

National Park Service (NPS) History Collection

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



Mark Maciha
October 24, 2014

Interview conducted by Jeremy Kaufman
Transcribed by Teresa Bergen
Digitized by Marissa Lindsey

This digital transcript contains updated pagination, formatting, and editing for accessibility and compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Interview content has not been altered.
The original typed transcript is preserved in the NPS History Collection.

The release form for this interview is on file at the NPS History Collection.

NPS History Collection
Harpers Ferry Center
PO Box 50
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
HFC_Archivist@nps.gov

ANPR Oral History Project

Mark Maciha

24 October 2014

Interview conducted by
Jeremy Kaufman

Transcribed by
Teresa Bergen

The narrator has reviewed and corrected this transcript.

Audiofile: MACIHA Mark 24 Oct 2014

[START OF TRACK 1]

Jeremy Kaufman: This is the October 24, 2014 interview of Mark—

Mark Maciha: Maciha.

Jeremy Kaufman: Maciha, Mark Maciha by Jeremy Kaufman, for the Association of National Park Rangers Oral History Project, Estes Park, Colorado, Ranger Rendezvous 37. So, if you could first just state when and where you were born?

Mark Maciha: Born in Fullerton, California, in 1960.

Jeremy Kaufman: And is that where you were raised?

Mark Maciha: Yes.

Jeremy Kaufman: And growing up, what were some of your major interests, hobbies, as a child?

Mark Maciha: I was really involved in Boy Scouting. And that influenced my career choice probably more than anything else. I sought a career that I could actually get paid to do Boy Scout stuff. It didn't quite work out that way, but it was close.

Jeremy Kaufman: What about Boy Scouting did you enjoy?

Mark Maciha: Getting outdoors and camping and growing up in an urban area, it was especially important to get away from that and get a break.

Jeremy Kaufman: All right. So, you were in an urban area.

Mark Maciha: Mm hmm.

Jeremy Kaufman: So, what was your relationship then, as you said, with the outdoors? Any, growing up any sort of knowledge of the park service, what that agency was doing at the time?

Mark Maciha: Interestingly, not. Our family went camping a lot. We went camping with a group on a monthly basis. A lot of camping with Boy Scouts. But primarily private campgrounds or local, regional parks. It wasn't until I was 10 that we got to Sequoia for a week. And then I really didn't explore the parks until I started working for the NPS.

Jeremy Kaufman: What about the outdoors that really spoke to you, being from an urban environment?

Mark Maciha: It was a place of refuge, and a place of meaning for me. And challenge. A lot of the Boy Scout trips were backpacking and challenging in nature. I sought that in a career.

Jeremy Kaufman: What was your home neighborhood like? You said urban.

Mark Maciha: Santa Ana, California. Lived on a cul de sac. Streetlights and all that. Spent a lot of time outside, working. Playing tag. Football in the street.

We had a swimming pool in the back, so neighbors were over quite a bit. But I liked being outside.

Jeremy Kaufman: Parents' professions?

Mark Maciha: My dad worked for a land development company, actually, The Irvine Company. Originally a Spanish land grant that transitioned from agriculture into development as Orange County exploded. My mom stayed at home and dealt with my two brothers and I for most of the time I was at home. And then she took employment about the time I left.

Jeremy Kaufman: And what about in school? What were some of your chief interests? On the academic side of things.

Mark Maciha: High school, I was editor of my high school yearbook. Photography. And again, that had a link to the outdoors. My high school had an air force junior ROTC program that formed a lot of my perspectives on leadership. And it fit nicely with the park service and the uniformed appearance in service.

Jeremy Kaufman: Coming out of high school, what was on the horizon for you in terms of your plans or aspirations?

Mark Maciha: Back up just slightly. When I was 15, we took the traditional two-week family vacation in 1976 along with everyone else, I think that's still probably the peak visitation year for the park service. And it was seeing Grand Canyon for the first time that really sealed the deal with me. So, the next couple of years in high school, that's what I had my sights set on. I worked for YCC on the Cleveland National Forest right out of high school. Went to college. Struggled with that. And then they offered me a GS-2 position at Petrified Forest. And after some thought, I took that and left college early and started my career.

Jeremy Kaufman: So, to back up to that trip to the Grand Canyon, did you have any contact with rangers that you remember?

Mark Maciha: I did.

Jeremy Kaufman: And what were those interactions like?

Mark Maciha: At the time, the main visitor center was where headquarters is today. And an interpretive ranger took five minutes out of his day to walk with my family that short distance from the back of the visitors' center to the rim. And I'm sure he had no idea of the power of his influence. And it was just that, it wasn't anything fancy. It was just being with us, and escorting us essentially out to the rim, that inspired me.

Jeremy Kaufman: You've mentioned YCC work? What was involved in that work?

Mark Maciha: That was interesting. It was a residential YCC camp again, on the Cleveland National Forest. Up at six in the morning for PT. Frankly, welfare food. We made our own peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. It was the USDA surplus meat that they served us for dinner. Back breaking

work hauling rocks, building gabions in the old green fire packs. No padding or anything. Heavy trail work. Probably in the best shape of my entire life. And again, I found that really rewarding. And it was probably another moment in time that I said yeah, I want to do this. Selected to return as a youth leader, but got that job at Petrified the same year, so I took that route.

Jeremy Kaufman: The GS-2 – what was your job title?

Mark Maciha: Fee collection. Or park aide. Fee collection at the Rainbow Forest entrance station.

Jeremy Kaufman: Did you have any expectations coming into that first job in terms of this is a first park service job, what are the next steps? I mean that first job, what was really something you were looking toward?

Mark Maciha: I didn't know what to expect. My exposure to the National Park Service had been quite limited. And I had no idea what they did. I spent a lot of off time riding with the patrol rangers. We had kind of a blended operation in fee collection and interp, which was great. So, you didn't get too burned out doing any one thing. I got exposed to the fire suppression side of it and the emergency services. And that was most appealing to me. And so, by the end of that season, I decided that was the route that I'd eventually take.

Jeremy Kaufman: Did you have any sort of formal training? Or was it just a matter of being exposed to different elements?

Mark Maciha: No real formal training. We had a week's worth of seasonal orientation and they kicked us loose. And it was actually the other rangers that were working there that really watched out for me. J.D. Swed, I tied in with here. Joe Evans. I mean, I could name a whole bunch of people, Chris Andress that were there. Again, they took five minutes out of their day to say, "Hey, try this." Or, "Hey, this is how this works." And probably tried to be like a sponge. And being receptive and interested helped a lot. Again, I spent a lot of time riding with the patrol rangers to get a feel for that. But it was just, yeah, that individual attention that I got from all those guys.

Jeremy Kaufman: The fact that you didn't really know, I guess, too much about the park service going in, what sort of challenges presented themselves to you, if any, that first job you had?

Mark Maciha: The short duration of the work. By the end of the summer, I was done. And I struggled with my first year in college. And I decided to take a year off and regroup. And then I went back. So, I don't know if it was a directly work-related challenge. But it was a struggle. I went to a college prep high school that was fairly intense. And I think I was just burned out.

Jeremy Kaufman: What were some of the things you learned as you were, for example, going on patrol with the patrol rangers, getting advice from people you mentioned? You said you were sort of like a sponge. Did some of those things really stick with you?

- Mark Maciha: Primarily how to deal with people. And again, just watching how they operated. And getting the foundations. And then allowing myself to be directed into some self-study. It's like, okay, well, structural fire's part of the NPS. So, let me find the textbook that deals with that. Or it prompted me to explore more of that on my own. But again, it was those guys taking that interest in me.
- Jeremy Kaufman: Well, once you, you said it was short term, came back, was it Petrified Forest where you returned.
- Mark Maciha: I did. I came back for a second season in fee collection. This time as a GS-3. Big money. (Jeremy Kaufman laughs) Still as a park aide. And again, tried to build on a lot of that experience. I mean, I was doing some training at that time, actually. Kind of got started way back then. And sought out some extra duty assignments. Seems kind of silly, but stuff like testing fire hose. But it beat the heck out of collecting fees. But again, taking advantage of the opportunities that were given to me.
- Jeremy Kaufman: What kind of training? You mentioned.
- Mark Maciha: Fire training. I was starting to help with instruction on that. That's the primary thing that comes to mind for that time period.
- Jeremy Kaufman: So, it seems that you were seeking different things. At this point did you have a certain area that you thought, I want to pursue this more than another area?
- Mark Maciha: It was just the total emergency services side of things. I went to Santa Rosa in 1980. That was in between the first and second season. Later in '80, I got my EMT. I did some search and rescue training up at Santa Rosa. They got me pushed in the right direction and took advantage of that down time to take care of those things.
- Jeremy Kaufman: Any memorable incidents from those early days that you were involved in, like front line duties?
- Mark Maciha: Having a great time talking to people and being able to serve. It was more the interpretive work than anything else. Petrified didn't have a high call volume as far as emergency services went. And it was more the community that was there. I ran into people this week that I haven't seen in 20 plus years. And I know I could call them today and they would be at my rescue. And I'd do the same for them. So, it's that sense of community and bonding that's, I don't know that you could get it anyplace else.
- Jeremy Kaufman: So those early years, getting involved, I ask a lot of people, everyone, really, about the park service mission. And how coming into the agency, how did you interpret that mission statement? A lot of people talk about a dual mission. What was your take, coming into the service? What that agency was meant to do and provide.
- Mark Maciha: Again, I came in without any knowledge of that. I'm sure we covered that in that first week of seasonal training. I don't know that I really understood

it at that time. It took a while to internalize that and make sense of it for myself. But early on, hey, it's a national park. People come to visit. You help the people. Petrified Forest has, or they've had a problem with resource theft. So, I recognized early on that resource protection was a key element there, because it was literally walking away from us. I know they're trying to shift that whole message these days, but yeah, that was a lot of the work there. I guess I started to get it that first season.

Jeremy Kaufman: So, when did you really start to think about, maybe it was further along in your career, but think about the agency's mission and balancing the enjoyment aspect, but also the protection aspect. And how did you balance those in your—

Mark Maciha: That's a good question. I'm not sure that I was really challenged to do that until I got into supervision. District ranger, chief ranger. And was making decisions or informing decisions on special use permits, on recreational use. From Petrified Forest, I went to Lake Mead. And I remember having a discussion with some regional resource manager and being chastised for not taking a more active role in resource protection. And I probably not so politely informed him or asked him to look around him and see the recreational use side of things. And I'm sure I wasn't this tactful. But we were running call to call with short staff. And it was impossible to even touch upon that.

Mark Maciha: My next duty station was Death Valley. The Desert Protection Act was under consideration at that time. And there was an active consideration between preservation, conservation and use as we considered lands for wilderness designation and leaving roads open or closing them and a lot of those kinds of issues.

Mark Maciha: And some of that happened, I'll take some of that back. Some of that did happen at Lake Mead. Alan O'Neill was a superintendent and came in and said well these guys, 90 some percent of our land is not under water, so we should focus on that. And he really built the resource program. But as a GS-7 field ranger, there was no time or energy for that. I mean, obviously the law enforcement contacts worked to partially protect the resource. But we were protecting people from people more than anything else.

Jeremy Kaufman: So, law enforcement, was that a time when you then moved more into law enforcement at Lake Mead?

Mark Maciha: Well, then, and I'm going to confuse all this, but in between all that, I did three years at Grand Canyon, got my commission out at Desert View. And then went back to Petrified as a permanent. Got in through the coop program. So, once I graduated from college, they took care of me at Petrified Forest and went back there for three years. So, I got off track there a little bit.

- Jeremy Kaufman: So, coming back to Petrified Forest, then, what did you, obviously the commission, training, what did you bring back then that made your job different in any way from the early days you worked there?
- Mark Maciha: Getting some more experience, some higher volume experience at Grand Canyon helped. And Lake Mead did the same later on. But it helped put things in perspective. And if it's not on fire, if it's still breathing, if it's not bleeding, then we can probably take a better approach to things. Not everything's an emergency. And I think starting out, everything's an emergency in your mind. Get out of Santa Rosa or FLETC and it's hard to put things in perspective. So, having the higher volume experience at Grand Canyon helped. And just more time and maturity. When I came back to Petrified. And having a three-year break, I could take somewhat of an outsider's look, coming back. Certainly, some of the people are the same and the resource was the same at that time. But older and wiser.
- Jeremy Kaufman: What was the process like getting your commission?
- Mark Maciha: Not a problem with Santa Rosa, getting the seasonal commission. Really the first class I applied for they had a vacancy. And so, I was accepted into that. When I took the permanent position, I came back to Petrified Forest as a GS-4 in the entrance station, doing the same exact job that I had as a GS-2. And the supervision at the time said, "We'll take care of you." Six months later, they advertised for a law enforcement position that they anticipated. And so, I got into that. And a year and a half later, I was at FLETC.
- Jeremy Kaufman: You were at FLETC. And so how long were you there at FLETC?
- Mark Maciha: Nine weeks was the training period.
- Jeremy Kaufman: Can you talk about that training and what you went for?
- Mark Maciha: We got the brainwashing when we first got there. And it was you know this is the cutting edge of law enforcement. That whole story. And honestly, it was no different or even better than the training we had received at Santa Rosa. Just a little bit longer and a little more in depth on some topics. But I'm not sure that I came out of there any better prepared than when I went in. but I'm sure I gained some knowledge and everything. But there wasn't any major ah-ha moment or any substantial change.
- Jeremy Kaufman: So, when you said brainwashing, like what exactly are you referring to?
- Mark Maciha: Well, the first day you get there and it's a typical in-processing situation. The medical checks and then the director of the center gets up and they herd everybody into the auditorium and brag about their facility and the quality of training, and set some expectations that, I don't know. I'm not sure that they were met, frankly.
- Jeremy Kaufman: Do you know, or are you aware of how things at FLETC have evolved? In all these years, really.

- Mark Maciha: Being now involved with the seasonal law enforcement training program, we stay on top of that. And it's longer. I don't know that it's better. And I understand the length. They have a captive audience, so let's get as much done as we can while they're there, for economy purposes. But I would like to think that the field training aspect of that has improved things. My field training at Grand Canyon was, well, we'll start at one o'clock this afternoon. I'll ride with you until three. I'm off at three. I'll listen to the radio. Don't get into trouble. Have a nice night. You can sign off at ten o'clock tonight. That was my field training. Dramatic changes since then. I think that's a good thing. I think they still struggle with curriculum. I don't have the perfect answer.
- Jeremy Kaufman: Well, what do you think they could improve upon curriculum wise?
- Mark Maciha: For us specifically right now is the quality. Simple things like typos in the student texts and lesson plans. And recently I, through my education, I found that they are trying to teach too much. It's like just tell me how to tell time. Don't tell me how the watch works. And we tried to capture it all for folks, and I think they get overwhelmed. And then they get out and it's like, oh, no, what do I do with all this? I think if they stuck to the fundamentals and the basic training and then expanded the refresher training to cover some of those topics in more depth, that might be a little bit better.
- Jeremy Kaufman: So, I'm sorry I'm going to be jumping around a little bit.
- Mark Maciha: Well, I'm all over the place, too.
- Jeremy Kaufman: So, to go back to Death Valley and the Desert Protection Act, could you just briefly summarize how that act came into discussion, what it was supposed to be doing, things of that nature?
- Mark Maciha: Okay. From my perspective, I remember listening on the radio in the entrance station to Petrified Forest. Senator Feinstein and I forget the other legislators involved; they had been talking about this for ten plus years. To expand Death Valley, to expand Joshua Tree. Figuring out what to do with Mojave Desert. And that was managed by BLM at the time. So that eventually came over as a preserve to the NPS. Designated a number of wilderness areas, including wilderness within Death Valley. And I knew all that was going on. Being from California, I had an interest in it. I'm kind of a desert rat at heart. So, I stayed on top of that issue. So, getting to Death Valley was an exciting time in that park's history to be involved with that. And all of a sudden, all those civics classes in high school came to be really important to figure out how legislation was passed. And oftentimes we'd be in the chief ranger's office and we would get a call from Washington to say, "Well, what about the Green Water Valley Road? How important is that, that that's in wilderness? Or should we cherry stem it? What should we do with that?"

- Mark Maciha: So, the other district rangers and some of the field rangers and I, we'd sit around the table and pore over the maps and make informed decisions and pass that on up. So, we were very much involved with that. I found that really exciting. And rewarding. And it was, I got there in '89. That act was passed in '94, as I recall. So, there was a lot of discussion that went on. And a lot of concessions that were made to get that land designated.
- Mark Maciha: And it boiled down to I remember hearing a story, there was a senator from Illinois that her garage door opener wouldn't work that day and she almost missed the vote. And that would have killed the entire deal.
- Jeremy Kaufman: Wow. (laughs)
- Mark Maciha: So, it boiled down to things that tight. And things like the Green Water Valley Road, or how the Bureau of Land Management had managed some of these lands in the past, and what we were going to do with it, and then what wilderness designation, how that would shape the recreational use. And then how the locals felt about that. And even in a good way, the Death Valley '49ers, I'll call them a special interest group. But they had an annual celebration out there. It started in 1949 was the 100th anniversary of statehood. And then it turned into an annual arts festival. It was really cool. But some of those old folks were accustomed to recreating in a certain way. And jeep tours and horses and all that. So that impacted those folks as well. You know, try to work through those special interests and traditional recreational use. It was a good learning experience, for sure.
- Jeremy Kaufman: So, in what ways did you engage the community, the locals, the guests, things like this. You know, you can't ignore the people. (laughs) So how was that engagement?
- Mark Maciha: In very general terms, I would call it reassuring folks that okay, this transition's going to be big for us. We're adding a million and a half acres to this park. It's not going to change overnight. Work with us. So, a collaborative, cooperative kind of approach. And frankly some encouragement to get out there and see these places in their traditional means and prior to that legislation going through. And working with those folks, keeping them informed through the whole process.
- Jeremy Kaufman: And how important is that to really have this community involvement? How important is it to keep people in the loop when you're trying to do something this major?
- Mark Maciha: It's critical. I don't believe in the past we recognized that. I think we could get away with operating in a vacuum. And at that time, and certainly today, everybody cares. And it's what's happening in your backyard. How's it going to influence me? And listening to those folks. I mean, they have valid concerns, and we should consider those. Just not all bad.
- Jeremy Kaufman: So, Death Valley's 1989?
- Mark Maciha: '89 to '96

- Jeremy Kaufman: So, were you at this point in the supervisory role?
- Mark Maciha: At the ripe old age of 28 years old, I was a GS-9 district ranger.
- Jeremy Kaufman: At Death Valley.
- Mark Maciha: Yes.
- Jeremy Kaufman: That was your first supervisory role.
- Mark Maciha: Mm hmm.
- Jeremy Kaufman: Okay. So, going into that, did you come into a supervisory position with any sort of, what's the word, (laughs) thought process of how to supervise? Did you have a, the word I'm not getting.
- Mark Maciha: I know where you're headed. My choice to go to Lake Mead from Petrified Forest was solely based on the need to expand my experience and to have some credible experience. Because I wasn't going to get it at Petrified Forest. And my supervisors were kind enough to suggest that I move on to get something like that. So, I went to a high-volume area to gain that credible experience. Going into Death Valley was kind of intimidating. I was 28 years old. Some of the folks I supervised were twice my age. All of a sudden, I had thirty plus people with fee collection and emergency services. And, at the start, 800,000 acres to deal with. And I had done what I could for personal development. I took a supervision class through the community college in Holbrook. And had done what I could. Listened to my dad. Listened to other mentors. And at the same time, another district ranger was hired, Dale Thompson, who'd been around quite a while. And he was a great one to talk to and kind of bounce ideas across. And it was kind of trial and error.
- Jeremy Kaufman: "Philosophy" is the word I was looking for. Management philosophy.
- Mark Maciha: Oh, philosophy. Okay. Let people do their jobs. And I've held true to that, I think, through my career. Take care of them and trust them to do the job.
- Jeremy Kaufman: So, what's in your view are characteristics that make a good leader, a good supervisor, a good manager?
- Mark Maciha: Listening skills. Listening to the troops. They know what's going on. They're in the field. They're on the front lines. Someone that takes care of their needs. And if you tell me that you need some equipment to make your job more effective, I'll certainly consider it and usually just go do that. And I think the whole thing about leadership is inspiring people to do things when they might not want to do them on their own. And to inspire them to do the right thing all the time. And I think that's where the challenge is, is being that inspiration. I think anybody can manage.
- Mark Maciha: And we had a discussion today about where are the leaders in the park service today, and can you name one person that is truly inspirational and captures that. I'm not sure that we've got that today.

- Jeremy Kaufman: Coming in as your first supervisory job, as you said, all these people you're now supervising and everything else, bigger park, Death Valley. What were you thinking would be some of the biggest challenges you would face in that new role as a supervisor?
- Mark Maciha: My youth, for one thing. Again, 28 years old. And at the time, ANPR had put out an article, and at the time there were six employees in the National Park Service, GS-9 or above, that were supervisors and under the age of 30. Two of us were at Death Valley. The other was my counterpart in interpretation. And we both came from Northern Arizona University, and that was kind of interesting. Yeah, my youth.
- Mark Maciha: And then I had, I guess, some idea, some philosophy, but I never tested that. So, I had the theory in my head, but I'd never put it in practice.
- Jeremy Kaufman: And then at this time, as you're moving up to this position, are you getting more in tune with that NPS mission that we talked about earlier? As you said, as a GS-7, you didn't really have time to—
- Mark Maciha: Yeah. I think I was in tune with it at Lake Mead. But it was heavily, heavily weighted toward the recreation side of the mission. That was a National Recreation Area so that was part of it. And I'm not sure that I could see my way toward preservation so much at that location. But at Death Valley, it really started to come together. And how do we make these things fit. We did a fair amount of special use permits, filming permits. The Death Valley 49ers. We had some traditional activities that fit pretty well, for the most part. And some of that philosophy changed during the time I was there. Not always popular. But there were horse trips that they would start at one end of the valley and progress to the other over six days. And this was all a part of the 49ers events. Well in the past, they had just taken a backhoe out into the backcountry. Not a wilderness area, but the back country. Dug a hole. Dumped the horse manure in there, covered it up, and went on. And we changed that practice. Again, they really didn't get it or didn't like it. So, there was a shift there. But again, with time maturity and the agency, and experience and making those or informing those decisions, it starts to settle in.
- Jeremy Kaufman: What other major issues besides the Desert Protection Act were brought up while you were at Death Valley? Specific to that park?
- Mark Maciha: Well, one of my rangers down at the south end of the park discovered a meth lab that had been operated by Hell's Angels for about a year and a half. I'll save you the long story on that. But that prompted the transition to semi-automatic pistols for the park service. We were still carrying revolvers. The short side of it is we were heavily outgunned in that situation. We were very fortunate in that no one was hurt, and no shots were exchanged. But when we went through that site, the sniper rifles and the capabilities that those guys had could have been deadly. And through the grace of God and some other things, none of that happened.

- Mark Maciha: So that prompted a big shift in at least the weapons that we carry in law enforcement. And that was a big deal. When I started in '79, it was two-inch pistols on a standard trouser belt. And some parks had different practices of either keeping those hidden during the daytime. And then in 1980, when I came back, it was a full-duty belt with a four-inch weapon. And at the time, the agency was still really fighting this whole concept of law enforcement. And one region I worked after that law enforcement were not two words that were to be spoken about our job. So, I think that started a shift in philosophy in the law enforcement program. Which was a positive thing.
- Jeremy Kaufman: Why do you think it was such, you said those words, you couldn't say those together. Why do you think some people have that mindset?
- Mark Maciha: The tradition. And honestly, we want to present parks as safe havens. We want to present parks as, you know, as a place to be conserved and to be enjoyed. And having a police force or a law enforcement presence, some viewed as incompatible with that. And still, I don't know that that's an element of our work that we really like to, or should, emphasize. Yes, we do it. And we've got marked patrol cars and all the rest of it. But we would rather celebrate, you know, the search and rescue and the fire and the ranger programs and the floating on the river and all those kinds of things rather than that aspect of the job.
- Jeremy Kaufman: So, I was reading in 1991, I believe, you received the Department of Interior Valor Award. Would you be willing to talk about that episode?
- Mark Maciha: Yeah. [pause, getting emotional] Sorry. It was crazy. We had a call. It was 10:45 at night or something like that. And got a report of a couple of guys stranded. And so, we went down to the Furnace Creek Lodge and interviewed this guy. And said, "Well, my buddies are up the side canyon twenty-some miles south." And they'd started out at a place called Dante's View, which is 5,000 feet. And decided to hike downhill to Badwater, which was 282 below sea level, with like a quart of water and a box of crackers or something. They left in the afternoon, and this guy was supposed to find them somehow. I still don't know how that happened. Just because of the terrain and darkness and everything. So, he heard them yelling. Came to call us. We went out, [Dale Antonich, Terry Harris] and I went out. And dry lightning over the place.
- Mark Maciha: We're standing up there and it's starting to rain so hard that the ground is eroding away underneath our feet. And I remember thinking, I don't want to be here. (laughs) It's just, I'm here, we're going to get the job done. But I just do not enjoy this whatsoever.
- Mark Maciha: And we roped them up. And they had hit a dry fall and they couldn't go up and they couldn't go down. So, we got them off of that. Got them out to the vehicles at about four in the morning.

- Mark Maciha: Meanwhile, the Badwater Road had washed out. I was driving a high-clearance Ford Bronco. And we had water up to the doors, trying to get out of there. Drove past a motor home that was stranded out there. And we just said, "Well, you're self-contained. We'll come back for you."
- Mark Maciha: But I think anybody on the staff would have done that. It's just timing and who answered the call that night. So yeah, I look at that and I think well, I'll take that credit. But also use that to take credit for some of the other stuff that I've done. More of a cumulative thing than that one night. But I remember the superintendent talking to us afterwards. My chief had written it up. [pause, emotion] And he says, "Is this accurate?"
- Mark Maciha: I said yeah. And they put it in.
- Jeremy Kaufman: I'll shift to more general than safety issues, obviously things happen regardless of the precautions or how a park talks about how to be safe to the public. The parks you worked at specifically, how do you think those parks then communicated to the public regarding safety and how to enjoy your experience in a safe manner.
- Mark Maciha: Primarily through non-personal interpretation. I'm not sure that there's much of an issue at Petrified Forest, just based on the nature of visitation and road access and all that. Mead was, I mean, we'd have 20,000 people in our district on any given weekend in the summertime. And so, trying to reach that population was especially difficult. And we had a couple of safety signs around. And through our patrols and everything, did our best. I guess given the visitation and everything, we did all right. But could have been more effective. And we didn't have the communication methods we have today. Death Valley, we had a lot of printed material advisories on how to prepare for an off-highway visit. We had a lot of dirt roads that were remote. And most of those folks were fairly well prepared. We had the all-terrain rental vehicles. We called them the low-slung sedan that somebody had tried to drive off on the dirt roads. Or they'd watch a Chevy truck commercial and think they could go bounce in their Chevy truck through the wilderness and survive. They don't show what happens to those trucks at the end of the commercial. So, there was a perception that vehicles could do more than what people were asking them to do.
- Mark Maciha: But overall, the search and rescue incidents at Death Valley were not a function of lack of information. I worked at Carlsbad Caverns after that. And a lot of the cavers were prepared to self-rescue, because they would have to get out to get help. And through a permitting system there, we took care of a lot of those safety issues. And overall, it was effective enough, just based on call volume.
- Jeremy Kaufman: Do you think now with all the social media and everything, do you think it's easier these days for parks to get that information out to the public?
- Mark Maciha: I would think. In that time, if someone wanted park information without the internet, they would send a letter, "Dear superintendent, please send

me a park map and brochure” and all this. And so, we’d drop it in the mail and send it to them and they’d read it. And now you can get online and go to NPS.gov DEVA [referring to the web address for Death Valley], and there’s the precautions on off-highway use, there’s current weather information. I could pull up a live picture of the visitors’ center at Yellowstone right now and tell you what the weather’s doing. So, I think the capability’s so greatly improved, I think people are more likely to engage in that, because it’s easy. Rather than the trip planning that we did as a kid.

Jeremy Kaufman: So, from Death Valley, you moved to Carlsbad?

Mark Maciha: Mm hmm.

Jeremy Kaufman: And what was your role?

Mark Maciha: Initially they called it a law enforcement specialist. It was a GS-11, essentially a district ranger, but there was only one district. Then I was promoted to a 12 chief after some reorganization a couple years later.

Jeremy Kaufman: Going from – I’m no expert on any of these places.

Mark Maciha: Okay.

Jeremy Kaufman: But going from a place like Death Valley to Carlsbad, and you have a cave environment, what are some of the differences and similarities of trying to manage those types of parks?

Mark Maciha: Well, similarity was with the desert. Although Carlsbad felt like a tropical rainforest compared to Death Valley. Just because of the vegetation. But one of the biggest challenges I had at Carlsbad was the protective concerns of the cave resources staff. And that there’s a unique culture there that they didn’t want anybody knowing the locations of the caves, to protect them. Even to the extent of not letting the chief ranger know where the caves were in the park. And so, by hook and by crook, I had to steal that information so that if we had an emergency call to some cave, I would know what they were talking about.

Mark Maciha: Visitation was completely different. Essentially a day use park compared to an overnight or multiple-night use park. In a lot of ways, it was much easier for me having worked at Lake Mead, being a high-volume area, Death Valley or relatively high-volume in EMS. And going to Carlsbad and the perception there among the staff was, well, everything’s an emergency. “Oh, well, Memorial Day’s coming!”

Mark Maciha: I said, “Well, how many jet skis do people bring here?” “Well, none.” “Okay. Well, how many big boats do they bring?” “Uh, none.” “How many big coolers, kegs of beer do they bring?” “Well, none.”

Mark Maciha: I said, “Okay. Well, let’s relax, then. We have a parking issue. Okay. Let’s go deal with the parking and manage that.” And you get that comfort level having worked higher-volume parks. So, I firmly believe in doing that.

Probably could have worked at Lake Mead a little bit longer. But the volume got to me there, too.

Mark Maciha: In Carlsbad, I probably had more of an opportunity to work on park-wide issues, to a certain extent. At Death Valley, with the Desert Protection Act, I did. But it was more of the management team decision making that I got involved in there, which was interesting to me. More the budget administration, that sort of thing. But the visitation, people pretty much behave themselves. And I would attribute that to design of the trails and the guided nature of many of the tours. So, through design we took care of a lot of the problems, and really didn't have too many issues. I worked a murder there, which was pretty interesting. That was national news for a while. But yeah, overall, Carlsbad was a much simpler place to manage.

Jeremy Kaufman: You did mention culture there. And talking to people both part of this project and not, just in general, the park service, of course, does have some long-standing traditions. Parks have their own sometimes ways of going about things. So as someone in a management position, supervisor position, how does one effectively, if culture needs to be changed, how does one effectively do that?

Mark Maciha: Not quickly. Carlsbad, I came into, it was the smallest place I ever worked, 50,000 acres. And it was a small park with a big park attitude. And more what we call lifers. Born, raised, worked, died there. And it contributes to a narrow view on the world. And so, coming in, sharing that there are other ways to do work and to not cave into the culture. That's sometimes a hard decision and a hard process. And it's just traditional scheduling, it's just all of operations, this was the way we've always done it. And to come in as the new guy and say, "Well, how about this?" Or, "What about that?" Or, "Why are you doing this?" And incrementally creating change, both in operations and the culture. And I like to think I influenced that a little bit there.

Jeremy Kaufman: What were some of the issues? Maybe not as big as the Desert Protection Act. But some issues that you faced at Carlsbad?

Mark Maciha: A lot of exploration going on at the time. New caves were being discovered. Oil and gas was fluctuating at the time. But they had implemented a cave protection zone that extended beyond our boundary onto the BLM. Working cooperatively with BLM and the forest service on fire management. And moving away from, this is our boundary, this is where the line stops, this is how we'll manage on this side of the fence, to an ecosystem management approach to fire. Cave management.

Mark Maciha: At the time, it had been recently designated as a World Heritage Site, which was poorly understood by the locals. And there was this perception that the UN was going to come in, you know. The white helicopters. And it was really kind of silly, but the honest problem was, we had done a poor job of informing them what that meant. And it was a really cool thing, and it had nothing to do with UN patrols there. But that was the perception

working with ranchers there. And both at Death Valley and Carlsbad, working with long-term residents, saying well, you're going to cycle in and out of here in three years. So, if we don't like what you're saying, we'll just wait until the next guy gets here. And not seeing, from their perspective I really learned from that. And going out and just talking to those folks. Having a cup of coffee, spending the time to get to know them.

Mark Maciha: And then, eventually, working some cooperative fire projects with the local ranchers. Say, "Hey, this will improve your rangeland. It will improve our ability to manage fire within the park. Hey, let's go do this and make that happen." So that was rewarding.

Jeremy Kaufman: And you also mentioned you got more into budgets at that time?

Mark Maciha: Mm hmm.

Jeremy Kaufman: So, in dealing with the budget, looking at numbers, how does that impact how you look at the broader management of the park site?

Mark Maciha: I'm not sure that I'll directly answer your question. But my operation had been severely under-funded. Vehicles, equipment, personnel. Disproportionate from some other aspects of the operation. So, I, the first two years, I over-spent my budget. By tens of thousands. And the argument that was presented back to my bosses was okay, what should I stop doing? And this is the right way to do this. What we have done in the past is not appropriate. And this is the cost of doing business. So, this is what I need. And I got the budget increase. So, I guess leveraging policy versus the budget process or the allocation of funding in the past.

Mark Maciha: And certainly, you get a chance to see the greater needs of the park through that process, because people are quite protective when it comes to money. And someone had advised me one time that my best approach would be to argue another division's position equally as my own. So, if I can understand the maintenance position on something, or interp or admin, understand where they're coming from, understand the bigger picture, that would help me to make a more effective argument or suggestion for my operation. And maybe back off on some stuff. So that helped a lot in seeing the bigger picture and then helping the park.

Jeremy Kaufman: So, you're at Carlsbad from when to when?

Mark Maciha: Got there in '96. And I left the chief ranger's position in '05 and took a detail through the Intergovernmental Personnel Mobility Act of 1970 to a fire training center that was being built in Carlsbad. And then I retired in '07 after that was done.

Jeremy Kaufman: And that was like a 10 million dollar [unclear] construction.

Mark Maciha: Yes.

Jeremy Kaufman: And so, can you like how the process of that building.

- Mark Maciha: Sure. In 2000, we had a pipeline explosion that killed an extended family of twelve. And as a part of the settlement from that, El Paso Natural Gas provided 10 million dollars to construct a fire training center to serve those that had responded to that family. And I had been tracking that as the chief ranger, engaged in some of the early planning discussion. And an opportunity presented itself for me to be detailed to that project, to oversee the construction and initial operations of it. And that fit in with the master's degree that I had in fire emergency management. And the public safety background and frankly it was the highest level of education of anyone else in that town with that experience base.
- Mark Maciha: So worked through the conceptual design, the construction. Initial year or so of operations. And then the two-year detail was up. And so, the through the core operations process, I was given an incentive to leave the park service in '07. So, did that, and then went to work for that training center for a couple of years.
- Jeremy Kaufman: You also got an EDD around—
- Mark Maciha: Yes.
- Jeremy Kaufman: Or working toward that. What was the decision process of going for that degree?
- Mark Maciha: At the time of the training center, I saw myself working more in education and training than doing, probably having passed my prime in the fieldwork. So, I sought a master's in education. And frankly to frontload the application process for the doctoral program I got the master's in education in '09, and then just graduated in May of '14 with a doctorate in education.
- Jeremy Kaufman: So currently you are the director of Northern Arizona University Park Ranger Training Program. For how long?
- Mark Maciha: About three and a half years now.
- Jeremy Kaufman: And what are your main duties, functions?
- Mark Maciha: The primary function is to manage the seasonal law enforcement training program at NAU. We're now one of seven programs in the country. It requires frequent contact with our staff at FLETC. Coordinating, ensuring all the instruction happens. Ensuring that we meet the accreditation standards. We run two sessions per year. Maximum 26 per session. So, my main function is teaching and coordinating that. I've got a few other duties assigned in that position. But I'm part of the parks and recreation management faculty there.
- Jeremy Kaufman: So, fieldwork versus an actual education curriculum, how do they complement each other? Well, of course fieldwork you get that firsthand experience. So, complement and also in the curriculum, what added benefits does one receive from being in the classroom versus out in the environment?

Mark Maciha: I feel that we have a significant role in shaping the future of the park service. And the way that we hire people in law enforcement, we're the gatekeepers. And if they don't get through us, they don't get into NPS. So, our role is vital in making the right selections to begin with. Training them. Cultural transmission. I'm being careful with that. It's not just a bunch of old war stories about how we screwed stuff up. It's maybe how we should be celebrating the stuff that goes right, rather than celebrating the stuff that we messed up.

Mark Maciha: Teaching, you have to stay on top of your topic matter. I left FLETC and I forgot half that stuff. Because you don't use it in the field. And so now I've got to be on top of my game as far as that's concerned. The challenge is to remain current with what's going on in the field, because I'm not working the field anymore. And there's sometimes a disconnect. We counter that by bringing in active duty sheriff's deputies, rangers, game wardens to provide instruction on those things that are more field based. I focus more on the behavioral science and communications side of things. Again, remaining current, that's important, too.

Jeremy Kaufman: So of course, this is the Association of National Park Rangers project—

Mark Maciha: Yes.

Jeremy Kaufman: So, I will ask when did you join ANPR and for what reasons?

Mark Maciha: I was a sporadic member for a number of years. I saw the benefits. I had talked to a lot of, well, I knew some of the founding members. I saw that ANPR was doing a lot of good things. *Ranger* magazine. Provided more current information on a lot of topics than what the agency does through formal channels. This is my fourth Rendezvous over 27 years. But the chance to reconnect and to recharge. And I talked to somebody the other day that will be a student in our program. I think she got a scholarship from ANPR actually to be here. Deb.

Jeremy Kaufman: Yes. Yes.

Mark Maciha: She is pumped. And it's so cool for me to see someone that excited about the park service, about ANPR, about our program. So, I really like how ANPR sustains the excitement and enthusiasm. Because the day-to-day job sometimes, the mission carries us through a lot. The visitors carry us through a lot. If the visitors get to us, then we can go to our managers, hopefully get some recharge. If our managers are getting to us, we're going to go escape to the field and get recharged from the visitors. And this is just another venue to do that. You know, it certainly gets me pumped up. And I guess perhaps laziness on my part. I didn't really stay active. I just rejoined as a life member a couple of months ago. So, looking forward to maintaining a stronger commitment from here on out.

Jeremy Kaufman: And as you know from the sessions, we've talked a lot about challenges the agency's facing, especially in hiring and what not. Now that you're at the university, how is everything going on in NPS affecting your role now

as an educator, if it does? And do you still try to convey to folks trying to get into, through law enforcement, that these are challenges they'll be facing?

Mark Maciha: You know, I focus on the good things. And it's easy to snivel about days gone by, and the challenges, and even current challenges. I won't sugar-coat that. But it's the best job in the world. I would do it again. And Mike Reynolds was talking this morning about a lot of the issues facing the agency right now. I wrote my dissertation on those very issues. The unfortunate thing is, and I told him to his face today, all of that research was met with silence and some resistance. And it's like okay, if you're calling people to action, then let's act. And let's not have another 12-point plan. Let's not have another strategic plan. And I traced it in my research. Over the last 30 years, we've had six or seven different calls. Well, when are we going to stop calling? When are we going to answer some informed advice and just go do it?

Mark Maciha: And certainly, the director explained a lot of challenges involved in that. And it's not as simplistic as that sounds. But there's some stuff that we can do that doesn't cost anything, or costs very little in time, and can make a big impact. So, my role, I think, is just, in a way, to sing the company song and encourage people to get into this with a dose of realism. And anybody can find problems. It takes a little more effort to find answers. And I've provided answers. And to this point have been ignored. Mike said he would read that on his plane trip home. So hopefully we'll get someplace. And I'll present that tomorrow afternoon here.

Mark Maciha: I mean, that's the frustrating part. I heard Bill Sanders talk to him right after I did. And it's like, you know, we solved this stuff once. We had the answers and you didn't listen, or somebody forgot. And as I look at, I currently take my class out to Petrified Forest. I've got 35 years of run time with seeing how that place works. And I've seen the organizational structure circle around at least once, maybe once and a half. It's like okay, times change. But we keep repeating the same stuff. And we've got to get out of that cycle. And it's going to take some intestinal fortitude to make those decisions. And I'm not sure that that's there.

Jeremy Kaufman: So, then, try to get back to the positive. (laughter)

Mark Maciha: Yes.

Jeremy Kaufman: So, looking forward in your role now and as a member here, what do you see and what do you tell folks coming in to look forward to? How do you really keep that message positive?

Mark Maciha: You know, I'll steal something that John Benjamin said. He was the superintendent of Carlsbad. Just retired. We've got a mission that's as important as national defense. If we didn't have the heritage, why are we overseas fighting wars? There's no reason. If we don't have our heritage,

if we don't have these places, there's no point. We ought to just pack it up and go home. Or let somebody else take us over.

Mark Maciha: So that's how important it is. And we get to do that every single day through whatever means. And that's through keeping the roads open. That's through quality interpretation. It's through law enforcement. It's through everything that we do. Administration bless their souls. It's really important. And it's really cool to be a part of that.

Jeremy Kaufman: So just sort of finish up, wrap up. But throughout, looking back, because this is in a lot of ways a reflective thing, a couple things, two, three, one, whatever you want. Moments in your career that you look to and say, "I am most proud of this achievement, this moment in my career."

Mark Maciha: Just service. Taking care of people when they were really hurting in a place that wasn't familiar. You know, and as mundane as fixing somebody's tire. Or being the family liaison on a search and rescue and talking to those folks and informing them as to what's going on. Dealing with families after fatalities. "What do you need? We're here to do it." And telling them where to go.

Mark Maciha: And I got recharged going out to Petrified last week with a class. And our uniforms look like NPS uniforms, and people ask us questions. And I'm back in interp mode and I loved it. So that's really what it's all about.

Jeremy Kaufman: Well, I thank you very much for sitting down.

Mark Maciha: Thanks for all your time on this, too.

Jeremy Kaufman: Well, thank you and yes, I appreciate it very much.

Mark Maciha: Thanks.

[END OF TRACK 1]

[END OF INTERVIEW]