bit. So, when did you get interested in working for the National Park Service?

Mary Bradford: When I was in college, it was my goal to join the Foreign Service, State Department. I knew public service. That's kind of what I knew. I passed the Foreign Service exams and was in a class in the '60s. I married my husband Bill in 1968. He's still my husband. And when they found out I was married, I was kicked out of the class. That's what they did with married women in those days.

Mary Bradford: I was working at night at a department store, and I thought, well, I have all these language skills. At the time, I did. I thought maybe I could be a guide on the National Mall. I didn't know much about the National Park Service, but I did go in and apply for a summer seasonal job. And they actually didn't have any. There's such a backlog of people wanting to be park – I didn't realize – park service seasonals. But I went into that personnel office every single day to see if I could get on with them.

Mary Bradford: It turned out they never did have something on the mall. But they had an open park ranger position at Fort Washington, Maryland, for the summer. The story I was told was that it was a political appointee, because in those days, a lot of the seasonals were handed out as favors by members of Congress. So as tough as it is for seasonals now, it may have been tougher for anybody on the outside then. And it had been two weeks, and he hadn't shown up.

Mary Bradford: The guy looked up at me, the personnel guy, and said, "Can you be there on Monday?" It was Friday. "Can you be there on Monday?"

Mary Bradford: And I said, "Yeah. I can be there on Monday." And that's how I started.

Mary Bradford: So, I was a seasonal ranger historian. One of the things I had to my benefit was there used to be height and weight requirements for park rangers, particularly if they had any law enforcement duties. And part of my day was on patrol in this small park. And I met those. I think they were five-eight, 145 pounds. I may have that wrong. But I am five-ten-and-a-half and meet the weight requirement. (laughter) That's fair enough to say.

Lu Ann Jones: What was your day like at that point, in both interpretation and – what did law enforcement mean at a park like that then?

Mary Bradford: There was not much training then. Of course, later on the park service got smart after a number of incidents. Particularly, I think, there was one at Lake Mead and some other parks. But at the time, they basically issued me the paraphernalia I needed. I had a Dodge power wagon with a bubble gum style light on top, a fire equipment hose in the back. And so, I would usually go out in the mornings and in the evenings in that. Middle of the day was when visitors, mostly weekends was when the visitors would come, and I would take interpretive tours around the fort. Which was fine. I was studying history. I'd studied history in college and majored in it, in fact. And this was, I was delighted. I was delighted to be able to use my history degree in a way that I had never – never! – anticipated. And still licking my wounds over my rejection from the Foreign Service.

Lu Ann Jones: So how did things progress from there? How did you, what happened next? (laughs) In the story.

Mary Bradford: What happened next was the superintendent of that particular part of National Capital Parks left and a new superintendent came in, Bob Stanton. He's a person I respect and admire. So, I'll lay that out there as my first [egg?]. Because I had been asking if I could go permanent. I had hired some young men to be seasonals because I was, by that point, senior on the staff and working for the one permanent park 025 person there who's my manager, my site manager. I saw that those guys were getting permanent after a season or two, and I couldn't figure out why I wasn't getting – it was three years, three-and-a-half years. The years kept piling up and I was still seasonal, subject to furlough. I went from one kind of appointment to another. The typical story. I'm sure you've heard this before. I would be a seasonal, and then I'd be a subject to furlough, then I'd be not to exceed. Just different, they stitched together a variety of things, probably illegally.

Mary Bradford: I went to talk to Bob Stanton. I said, "This has been going on and people [unclear]."

Mary Bradford: He says, "This isn't right." He says, "They're opening up more positions to women." This was November of 1970. And all of a sudden, women were being

accepted into the service. Big time. There was an intake program. I was not technically eligible for the intake, because I was already in as a seasonal.

Mary Bradford: And I said, "Can I do this?"

Mary Bradford: He said, "I'll see what I can do." There were a lot of ins and outs, but the result of it was that I was one of the few people who'd already been working for the park service who ended up coming into that group in 1970. I went off to Albright Academy in January of '71, as a permanent employee. I worked at Ford's Theater briefly, but that was as a temporary thing for Fort Washington before I went to Albright.

Lu Ann Jones: So, did you ever know a woman named Tina Satterwhite Short, by any chance? She's an African American woman. Came into the service sometime during that time. Worked out at Fort Dupont.

Mary Bradford: No, I did not. But let me back up a little bit.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah.

Mary Bradford: Because there were a whole lot of people who came in. I met some of them. But there was all of a sudden, a rush of women. I knew pretty much all the women who were in during those leaner years. And even when I went to Grand Canyon, there were only six women in my Albright class. And those were big classes. I can send you a photo, if you'd like. I went off to Albright. And I didn't meet Tina. So, what's her story?

Lu Ann Jones: Well, she came in another, it might have been a different intake program.

Mary Bradford: She might have been one of the "real" intakes. They were shooting for certain communities to bring people in.

Lu Ann Jones: Right.

Mary Bradford: And so, I was a bit of an anomaly. As an intake, I was like the only one who had experience. Sometimes I'd go to some of their sessions, but I didn't go to all of them.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, I think this is really interesting because one of the things that we are trying to document is the, yes, what's beginning to happen in the 1970s as the demographics are beginning to change. And so, what programs are bringing people in, and how are conditions.

Mary Bradford: The demographics had already changed. The park service was just behind, I think.

Lu Ann Jones: Yes. (laughs) Well, I'm talking about the demographics of the national parks.

Mary Bradford: Oh, yes. That's right. That's right. Yes. We were rare. I was rare. A woman ranger qualified at the time. Yeah. That was rare.

Lu Ann Jones: What was the training at Albright like?

Mary Bradford: It was pretty good. It was a three-month. It was a long one. It's not what they call Fundamentals, it's introduction to, introduction to something. I was in the fed [unclear] section, I think, or something. And Bruce McKeeman and Georjean were in my class. They were in my Albright class. As Bruce says, there were six women in the class, and he married one of them. I went off; my husband stayed in Maryland. He was working but it was a difficult time in our lives. We had, he had had a very bad accident. Somewhere in the early 1970s, he was working and fell, he was on a roof, making money to go through college. And fell through. And landed three stories below and broke his legs and his back and his ankles and everything else. We weren't sure he was going to walk again. So, he was in the hospital for a month and in a wheelchair for a month and on crutches for a long, long time. All of this coincided with about the time we said, well, I guess I'm going to have to get serious about my career.

Mary Bradford: He did eventually get better. He's walking around here now. But he's still, he's still badly scarred from all of his injuries. It was, it was sort of, it felt like it gave me permission to pursue actively this real career. So going – and by difficult, I mean, we've always gotten along really well. So it wasn't that kind of difficult. It just was a turning point for both of us. That if I go out to Albright, this is going to give me the opportunity to advance in my career. This is great news in case for some reason he never fully recovers.

Lu Ann Jones: So those three-month trainings, I mean, they were very—

Mary Bradford: I can't believe anybody would be interested in that. (laughter)

Lu Ann Jones: —very physical. They were also just the administrative, it was kind of soup to nuts, right?

Mary Bradford: Soup to nuts. It was everything. It was the first time I had ever rappelled off the side of anything. When your first rappel is off the Grand Canyon, that's a rather spectacular debut. And I loved it. I loved all the outdoors, the hiking. I was strong, physically strong then. I remember Rick Gale was teaching all of us to shoot out at a range. Because some people came in, one was an ex-California highway patrolmen, other people had never held a gun. I remember being very proud that I came in second in the class. (laughs) And how shocked they were. I think I came in second after the ex-California highway patrolman. So, I apparently had a knack for some of those disciplines that made me feel strong and capable. And that was a good thing. I thought the Albright experience was excellent.

Mary Bradford: There was only one small thing that came up during the class. To me it was emblematic of a few things I'd run into later in the career. I remember being in the store, the grocery store at Grand Canyon, with two of the six women who

were in our actual session. And we were shopping. One of the women was a single woman. And the other one was married from, I think, at JNEM, the Arch. Anyway, we were there, and we were going through the store and buying things. The wife of the superintendent of the training center had sent out an invitation for all the wives of the guys in the class to come to a tea at her house. She approached us in the store, and said, "Why didn't you come to my tea for the wives?"

Mary Bradford: We kind of looked at each other and said, "Well, we're women in the class, but we're not the wives of the rangers."

Mary Bradford: She said, "Well, you know, if you're here, you're probably going to end up marrying a ranger anyway. So, you should learn about what it takes to be a park service wife." She turned around and walked away. We looked at each other. and then we just started laughing, and then we got mad. We went through a whole series of emotions. It was like oh, my, is this what we're going to be facing? And in one way or another, that taught me that the National Park Service was going to be a great place to work – the Albright classes were wonderful and the people I met were great – but that I couldn't expect it to be smooth sailing always. And that I just needed to be prepared for it and not take it personally.

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. I've read some of those, they actually had little manuals and things about how to be a park service wife.

Mary Bradford: I have those. I have those still.

Lu Ann Jones: It's kind of hard—

Mary Bradford: There's one with a hand on the front and a glove writing in penmanship. Yes. How to iron their shirts.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah.

Mary Bradford: Yes. I read those. There was nothing for how to be a park service husband.

Lu Ann Jones: Right.

Mary Bradford: Which my husband used to laugh about a lot. He wanted me to say, though, I said, "Honey, is there anything you want me to say in this interview?"

Mary Bradford: He said to me, as we were riding in the car, I was dropping him off. He's here; he's visiting with some friends today. I said, "Is there anything you want me to say in the interview about you?"

Mary Bradford: He said what I was going to say about him. Which is, "You have a very understanding husband." (laughter) I have a very understanding husband.

Lu Ann Jones: How did you, how did you feel like your male peers there at Albright accepted the women in the class?

Mary Bradford: For the most part, well. Over time, and this is over the course of a career, I figured out there's a sort of a percentage. There's at least half of them are pretty open-minded. And if you don't get up in their face or give them a lot of grief about anything, really, and just kind of carry your weight, do what you're supposed to do and maintain a pretty good attitude, they're going to be with you all the way. There's going to be about 10 percent that aren't going to like you anyway. Because they don't like working with women. It's not their thing. They weren't exposed to it. Or they think you're taking the place of another [man?]. There's another 10 percent who just don't get along with anybody, so you've got to write them off. And there's another 10 percent, I'd say, who would see themselves in competition with you. Don't know how to do that. And sometimes act inappropriately that way. And maybe there's another 10 percent that want to hit on you or do something else. You learn to play percentages there. You figure ,I cannot make all of them be on my team, so I'll work with the people who can. Eventually, you win over some of those other percents by being true to yourself and straightforward, and, as I said, carrying your part of the deal.

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. So, once you got through with Albright, what was the next step? And if at any point I'm going too fast or going too slow and not giving you the chance to say something you need to say, you just tell me, "I need to say this." Okay?

Mary Bradford: No, those are the two main things I learned at Albright was learning how to assess a little bit of the situation around me personally and learning some fantastic skills. Right after Albright, they sent me to this urban rangers thing they were doing. I met a lot of people who had come out of some of the western parks. And I had met them out at Albright, too. They seemed to be a different breed of people in some respects than a lot of the people I had met and known in the urban areas. They were convinced that, of the ranger ideal, the image, the big western parks. And you could tell some of them looked down on the urban areas and the smaller parks, even though that's where most of the public came, and even though that's the public that votes on support and money for parks. A lot of people like the national parks in the abstract, the big western ones, but they spend most of their time in some of those smaller ones that are near their home. Working with them was a very different kind of skill set. And I think the park service was smart about – they were on track to try to train, that's why they mixed it up. They put people in who were comfortable in urban areas in those groups, and people who came out of the western parks. And they tried to cross-fertilize that knowledge, so that you could be successful anywhere.

Lu Ann Jones: So that was a particular program for training people in these new urban parks.

Mary Bradford: Right. Yeah. And that was right after Albright. And that's done. And so—

Lu Ann Jones: What kind of skills were you learning there? You didn't have to rappel, necessarily, but what were you kind of learning in that kind of training?

Mary Bradford: I don't remember.

Lu Ann Jones: That's okay.

Mary Bradford: I don't remember. I mean from there I went to – I did a little environmental education [unclear] was part of it. But that wasn't much. The main thing was I went to, I was sent to Summer in the Parks, which was a program in Washington, DC. And they hadn't had a uniformed person in the program. They brought in a lot of smart people from the outside to quickly set up some way, our parks had, they were still in the "keep off the grass" mode in the urban areas. They had had riots in DC in '68. And the urban youth were surrounded by national park land, because the national parks had service management of the urban land in DC. And the idea there was, if people are living in that area, it's their parks, and you can't apply western park rules to local parks. Maybe you need to draw people in, make them feel comfortable, patrol them more heavily – because if they're not clean and safe, and if you don't have activities, those three things, people won't use urban parks, or parks in urbanized areas. People have to feel like they're not going to get robbed. They don't want to see needles on the ground. And they want to have something to do when they get there.

Mary Bradford: At the end of my career, I got to reapply all of those principles again to my local park system. Because that's what worked. So, they were on the right track in the '70s. They're trying to reinvent that now. But they were on the right track with that program. It was made fun of by people who were, "Oh, they spent all this money on Summer in the Parks." And they made jokes about it. But actually, it was quite a sensible thing to do.

Mary Bradford: I was thrilled to be part of it. I was able to talk park service talk to the people who'd come from somewhere else and explain what some of the acronyms were and how it worked. I worked with day camps. I ended up writing their manual and doing a lot of the policy and guidance paperwork for them, some of which I still have somewhere in a box in my attic.

Lu Ann Jones: Colleagues in the National Capital Region are doing a study of Summer in the Parks.

Mary Bradford: Are they? I've got all the materials.

Lu Ann Jones: Yes. I'll let them know. Because it's kind of part of the civil rights initiative that's going on in the park service now. But looking at that program and how it intersected with, oh, man—

Mary Bradford: I've got a shirt.

Lu Ann Jones: All right. So, what, so there were, so what – how did that program work?

Mary Bradford: Well, I left before it was over. I didn't stay with it very long. I ended up—

Lu Ann Jones: Oh. But when you were there to work with some—

Mary Bradford: Pretty well, I thought. I mean, I ended up going, at one point I ended up going over to Fort Meyer and took bus driver training so I could teach all these college kids we were hiring to drive busses in the inner city. It was crazy. I went out to the Greenbelt Park Police Course and backed busses into barns, and taught people to drive busses. We bussed kids. We would pick them up at designated locations in DC and take them – most of them had never seen that much green grass – and take them out into the parks. There were also music programs. We got the National Symphony. Worked on that one, to get the National Symphony to do its practices in the parks rather than at the Kennedy Center, I think, had just been built. Wherever they were. And we had that. We had day camps, music in the parks. We had art in the parks. Art Barn at Pierce Mill. I can save a lot of that to talk to the Summer in the Parks people.

Lu Ann Jones: That would be great. Yeah.

Mary Bradford: But it was fun. And like all things, I think one of your questions was when are you most energized. When you're working toward a defined goal on a well-managed project with people that are all pushing in the same direction, that's when you get most energized. A small team with a common goal. A virtuous purpose. And good hearts. Oh, and the ability to get things done. So that was that.

Mary Bradford: George Hartzog was director. There had been another riot in Yosemite, at Stoneman Meadow. And his idea was, he would take people who are successful in talking to groups that were not like them, which he considered Summer in the Parks people to be, to go out to Yosemite. Because there was clearly a standoff between the spit and polish rangers and the hippie San Francisco types who were coming in and sleeping in the meadow and the rangers were driving them out. So, he thought he'd get several of us, he got many of us in that program and from elsewhere, and hand-selected some rangers out in that park and in other parks he thought would do well in that regard. You know, Roger Rudolph, Mark Forbes, Bob Barbee, people who were really easygoing and who could talk to anybody. And Butch Farabee. And brought people in to work, do Summer in the Parks in Yosemite. I wore that shirt in Yosemite. We did not wear the ranger uniform, because that was part of the standoff mentality. I see the police brutality stuff in the streets now in some cities and everybody looks militarized. I want to go up to them and shake them and say, "Get out of all of that gear and just get out there. Talk and listen to people."

Mary Bradford: There were a lot of things that were found out there. I worked near the trails, Happy Isles Trails Center. Roger and I took some people off on overnight hikes. People would take hikes, but what if you were a singleton? What if you were an old person, or somebody with young children? You didn't want to kind of walk out into the wilderness by yourself. So one of the programs that we started was, you know, hike with a ranger. And we would take people off into the woods and stay overnight and then come back down. And they loved it. It was a great way, and parents could get rid of their teenage kids that way send them off with us and that sort of thing.

Mary Bradford: One of the other things we found out was really early when we got there was that – one of the things we found out when we arrived in Yosemite in the summer of '71, talking to the people who were camping illegally, was that they had to camp illegally. Because when you came into the park at that time, they told us, you had to give them your license plate number for your space. And they weren't in cars. They were hitchhiking, or hiking in. Or they didn't have vehicles. If you didn't have a vehicle, you couldn't have a camping space. You could in the back country, but not in Yosemite Valley.

Mary Bradford: So, one of the very first things we did was drag logs and create a new campground called Yellow Pines. It got another name later. There was an informal camp for climbers. You know, very much hippie, self-sufficient types, out behind the gas station. And we actually formalized it. We set up rules. Because park rangers were going in and breaking it up. We said it's there. You know, let's put some parameters around it and set up what it is and what it can be. So that became a walk-in camp site, too, for the climbers. We called it Climbers Camp. I want to say it was Camp Nine or something. It got a name after that.

Lu Ann Jones: I've heard of Camp Four, is that it?

Mary Bradford: Camp Four. That's it.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah.

Mary Bradford: It was Camp Four. It's been a long time. I forgot. So that was our role there. And that was good for me, because you know what, except for the training at Grand Canyon, that was my first big park experience. And Yosemite's a great place for your first big park experience.

Lu Ann Jones: So, were you considered an interpreter? Or kind of—

Mary Bradford: We were, I'm not sure what they considered us. I think they considered us outsiders, the regular park staff. With a few exceptions. Some people totally got it. They knew they had to change. I always give the park service credit for that, that there are always people at every level who say wait, what? You should be doing something different. So those people were great. But we did a little of everything. Overnight hikes. A lot of the same stuff that we were doing in Summer in the Parks and some other things, too, like you couldn't go out in the Merced and float down the Merced. And we permitted that and we actually gave people tubes and led interpretive talks while floating down the Merced. There were things like that that we introduced to that park. There was a shuttle bus service that was started. Remember I said not everybody had a car. And the big complaint in Yosemite Valley, and the big discussion then, as it always has been, is how do you manage use? Because there's way too much use for that box canyon. But a lot of that use is the vehicles. You know, if you have a shuttle system, which is still in place, that helps. So that was started. In the evening, we would ride the shuttle buses, just to keep trouble down. There was a lot of pot

smoking and drinking and stuff, and so just by circulating back and forth, you could make sure that things were under control.

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. How long did you stay there?

Mary Bradford: Not even a year, because I got an assignment at Cabrillo National Monument. So, I was not there a full year. I moved to Cabrillo and worked there. Yeah, I came there as chief of interpretation at Cabrillo. Small park. No, it wasn't chief. They didn't have, it wasn't chief. It was an interpretive specialist. That's what I was. It was such a small park. I was the interpreter. (laughs)

Lu Ann Jones: Right. Yeah. When you say you got the assignment, did you apply for it? Or did they pick you?

Mary Bradford: No. They picked me. Yeah. They picked me and said I was going to go there. They were into assigning people at that point. They wanted to spread people around a little bit. It was getting to the point where people were only going to where they wanted to go, and some of the smaller parks were getting short shrift. I don't know.

Mary Bradford: The staff there was interesting. Once again, the percentages. Some were really good about it. Others just couldn't accept it.

Lu Ann Jones: You mean the fact that you were a woman?

Mary Bradford: A woman. Yeah. They'd had one woman work there before, and they didn't like her. So that was their idea of what a woman was going to be. She seemed fine to me. But I don't know what the story was. And I decided just to move forward and do what I do. I've been back there many times. Tom Tucker was my superintendent, and just before he passed away, we had a wonderful conversation about those days.

Mary Bradford: But I did get there. And I remember the chief, I came in a uniform. And I had my badge on and my hat. And at the time we were wearing a brown and white uniform, which was terrible. And he said, "Nice to meet you. I'm so glad you're here. Here's your office. And oh, by the way, we don't let girls wear the badge at this park." First day.

Mary Bradford: Those things are kind of turning points for people. Because you have to decide, am I going to get all up in his, what do they say now, up in his grill about it? (laughs) Or am I just going to say, make light of it and say, "Oh, I have to wear this, because otherwise people don't know I'm a ranger." And then I even tried to make it lighter. I said, "You know, this uniform's so bad," because nobody liked that uniform. I said, "I have to hook it in my bra strap to make it not flop over." And he sort of laughed. I don't know, we got through that somehow. It's all about trying to see where people are coming from. I wasn't mad about it. I was, but I had to figure out a way to recover quickly. You're not going to use any of this, are you? (laughter)

Lu Ann Jones: You'll get a chance to look at the transcript. Well, I think these are really important because the park service is changing a lot during that time. And I think for any organization—

Mary Bradford: Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: —it's always going through some kind of growing pains of one sort or another.

Mary Bradford: I felt for a long time I was always the first woman whatever. I wasn't the first in the park service at that time. I was a little bit ahead of that class of women, so that's why I don't know that person you mentioned, probably.

Lu Ann Jones: Right. Right.

Mary Bradford: But I was of that era where there's like, there are probably six or seven of us. We've talked over the years. We were always like the first woman X, the first woman Y. We were one of two they'd ever seen. You know, that kind of thing. So yes, it was interesting times. But I just liked the park so much, and the service seemed like it had a really strong mission.

Lu Ann Jones: So, when you went to a new park, how did you plunge in? Learn the resource, learn this history. What was just that process like?

Mary Bradford: Well, I love to read, and I'd read everything. I read up on it. I like being out. One thing I carried through my whole career was getting out into the field, being outside. I'm troubled when I go to parks, and I see just volunteers or cooperating association or concession employees at the desk. And you can look in the back, or maybe there's offices, and the trained rangers, naturalists, interpreters, they're in their office. I think it's even worse now because of the computer. The inbox pulls you in, and the demands on your time are such. I tried to limit office time always, and go out and walk. I also liked really talking to the maintenance crew. Because they knew a lot more than some of the – the rangers would transfer in and out. But those maintenance crews, a lot of them, they were there all the time. And I was sort of stunned by the lack of mixing that I observed in the National Park Service between those two groups. And it was something I always hoped would change and never really has. But I learned a lot by not being in the office. And by reading at night. You could talk to people on the park staff. And the information sometimes was valuable, sometimes it wasn't.

Lu Ann Jones: How did you learn to, well, you had moved a lot, so I was going to say just adapting to new communities.

Mary Bradford: I have no problem with that. It's part of my DNA.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah. (laughs) Who you are. I think one of the questions that we had put out there as a sample was kind of what skills you learned in kind of each position. And can you think in terms of, I mean, you've been really good at kind of outlining what you learned, and what you took to, and what you learned in each position.

Mary Bradford: Right. Well, I was going to say, I learned the big park mentality in Yosemite. That was interesting. Even though I wasn't on their staff, it helped me later understand where they were coming from, and then trying to find where there was commonality. In Cabrillo, I learned a lot about, because it was a small park. I actually think it was better than the big park experience. Because you got to see everything. They're so siloed in the big parks that you really didn't get to understand, how did admin do its work? We were all sharing a space that was not very large. And we had individual offices, but we ate lunch together. There was like one interpreter had a couple of seasonal staff. There was a guy who was the chief ranger, and he had another fellow who was the patrol ranger. Very small staff. Yeah. And so, you learned what all the functions were. Later in my career, that became very useful, the fact that I hadn't specialized, really, in anything. Even though I had these labels at different periods, I actually had seen the others in operation and come to know them as people, nice people, for the most part.

Lu Ann Jones: Was there a moment in your career where you thought, I'm going to make a career of this?

Mary Bradford: Right from the start.

Lu Ann Jones: You did. You knew that.

Mary Bradford: Yes. Right from the start. Right from the start.

Lu Ann Jones: And did that, how did that shape—

Mary Bradford: I never planned to leave or do anything else. Well, here's how it shaped me. When I was pregnant with my first daughter, I was at Cabrillo. I'd been there a little over two years. And there really wasn't any pregnancy program at the time. I mean, basically I was told, "Well, you'll have to transfer, because we can't let you have that time off." Because there wasn't any maternity leave, or paternity leave. You had to use your own accumulated leave. And I had enough to last a few weeks. But I wanted a little more time and then to ease back to fulltime, ease back in. Which is, I think a perfectly fair thing for a woman to ask for in a career path. Because women's career paths tend to be different from men. A man's career path will start at the bottom – my hand is going to go up here, in case the tape can't read this (laughter) – and rise on a steady rise, maybe with a few plateaus, all the way up until their career peaks, and then they retire.

Mary Bradford: Women, if they have children or are married or something, they'll get to that same peak. That's not the issue. And then they'll still accomplish a lot in their career. But the pattern is different. It often goes up, then it levels off. And they dip a little bit while you're, then you rise up again. Then you plateau a little bit, dip a little bit, then you rise up again. You make choices at each of those. What's going to work for me and my family? It doesn't mean that your career has to stop, start, or is worse, or even that one way is better than another. Because I have seen women

get to the same point. They become regional directors. They become associate directors. And they've been through that. But their careers go like this.

Lu Ann Jones: Up and down.

Mary Bradford: More like a wave to the top, rather than a line to the top. And that's what I found out when I left there.

Mary Bradford: So, I said something to someone that I knew in National Capital Parks. I said, "Do you have anything less than fulltime there? Maybe I can work something out." And they did. I won't go into all the details, but for about a year or so we moved back to Maryland, and I took a job working for a wonderful fellow named Rock Comstock. He's passed away. And he was one of those guys, and there are many in the park service, who would talk to women just like they would talk to any of their employees, and were terrific to work for. You didn't feel patronized, you felt valued, and you got assignments. When I came back fulltime, I ended up working on planning teams. I was assigned out of the Denver Service Center, working at an office out at Harpers Ferry. I worked on the C&O Canal Plan, and the Harpers Ferry plan. And you'll see if you check the, Roger Williams Plan in Rhode Island. I was at Boston Harbor Island. I can't remember them all. But I was on several planning teams. I never ran them. But I learned about planning from those assignments. And that was useful. It interested me in the law, because they were using terms like easements, you know, boundary issues. There were so many property rights issues when you were either acquiring or working with the local government.

Mary Bradford: So, I decided I would go, while I was doing that, to law school at night. So, I asked the training officer if I could apply some training dollars, because you got a certain amount every year under your individual development plan. You could go to Albright, you could go to Mather. You could take something at another place. I said, "I'd like to figure out what all those dollars would add up to and I'd like to use it to help be paid for law school classes that actually apply to my job."

Mary Bradford: They said, "That's okay." Because they often did that sort of thing. So, my property law classes and some of the others that related to my planning work helped me get through law school at night. I got a JD from Georgetown Law School at night. Five years. (laughter) So that's what I did.

Mary Bradford: Somewhere, Bill Whalen became the director of the National Park Service. He'd been involved in some of the parks, and he remembered me from those days. I was doing work on planning teams. He contacted me one day and he said, "I'm having trouble with park concessions. And I have this opportunity. I want someone who can go to business school and learn enough to help me manage park concessions." He says, "We tend to get people who have been concessioners." And he says, "I'm afraid their relationship is too close."

Mary Bradford: So, I said, "What did you have in mind?"

Mary Bradford: He said, "How would you like to go to Stanford Business School? But you'll have to do it, I can't send you for more than ten months. That would be the limit." A detail. Some kind of, I don't know what it was. But he says, "there's this thing called a Sloan Fellowship. If you can apply to Stanford and get into Stanford and get in this program, I'd like you to go."

Mary Bradford: And I thought, this never happens. This is outstanding. I talked to my husband, and I said, "What if I get in? We'll have to go to California for ten months. Are you up for this?" At that point my husband said, he was working, and he said, "Yeah. We'll figure something out, you know."

Mary Bradford: I applied, I got in, and I got a fellowship. And it was the one time in all of my career moves with the National Park Service where we both actually started on the same day. I started classes at Stanford on the same day he started his job at Menlo Park. It was wonderful. (laughter) We brought our daughter along and enrolled her in the Stanford preschool. That was great. But for a year, I had to work really hard. I just kept thinking about park concessions. I want to know as much as I can about the business world. And use the law degree now that I had with it. And I thought maybe I can help Whalen with this concession thing.

Mary Bradford: Right toward the end of my time at Stanford, he got removed. There I was with all the stuff that he'd asked me to get, and there was a new regime in Washington.

Lu Ann Jones: What year are we talking? Where are we?

Mary Bradford: We're talking 1980. So that was sort of another turning point. But I wrote my thesis on managing concessions in national parks. I mean, I was, you know, that was my focus. And it turned out I never did work in the concessions office at the National Park Service after all that.

Lu Ann Jones: So, what did happen, then?

Mary Bradford: Well, one thing, you asked about a lesson I learned at each one of these things.

Lu Ann Jones: Yes.

Mary Bradford: So, I'm off at Stanford in this class of 42 fellows in the class. There are three women, once again. Just very few. And Bill, we were at some event, a social gathering, get to know you. We'd been to a few of those. I would, you know, talk to my classmates at these events. We'd hold our drinks and chitchat about how much we hated accounting or something. These were people from, a lot of car company people, people from start-ups. One guy from Apple, which was just starting. You know, pretty interesting folks. And one person was a White House fellow. Another person was a high-level person at NOAA, head of the cloud seeding program. So, it was a mix of government and corporate types who were usually mid or early career that had been selected by their leadership to go through this accelerated program.

Mary Bradford: So, I'm mingling at this party. At one point, my husband walks over to me and says, "I've been listening to the wives of some of these guys. They think you're kind of snobbish because you don't talk to them." I thought God, I don't really even know them. I mean, I'm in class all day with their husbands. What should I do? And my husband said to me, "You should go over and start talking to them, because…" I said, "Why do I have to do that? Why don't (laughs) you know, why is my rules different than your rules?" He said, "Just do it." And I said, "Okay."

Mary Bradford: So, I walked up, and the first woman I walked up to was a woman named Ginger Brown. Terrific woman. And so, I've always called this the Ginger Brown rule. I started talking to them, asking them about themselves, their families. One of them had a doctorate. They were very interesting people. I always figured after that, whenever I was in a new place, and coming into a new environment in the park service, if they were having something to welcome me or social, I would go and talk to the wives first. It turns out they're a little worried about us. Their husbands are out all day working with these women. And it makes them a little nervous. And they had no reason to be nervous around me. But they didn't know that. And they also thought we were blowing them off and thought that they were less than because they didn't have these big jobs. And I never felt that way. I had kids. I know how you take a break and how demanding it is. So, I was not one of those. So, I just wanted to put people at ease. Actually, I liked it a lot, because I love talking to women after talking to men all day.

Mary Bradford: So, the Ginger Brown rule I followed through my whole career, and that helped, a lot, with some of the tensions I had felt when I first came to Cabrillo. Because those tensions were definitely there. And after, this was after Cabrillo, but I did use that then in later assignments. And that worked out very well. At first, I was doing it deliberately, and then I was doing it because I wanted to. Because I learned a lot about everybody. And whatever pillow talk there may have been between them about me was not that I was some outside which who was – they were fine with me. And it worked out. And I liked those. And some of those women are still my friends.

Lu Ann Jones: Oh. That's nice.

Mary Bradford: I'm sure you can't use any of that. (laughs)

Lu Ann Jones: You'd be surprised.

Mary Bradford: That just occurs to me. But that's what I learned at—

Lu Ann Jones: I mean, I love that. The Ginger Brown rule.

Mary Bradford: The Ginger Brown rule. Oh, yeah. She's still around, actually. I better be careful. But she may not even know that it's named after her. I think enough time has passed that that would work. But when I didn't have the concessions job then wasn't going to happen. It was actually some, a row at a congressional hearing about concessions that got Bill Whalen kind of headed out the door. So too little,

too late, I guess. But that was one of the points in a career, it's kind of a turning point where you think well, I'm going to have to fend for myself. There's a whole new leadership in and all they know is I've been gone for ten months. And they're probably a little ticked about it. And I don't have a park to go back to. I knew what I was going back to. I was going back to nothing that I knew of.

Mary Bradford: So, two things happened. I said this is really probably a good time in my career to have a break, have another child. We had another child. And I went to work. I had this law degree. I thought well, how can I use this? And I asked around. I was over at the main Interior building. When I came back from California, then, in 1980, because I wasn't going to the concessions office, I ended up, they gave me a bunch of environmental impact statements to read and write. They gave me something, you know, kind of make work, and it was not right for everybody. But I enjoyed that in some ways. But it was not a job, really. It was just something while they were trying to figure out what park I was going to be assigned to next.

Mary Bradford: So, I went to the Interior Department building to read these environmental impact statements. And while I was there, I heard that there had been a big blow-up in the Office of Legislative Counsel in the Office of the Secretary of the Interior. Where they had attorneys, like seven, maybe seven, six or seven attorneys assigned to work on legislation affecting all the agencies in Interior. Some people did BLM, and some people did water rights. And one guy was in charge of doing National Park Service stuff in Alaska, which was a new part of the national park system. The ANILCA law had passed around that time. They had just fired him because he couldn't manage to get fee legislation the secretary wanted.

Mary Bradford: I said, "I'm a lawyer. Does that mean there's a job opening there?"

Mary Bradford: And they said, "Yeah. Go up and ask them if you can have that job. Sure."

Mary Bradford: So, I went up to the Secretary of the Interior's office. Ended up talking to the undersecretary of the interior, I can't remember who it was now. And said, "I'm interested in that job in legislative counsel. I have a law degree and I'm in the park service. I'm a park ranger, an 025 park ranger, but a lawyer, too. Maybe I could work on fee legislation for you."

Mary Bradford: They said, "You'll have to leave the 025 series. You'll have to stop being a park ranger. You'll have to go to Schedule A, which means we can fire you any time. Can you handle that?"

Mary Bradford: That was tough. That was tough. I eventually decided to do it. Took a chance. I was the lawyer who handled National Park Service legislation in the Office of Legislative Counsel for seven and a half years.

Lu Ann Jones: Well before, so at what point do you get involved with ANPR? Before you leave behind the 025?

Mary Bradford: At the beginning.

Lu Ann Jones: At the beginning.

Mary Bradford: The belt buckle that I'm wearing right now is serial number 12. I joined ANPR as soon as it came along, because what I saw with park rangers was, and what I knew enough now, what I know now about the park ranger series, 025, is that OPM considers it a non-professional series. It's a blue-collar series. I remember seeing that all these people had degrees. And they were GS4s and 5s and 7s and 9s. I knew that if you had a degree for the most part you came into the government at a 9/11/12. And that was the entry point. So why was the entry point for rangers so low, and why did they stew around with all this training, these low grades? And they did because it was not seen as a professional series. I thought an association like this of national park rangers could help professionalize, in other people's minds, what this group was.

Mary Bradford: As it turns out, people got so wedded to the whole 025 number, there were many times over my career where I would tell people, "Don't be wedded to just a crazy number created by the government to put on a series. There's nothing magic about 025. I left 025 to go to a Schedule A appointment and came back in at 025." But when I went out, I realized that I was in a professional series, and actually my degrees and education were respected, and I got the grade. I was able to be promoted past the GS-12 I was when I went into it. And when I came back to the park service, I had a higher grade. I got past that barrier that so many rangers run into at 12 because essentially, they're in a non-professional series. And it's hard to make the leap from the 12, which is, I don't even know where it is anymore, because I've been retired for so long. But that was really kind of considered topping out for a non-professional series.

Mary Bradford: Everybody says, "I never could get past this. I couldn't get this grade. How did you make the leap?"

Mary Bradford: I said, "I left it. I left it, went outside, went around. And came back in then when I could be at the manager level." There's an artificial barrier that is created by the insistence that we have to stay true to this 025 thing. I do think that rangers should be professionalized. I've been with them since '77, the ANPR. I'm a life member. I don't know how much progress has been made on that point in all these years, and that makes me sad.

Lu Ann Jones: So, when you, am I right to speculate that your job now in the Secretary's office is a pretty high-pressure job and politicized job?

Mary Bradford: Very high pressure. Very politicized job. It taught me more; I should have been smarter, later in my career, I should never have gone back to the Washington office. (laughs) Because I knew from that job how bitter and, you know, they always used to talk about the long knives being out. And the politics of everything. I mean, I saw how there was good that could happen. But it was always done staff to staff. I had good contacts at OMB. I had a couple of good people to work with in both the House and the Senate staff. One, a park service

person, Heather Huyck, who was working for Bruce [Vantil?] at the time. People, Tony Benvenuto and Jim [Birney?] and some other people on the Senate side. People that you could kind of, when everybody was fighting, when all the dinosaurs were fighting each other, we were the small mammals scurrying underfoot. Actually, trying to put our nuts away for the winter and get something done. So, we would work together often to package legislation in such a way that could appeal to, so it taught you to have a, that would appeal to all sides. It wasn't as contentious as Congress is now. There was some joint legislation and cooperation, but there was plenty of grandstanding. As we used to say when I lived in Texas, some people are all hat and no cattle. You know? There were plenty of people who had that mentality up there. You had to figure out where the real power was, and write something that would work. It started with fee legislation, but it worked for ANILCA, boundary studies.

Mary Bradford: I had great opportunities. I got to go to a lot of parks in that job. I wasn't trapped in Washington. Part of my "if you're not in the field, you don't get it" mentality was that every time an opportunity came to come and actually see something I was working on, if it was the Acadia Boundary, I'd go to Maine and work with [Ron Rye?], the superintendent. East Everglades boundary, went to Everglades. Met with Mike Finley. We went up in a helicopter. I could visualize it so I could prepare not only the legislation properly, but also the testimony for our witnesses. Or if it was the Smokies. Or goodness gracious, I worked on American Samoa. You know, I was meeting with – I got to be out talking to great people and learn a lot about a lot of parks. And that was probably the finest, that and learning how the system worked in Washington were the two take-aways I got from that job. in spite of the fact that it was high pressure, and many days, very unpleasant. Many days, very unpleasant. You haven't felt uncomfortable until you've had the Secretary of the Interior yell at you. (laughter) And, you know, but you got to go to siting ceremonies at the White House. And there were kind of fun things, too. Yeah. So, it was interesting times.

Lu Ann Jones: So was part of that takeaway there, again, that you make your allies, like you said, that the lower levels, or the staff levels, the people that can make things happen.

Mary Bradford: Right. I mean, you have to get along with the big bosses, obviously. There are people who make entire careers by just cozying up to the top. I had some great support from some of the big bosses. But not because I spent lots of time with them or cultivated them in that way. That was not how I got there. Most of my daily work was with my peers, I would say.

Mary Bradford: Another part of that was, too, by that point I had met enough, there were newer women in the service, that I was sort of their go-to person. I had a lot of women – I've had some approach me at this conference – a lot of women who I gave some advice to or just tried to calm them down. Or told them, "Yeah, I feel your pain," if that was all it took. And I've had several people here, some of them with gray hair, (laughs) tell me how much I meant to them in those days. I guess this

conference has really moved me in that way. There was a lot more of that happening here than I thought was going to happen.

Lu Ann Jones: This, so you're there in the '80s. Who's the Secretary of the Interior you're working with?

Mary Bradford: Oh my gosh. At first, it was Jim Watt.

Lu Ann Jones: That's what I was thinking.

Mary Bradford: And then it was Don Hodel. And then Reagan brought in a guy named, nobody remembers him, Judge Clark. It was his riding buddy. Used to ride the park police horse out at Rock Creek stables, with this guy. So, Reagan was always out with Judge Clark, his riding buddy, and he wanted to figure out a way, I guess, to keep Clark in Washington. So, he made him Secretary of the Interior.

Mary Bradford: Then there were other people. We had Lujan, Manuel Lujan, who was a congressman from New Mexico. He was Secretary of the Interior. That was when the Bush crowd came in, the Bush I crowd. Those political appointees on the Bush I crowd were much easier to deal with, for the most part, for me, anyway, than the Reagan people, who were very dogmatic. Different than what we were accustomed to, let me put it that way. The political appointees, many of them who came in with the Reagan administration were not the sharpest knives in the drawer. For them, a prestige appointment would have been, if they were on the transition team, was Defense or one of the big agencies. And Interior was not their goal in life. So, it could be complicated to work with some of those people. They came from a knowledge level of zero. That was bad in some ways. In some ways, it was good. They had no knowledge. You could sort of fill them in from your point of view. So, in a way, it was okay to work with those Republican administrations, for many of them that were in Interior.

Mary Bradford: Now not so much at OMB. There were a lot of the dogmatic types there had had come from Mountain States Foundation and other places who really didn't like the whole business of locked up public lands very much in general terms. They mostly stayed hands-off the National Park Service, but it was a struggle.

Mary Bradford: The Bush people had some better political appointees in play. Lujan from New Mexico, he kind of got it. I did a number of hearings with him. He fought on the concession stuff, so I accompanied him to a lot of hearings. Because at that point, I got to use that concessions knowledge. He really tried to not make us beholden to those concessioners, the people who were running things in the parks. It came from his experience in the House after the Challenger blew up, the shuttle. Because they couldn't do anything. I don't know if anybody remembers this, but there was a problem with the O-rings that caused the flare-up. He remembered that they couldn't take the contract away from the private contractor that built those, or even punish them, because they were private. They weren't government. He said, "By God, if the government relies on something to do its fundamental

business, the government should run it." So, he began pulling back on those concessioners. So that was interesting to me that that came from a Republican secretary of the interior. So, I could work with that. Then also Mike Hayden was named, he is a former governor of Kansas, he was named an assistant secretary for Fish, Wildlife & Parks. Later went on, I think with the Fish & Wildlife Foundation, very much an environmentalist, and worked with the Tall Grass Prairie. So, there were some good people, too. That's all I've got to say about that.

Lu Ann Jones: You were talking about mentoring, and here you are kind of at midcareer [high-pitched, loud tone]

Mary Bradford: Okay. That was my message from my husband.

Lu Ann Jones: Do you need some more water?

Mary Bradford: No, no, no. I do need more water, yeah. Why don't you do that while I answer? [getting water, texting] Have we gone on too long? Should we stop?

Lu Ann Jones: Oh, no. the next person will come in about 25 minutes. So that would be good.

Mary Bradford: Okay. So then maybe we should move—

Lu Ann Jones: I was just going to ask you, so you talked about some of the people here [at Ranger Rendezvous] expressing appreciation for you as a mentor. And sometimes it was, as you described it, I think could be just a word or two. [tone] But were there times where you felt you were a more active mentor, or you took somebody under your wing and felt like that you—

Mary Bradford: What do you mean by "active mentor"?

Lu Ann Jones: Well, that you had a protégée.

Mary Bradford: I occasionally had people assigned to me to follow me around and do things, yeah. There was some of that. Most of it was just people, you know, you'd be talking with someone, and they'd approach you. Sometimes they wouldn't approach you, but I'd be in a park and they – I don't know how it would come about. I'll have to think about that.

Lu Ann Jones: Okay.

Mary Bradford: I'm not really sure. It wasn't just women. I mean, I had a guy who stopped me the first day I was here. I think it was when we were waiting for the trip up to Los Alamos [earlier in the week]. I was standing there, and he came up and he said, "Mary Bradford, I remember you." And he reintroduced himself. He said, "You had a big impact on my career." And I said, "Why so?" And he said, "Well, when you were an associate director at WASO, and I had to come to you about something" – I oversaw the training centers and everything at that point – "you had a plaque on your wall that read, 'If it doesn't happen in the field, it doesn't

happen.' I've been telling people that story for years in admiration. And I just want to make sure that my memory is correct. That was you that had that on your wall."

Mary Bradford: I said, "Yes, that's what I had on my wall." (laughter) So I had had an impact on a guy's career in a way I hadn't even known about until two days ago. So, there are those sort of things that just happened. You end up influencing people in a way by your actions. Sometimes you're not even aware of what your influence is. So, you have to watch it and not let the awareness down that you're being watched. And you are being watched. I think women are watched a little more closely than men, frankly. So, you're really being watched. You can't get away with the dozens of screw-ups. You really have to be on your toes and try to be open and be your best self.

Lu Ann Jones: So, what was the next step?

Mary Bradford: Oh, I don't remember. Let me think. I have CRS disease now, can't remember stuff. Let's see where I go after that. Oh, gosh, how could I forget? One of my favorite jobs. I became deputy regional director in Santa Fe. (laughs)

Lu Ann Jones: Oh.

Mary Bradford: I got asked to be deputy regional director in Santa Fe. There had been a bit of an issue between the regional director, actually, they didn't like each other, the regional director and the deputy. I don't want to get in the middle of that, and that's not my business. But he just needed a different person in. He'd had some issues, real and perceived, otherwise. I think he saw me as a person who could come into anything and belong and maybe calm some things down. I was surprised at the offer, because I hadn't been a park superintendent. And I didn't expect it. I had been offered two superintendencies, both of which got pulled out at the last minute due to some political shenanigans that really still to this day rankle a little bit. I won't mention the parks. But at one point, I actually looked into schools for one park. I had pretty much everything set up, and the rug got pulled out from under me. I'm not the only one with a story like that, so I don't take that personally. At the time, it was really upsetting. But I expected that I would get a superintendency out of it. By that time, I was a 14. I thought that's what happened. But I got, instead I got this offer to be deputy regional director. But it was a small region and a good region. We had 44 parks. I came into the regional office. They had a social to welcome me. Ginger Brown rule. Talked to all the great people. All the wives and women. And actually, the maintenance guys; when I left that job, the maintenance guys made me a lovely gift. I mean, I talked to everybody, and really did try to do that. I heard later in feedback that that was a good way to open up was not to come in and then stand and make a speech about who you are and all the rest. Just to socialize. People are good at sizing up when people are faking it and when they're not. I was pretty excited. I wanted to be there. I admired the knowledge of that regional director. I knew he had some bumps and bruises. But we sat down and I said, "Here are my

conditions." He was great about that and always backed me up and let me do what I was supposed to do."

Mary Bradford: Some of the guys in the service who'd been around a long time and grown up in the old ways could be very patronizing to women who came in, even in positions of authority. Even if they came in as superintendents, or came in as regional directors in some ways. I saw it on the National Leadership Council. So, you just, you had to hold your own. I think sometimes if you just told them, "Listen, here's who I am and here's what I'd like you to do." If you just laid out – for some of them, it was kind of new to them. They didn't know they were offending you. So, I never took any of that personally. The patronizing comments, or the ignoring you in meeting stuff. I figured they just had never learned it. So, it was just sort of take them quietly aside and say, "You know, you're doing this, and this could be handled a little bit better." They were, for the most part, terrific people. Some people got it from the start; they were always good. But others, it was just not their life experience. So, I never let it bother me the way it bothered some.

Mary Bradford: So, Santa Fe was great. I would still be here, I'd still be director, probably, if they hadn't dissolved the regions and the reorganization in '94. In '94, they merged into the Inter Mountain Region, Rocky Mountain. They did some other realigning, too, and moved a lot of parks around. And I was part of the 1994, end of 1994, beginning of 1995, what they called Transitions and Discovery. We had a big conference. And I worked hard to make that merger happen, even though my heart was sad, because I loved working with Santa Fe and I loved it, and I knew I'd have to move.

Mary Bradford: I had two choices. Roger Kennedy, who was director at the time, gave me two choices: regional director at Omaha, or come to WASO as associate director. There are many times in my life I thought I should have gone to Omaha. I mean, they had to end up with a great regional director, they ended up with Bill Schenk, who was fantastic. So, I'm not complaining about that. It was that I should have known better than to go back to the Washington office because it could be a very political and distressing place to work.

Mary Bradford: When I came back as associate director, we had the first shutdown the park service had ever had. There were a lot of things going on back at WASO. I thought, well, I have 27 years now. And if at the end of three years I don't feel like I want to continue doing this, I can retire with a high three and the pension, and figure out some other way to serve. Because I also saw the WASO, I realized then that WASO may have been, that was kind of the end. The next levels up were political appointees. And I did three years in WASO. And I learned a lot. I finally got to use all that accounting, because we had the budgeting and the personnel. I had the training centers. I got to go make graduation speeches at FLETC [Federal Law Enforcement Training Center]. You know, there were many fine things in that job. And I had some really great people. And we were at the cutting edge of, just the beginning of the electronic. I had gadget people around that everybody made fun of because they were starting on Blackberries and Palm

Pilots and all those things that were going to eventually take over. But we could see that future. I always felt I got an edge on that with a lot of people at my age level, because I had those people working for me. I'm still friends with some of those people. Once again, I met great people. I learned something new. I enjoyed it. But I knew that I had probably run my career. I could have gone out to another superintendency or something. But at some point in life you say, "What's next?" I was at that "what next" point at 31 years with the National Park Service. And I retired.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow. How did you feel the day you left?

Mary Bradford: Like I'd jumped off a cliff without that damned rope.

Lu Ann Jones: Can you say more about that?

Mary Bradford: It was frightening! It had been my home for 31 years. Good and bad. I knew its ways. I'd learned a lot. I had contributed in some small way in different places. It was, it was the dailiness of it that I missed. I missed the people, and I missed having a sure routine. The open calendar frightened me a little bit. I did have a consulting company for a while, and I found it odd to be chasing the dollars. I did give talks. I was so grateful that I got asked back to give talks at regional directors' conferences and others. I had a couple of standard ones that I would give. The most popular one was the one I called "Instant Lawyer." Which I would teach, I think I gave it at ANPR once. I may dig it out again. But it basically explains why certain things are the way they are legally in very simple terms. That if you have a policy and someone writes a regulation, I set it up like a poker game. What trumps what? Well, the "trump" is not a good word anymore. Yeah. What trumps what in poker? So, regulation is over policy.

Mary Bradford: But if there's a new act of Congress, whatever regulation you have, if it changes it, you can't say, "We object to this new law. We can't do that because our regs say this." No, the new law says you're going to change your regs. So why things were. And what's outside the law, like Indian treaties, and why you can't, and what the role of the Supreme Court is. Some of it is basic civics. But a lot is, why do you have to do the things the way you do? Why are the policies written the way they're written? Why does something that seems completely stupid to you, that's on the books, why is it there? What's the reasoning behind that? And I think if people see that, it helps them in their job. They're not always saying, "Those stupid idiots in Washington. They don't know what they're doing." No, maybe there's a legal reason you have to do it that way. If people would stop sniping at parts of the organization that aren't like them. If the field would stop sniping at WASO, if WASO would say what do those people do, farting around all day? You know, if people would stop that mentality, and there was a little more interchange, and a little more understanding of each side, I would like to help bridge that.

Mary Bradford: And I did do some of that. I talked about the legislative process. I tried to bridge what I saw as a big gap between the field and the central offices, who were doing what they had to do legally. And the people in the field, who needed what they needed to do practically. And they didn't often meet very well, or even overlap. So, in post-retirement, that was a contribution I did for a few years. And I got put on the board of Eastern National, which is the cooperating association board, for five years. That was my nice off-ramp into real retirement. (laughter) So that was actually, I think I had a very good retirement, because I did have that off-ramp. So essentially, I had 36 years of being fully involved, but the last five were off the payroll.

Mary Bradford: By that point, my husband was able to travel a lot more with me. So, he actually met a lot of people that I had been working with over the years through the Eastern National trips that we would take. So that was fun. And my kids did, too. My kids were of an age where they were coming on those trips as well. So, it was one big, happy family. That was new, because for so much of my career, I had to keep my family and my park career separate. Unlike people who live in big parks, where their families are all together and playing together and they know each other and the husbands and wives all hang out together, I thought for my own sanity I needed to have it as a separate part of my life. I had an imaginary hook outside my front door, where I would hang up my work bag – I didn't really have a work bag – but I would hang it up mentally and I would walk in the house, and I'd just be Mom again and friend again. So, the lives didn't overlap that much.

Mary Bradford: Having said that, both my daughters work for the National Park Service.

Lu Ann Jones: What do they do?

Mary Bradford: My youngest daughter, when she was in high school, we had moved back to Washington. By that point, I was in the Washington office. She had to do a spring service project. They were redoing the Washington Monument. It had scaffolding all around it, and everybody had to be escorted up. So, they needed a lot of extra bodies just to take people up in the elevator. So, she escorted them up the elevator in the Washington Monument. And she worked for six summers at Wolf Trap, that's probably the bigger job, of course, at Wolf Trap, running the Children's Theater in the Woods. She started out just working with them as a high school student. Every summer through college, she was going through college, she returned and worked at Wolf Trap, for the Theater in the Woods.

Mary Bradford: My oldest daughter, when she graduated from college with a degree in architecture, moved with a friend to San Francisco. She didn't have a job out there, which was kind of crazy. They were looking for jobs, and they were on, they were not far from the Presidio. And apparently, as I was told the story later by Superintendent Brian O'Neill, who showed up in my Washington, at my office WASO one day, plopped down in the chair in front of me and said, "Your girls are working for me."

Mary Bradford: And I said, "What?" He said, "Your girls are working for me." I said, "Who are my girls?" He says, "You have a daughter, Jen, don't you?" And I said, "Yeah." "And Michelle?" And I said, "Yeah." (laughs)

Mary Bradford: He said, "They're my budget, they're helping me through the budget. They work in my budget office now. And I said, "What?!"

Mary Bradford: And Jen called, I called her up and I said, "You didn't tell me you're working, I'm the associate director. I don't even know you're working for the National Park Service."

Mary Bradford: She says, "Don't worry, Mom. It's seasonal." She said, "I didn't want to tell you because I wanted to get the job on my own." And she did. Only Brian, of course, when she put in her paperwork, saw that, you know, "Do you have any other relatives working for," and he saw my name and told me. And that's how I found out. Which I thought was pretty cute, actually.

Mary Bradford: In both instances, they couldn't see a future path for a career, and they did not make it their careers. All that made me a little, that made me realize things hadn't changed all that much. I mean, in both cases they talked to people who'd been there like forever in seasonal jobs, or in term jobs, or couldn't get on permanent. They saw the same thing I saw in 1967, and that had not changed. I hope ANPR can, and the National Park Service, can rethink all of it. It's time. We're not going to get the people that we need. Mike Reynolds [associate director of operations] was right about that. Those people aren't going to be interested. These are bright, educated people who said, "I don't need to put up with that. I've got college debt to pay. I've got a life to live. I don't want to be in that situation in my life. As pretty as the parks are."

Lu Ann Jones: Do you want to end with something more optimistic than that? (laughter)

Mary Bradford: Actually, it's pretty optimistic. I think if the park service recognizes that – let me back up a little bit. Some of the same conditions exist for the employees that existed when I started in '67. I've been listening here at this conference to people talking about opportunity for advancement. Getting ahead. Being appreciated. Housing. I also hear them talk about the great fun it is to work outdoors. How much they like the mission, which is what motivated me. How much opportunity there is to really do something you can be proud to tell people you do. That can be harnessed by the park service. That's the thing that the park service needs to really be committed to doing. You can learn from the past. I don't believe you have to reject it. But I do think that you probably are going to have to bust up almost the entire way you pay, hire, and expect people to perform. I mean, I think the park service is well on its way to understanding that now. I hope they develop the tools to actually accomplish it. I worry that the climate in Washington is so poisoned, it's hard.

Mary Bradford: There's one other thing, which I've never told to anybody officially. For many years I thought it was important that the National Park Service remain part of the Department of Interior. There was that big budget, there was a lot of space, there was tradition, there was all the rest that seemed to be, it was part and parcel. You were part of the Department of the Interior with other land management agencies.

Mary Bradford: I worked for almost nine years for a local park district. I had more money, more freedom, and more ability – I was director of a park district – more money, more freedom and more ability to accomplish the goals of the organization: the resource management, the visitor goals, and it could change on a dime because we were independent. We had a board we reported to, but that was it.

Mary Bradford: And I think it's time for the National Park Service to leave the Department of the Interior.

Lu Ann Jones: How would that be accomplished?

Mary Bradford: I don't know. There are probably a couple of models you could do. It could be within the Department of the Interior but be more independent. And I'm admitting that I was wrong for years. I thought that was – when anybody talked about independence of the National Park Service, I thought oh, yeah, then you'll be forgotten and you won't get any budget. But I've changed my mind. I think that is one of these things that somebody ought to explore. Can they report to a board? It happens all over the country. State parks, local parks. They often report to a park board. San Francisco's a perfect example. Golden, there's a board, you know, that goes right to the mayor. You don't have to go through some department of public works in the local government. If you can have that you can, people don't want to, you wouldn't have your money that you collect in fees being dispersed all around the government. Or people taking it, or offsetting one thing against another. You would have a strong voice. And you might be able to accomplish some things that you can't accomplish now within the very rigid OPM personnel structure, for example. You would have more freedom to buy things on the open market. You may not have to do the whole GSA, you know, takes forever thing. Some things would happen more quickly.

Mary Bradford: I think a real blockbusting way of approaching the park service would be useful at this point in time. I don't know if that's politically correct. But I'd be willing to help make it happen, if they ever get the will to do it. Because the fact of the matter is, we're the luckiest people in the world. We get to manage the places people go to on vacation, and the resources that define what America is. That's a great job.

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. Well, thank you very much. This has just been great. This has been great.

Mary Bradford: I don't know, I had no idea what I was going to say when I walked in here. I'm in trouble now with that last one, right? (laughs) I thank you for listening. I really appreciate it.

Lu Ann Jones: It's my pleasure. I mean I really, I've just heard some great stories as part of this project.

Mary Bradford: The whole thing. Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: Absolutely.

Mary Bradford: Do we all have stories?

Lu Ann Jones: Oh, yeah.

Mary Bradford: Could I say one more thing?

Lu Ann Jones: Sure.

Mary Bradford: I want to give a shout out to people who were always good to me in my career, because there was rarely a chance to do that. I want to say nice things, I already did, about Rock Comstock?

Lu Ann Jones: Is it RB?

Mary Bradford: R-o-c

Lu Ann Jones: R-o-c

Mary Bradford: K. R-o-c-k. Rock Comstock. He's passed away. He went on to work with the Appalachian Trail Project. I want to say good things about the people who taught me a lot, even if they didn't know they were teaching me. I mean, I had some managers who were not on the job, really. They hated what they were doing, and they were not visible. But they gave me the leeway to be them for a while. I wasn't getting paid it, but I actually learned a lot that way.

Mary Bradford: I'd like to say nice things about Jack Morehead, Bob Barbee, John Cook – he promoted a lot of women. He had his issues, of course, but he always did right by me. And I have no problem with the man. I have no problem with many, many people in the service who came out of that whole western culture, because as I say, I respect that that's their culture and I learned a lot about them from the park service.

Mary Bradford: Karen Wade, I always thought managed to – I loved her attitude, her calmness. I always wanted to be that person. I'm more animated. I'd always try to emulate some of the things that she taught me.

Mary Bradford: I would say that there were people large and small. Those maintenance guys in Santa Fe, I learned a lot from them. They were super. They're probably still around. I should look them up. Many people who were kind to me over the years in the park service. Bob Stanton. Yeah. Lots of people. But I learned from people like Ann Belkov, who didn't take anything from anybody, you know? How she stood up for things that she thought were important, and made a good career out of that.

Mary Bradford: There are people that I admire, and I'll probably think of 30 more when I walk out. But I wanted to give them a shout out.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, I appreciate that. Just because we're going to stop now, we can communicate through email, or you're still in Silver Spring, right? For a while?

Mary Bradford: We're actually in the process of moving to Destin.

Lu Ann Jones: Yes.

Mary Bradford: We're going right down. Oh, my neighbor in Silver Spring is a producer for NPR.

Lu Ann Jones: Really?

Mary Bradford: I heard you say that in your presentation this morning. Do you listen to NPR?

Lu Ann Jones: Yes.

Mary Bradford: Do you ever listen to a show called *The Splendid Table?*

Lu Ann Jones: Yes.

Mary Bradford: Sally Swift produces it. Yeah, Sally's actually watching our house while we're here. So, I can ask her. If you're really serious about getting your podcast or something on NPR, I'll be glad to ask her. But you let me know.

Lu Ann Jones: I will.

Mary Bradford: I don't want to presume for Sally. She's pretty busy. But she could probably get an in for you.

Lu Ann Jones: Thank you.

Mary Bradford: So, there's that. Okay.

[END OF TRACK 2]

[START OF TRACK 3]

Lu Ann Jones: We can do that. So, this is Mary and Lu Ann again.

Mary Bradford: I just thought of another name I want to give a shout out to, and that's Russ Dickinson. Throughout my career, and then later, when I was on the Eastern National Board, he was always extremely helpful to me and provided good guidance, insight and just good humor about everything. I liked him a lot.

Lu Ann Jones: Can I just ask you—

Mary Bradford: Sure.

Lu Ann Jones: So, Roger Kennedy brought you on board.

Mary Bradford: He did.

Lu Ann Jones: What did you think of him as a—

Mary Bradford: Associate director?

Lu Ann Jones: Well as a, when he was the director.

Mary Bradford: Oh, when he was director. Yes. Well, Roger, he ended up being in like an assisted living or something in Montgomery County, Maryland, and I was his director of parks there. So, I would go over and still see him after I retired. So, I had a good relationship. That just says I had a good relationship with Roger and Frances. I was at his funeral when he passed away. What I thought about Roger was that Roger was, he had a kind of a jumpy attention span in many ways. A very smart fellow, very erudite and could write beautifully. And very prolific writer and had done a lot. But as a manager, he knew what he wanted to do but he couldn't – let me put it this way. He thought he was going to be the education director. He ended up being the reorganization director, and I think that was a course, probably a poor course to take. When you do a reorganization, it often takes a couple of years, at least, for it to settle down. You're merging incompatible cultures, and you have to focus on that fully. Once he decided to reorganize, he gave up a lot of his time in office to the reorganization and solving the associated bumps and bruises that come with reorganization. I don't think he ever got the chance to be the education director he wanted to be. I think his heart was in the right place. He had a lot of energy.

Mary Bradford: I would say the most interesting director I worked for was Bill Mott. Talk about energy. He'd come out of a local park district, like I had the experience with when I retired. And he understood how you had to engage your communities around the parks, in a way. I think, Bill Mott, what am I saying? I'm saying his name wrong. Bill Mott had a way of understanding that without the communities you didn't have support for the park system, and I liked that about him. He got all caught up in Yellowstone fires and the wolf reintroduction.

Mary Bradford: Yeah, I've seen a lot of directors up close and personal. Walked into their offices. Many of, probably more than most people here have.

Mary Bradford: Jim Ridenour, his big thing was the thinning of the blood. He did not, he couldn't believe we kept acquiring new areas when we couldn't take care of what we had. My response to that internally always was, let's just get more resources to those, because the need never goes away. I didn't believe we should pass up the opportunity if it was nationally significant. I kind of didn't agree with him on that. But his idea was to try to get a whole lot more into the backlog. So, he tried to get more money into the backlog to take care of what we had. So, each one of the directors had something that they could focus on that was helpful to the National Park Service. Each of them maybe got a little derailed by circumstances, which is why the director's job is so incredibly hard, and why I never aspired to that. I think you can have all the – I've gotten off-track here – but you can have all the goodwill that you want and maybe a purpose in mind. Maybe you have three things that you want to accomplish, and you're lucky if you get one of them. I think Roger ran into that when there was too much with the reorganization. But others might have a different point of view.

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. Thank you very much.

[END OF TRACK 3]

[END OF INTERVIEW]