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Association of National Park Rangers Oral History Project, 2012-2016



Anne and Scott “Dusty” Warner  
October 25, 2014

Interview conducted by Lilli Tichinin  
Transcribed by Thea Marie Garrett  
Digitized by Marissa Lindsey

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

ANNE WARNER

AND

SCOTT "DUSTY" WARNER

By Lilli Tichinin

October 25, 2014

Estes Park, Colorado

Transcribed by Thea Marie Garrett

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## [START OF TRACK 1]

- Lilli Tichinin: All right, so, this is Lilli Tichinin on October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014 here at ANPR [Association of National Park Rangers] Ranger Rendezvous doing interviews for the oral history project. So, if you could each introduce yourselves that would be great.
- Dusty Warner: Okay, my name is Dusty Warner. I'm a retired National Park Service ranger.
- Anne Warner: My name is Anne Warner and I still work as a seasonal at Acadia National Park.
- Lilli Tichinin: Wonderful. Great. Well, we'll start kind of just with your early lives. Where were you born?
- Dusty Warner: I was born in Massachusetts but spent most of my youth in Vermont in a little town called East Arlington, pretty rural town. We were dairy farmers.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah?
- Dusty Warner: Yeah, and when I was fairly young, I knew I wanted to be a park ranger – really. So, when I got out of high school, I had applied to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in the forestry program. I got a scholarship, but I had lost my parents early on, so I didn't have a lot of financial resources. They gave me a full scholarship as far as tuition was concerned, but I didn't have enough to cover the living expenses very well. So, I spent about a year in school and then I had to – I was on a co-op program where I was supposed to go to school a semester and be out a semester. By the time I got to my second “got to school” I didn't have enough money to make it through the semester. So, I went to the dean of students and I asked if I could take an extra semester. He said, “Sure, but you are going to lose your draft classification,” and that was in 1968. And sure enough, I was out of school approximately two months and I lost my draft classification. I got drafted, ending up liking the Marine Corps and I stayed twenty years.
- Dusty Warner: And when I got out of the Marine Corps I said, “Okay, I'm going to try again,” so I did, but I knew it was going to be a lot harder the second time. So, I got a job working for a defense contractor for a while, but it was kind of a stopgap sort of thing. I spent a lot of time trying to build up credentials. The Marine Corps actually sent me to college, but they sent me to college to get an undergraduate degree in psychology, but they didn't care what my minor was or what my electives were. So, I got about forty-eight hours in the natural sciences, mostly in the concentration of ecology and biology. I had enough to be able to segue into the Park Service if I had an opportunity.

Dusty Warner: When I retired from the Marine Corps, I went to work for a defense contractor, and I started taking courses – correspondence courses and other courses – that I needed to fill the gaps. And I realized, at that point, that I was going to need to flesh out my resume, so I went to school to learn how to be a paramedic. I did that and went through that and then I went to our local fire department and learned how to be a firefighter. So, all the rest of the stuff kind of – I was trying – and I had a really good mentor at that time who was the district ranger at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. His name was Dave Panebaker. He kind of pointed me in the right direction. He said, “You’ll need this.” Because he didn’t want me to struggle, he didn’t want me to go, “Well, okay, well, I tried, but it didn’t work.”

Anne Warner: And you were volunteering at that point.

Lilli Tichinin: Okay, yeah.

Dusty Warner: I was volunteering in the Smokies around ‘93, I guess, ‘93, ‘94, something like that. I got a lot of good volunteer assignments. I worked for the trail crew. I finally ended up, by ‘96, I was helping with interpretation. I had kind of made that progression from working trails to helping with interp. And I was sending out applications starting in ‘97, yep. Starting in ‘97 I started sending out applications. And this was a bridge we had to cross together. I was getting paid fairly well as an engineer for this defense contractor, but I was not happy spending all that time behind a desk. So, it was a big break for us, the kids were already gone so it was like, okay. But she [Anne] was a CPA [Certified Public Accountant], and she was working, and she was kind of embedded in that. And here I am going to swap jobs from a fairly well-paying engineering job to a really low-paying [laughter] temporary seasonal job as a park ranger. The day that I announced it, I was thinking about this for months, trying to figure out how I was going to do it. I came home and I said, “You know, I’ve talked about this park ranger thing for a couple of years” – because when I was getting my paramedic it was pretty obvious why I was getting it. And so I broached the subject and I said, “You know, I’ve got a window here, about six months or so, I’m going to resign my job and see if I can’t get a job” – because I didn’t want, I didn’t want to play the game of well, I’ll wait till I get a job, and then resign from my other job as an engineer. I wanted to be upfront about the whole thing, so I just quit my job, even before I had – I don’t think I had a firm job in the bag as far as a seasonal. And so, I did, and she was gracious enough to say, “Well, go ahead.”

Anne Warner: It had – I mean, we had been planning for this for a good long time. So, you know, we knew that financially it was going to be a big difference for us, and we felt like we could do it. But his first job was part-time.

- Dusty Warner: It was thirty-two hours a week and it was at not the world's smallest park but it was close, I was a general ranger at Ocmulgee National Monument, which is in Macon, Georgia. [laughter] There were only eleven of us there including maintenance. I worked the weekends and most of the time I was the only one there. I gave programs, sold stuff at the bookstore, fixed toilets, and checked fishing licenses, whatever needed to be done.
- Lilli Tichinin: Okay.
- Anne Warner: And we were living in North Georgia at the time and we had a small travel trailer, so—
- Dusty Warner: So, we made this deal and said, "Okay, you go try it out." It's like midlife crisis for me. [Lilli laughs] She says, "All right, I'm not quitting my job. I'm going to stay at home. You can go down there, and you can try it," because it was a six-month seasonal assignment. I took the trailer down there and stayed in the trailer. They had a place for me to be able to stay; it was a VIP [Volunteers-in-Parks Program] slot, but I stayed there. They had two slots. I came home on the weekend because it was about a two-and-a-half, three- hour drive.
- Anne Warner: [talking at the same time] Oh, it was more than that. It was probably more like three-and-a-half or four hours.
- Dusty Warner: Three-and-a-half hours or something like that for me to get home. And I was only working four days a week, so it was okay. And it was good because the chief ranger that I was working for knew what my situation was because I had told him beforehand when he originally called to interview me. I said, "Look, this is not the typical thing. I am not, you know, twenty-two years old."
- Dusty Warner: He said, "Well, I knew that already." He said, "You're a retired Marine," he said, "you're a paramedic – and that sort of stuff, so I figured." He said, "You're exactly what I wanted because you're going to be independent. On Friday night everybody is going to bail out" – which meant the eleven other Park Service employees, that was it [laughter] – "You got the dot [?] all weekend long. If the plumbing breaks, you're going to have to fix it. If somebody needs assistance, you're going to have to run the cash register; you're going to have to do guided programs. You're going to have to do everything." Because I was the only person there on the weekend. He said, "I was looking for somebody that was older, that would be happy doing the job." So, we had a really good fit.
- Dusty Warner: I was very fortunate and he was understanding enough to – well, I wanted eventually to go to fire but I knew I was kind of in that, because I had retired at thirty-eight, so I was kind of a little old to go into fire in the normal route. But he made provisions for me to get

some experience. I actually came up to the Smokies, went through fire school, some other stuff, while I was still working there. And I ended up not doing my full season there and he didn't mind. I got a job in interpretation on the Blue Ridge Parkway. And that was kind of the "okay" because that was a full five days a week, plus. So, we had to make a decision point then with what was going to work.

Anne Warner: Well, I still came home every other week and worked for the guy I had been working for, for a long time, so—

Dusty Warner: But it kind of flopped because I wasn't coming home, she was staying at home and she was traveling up on her weekend, and it was probably a three-hour drive. Three or four hour—

Anne Warner: At least.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Dusty Warner: —three or four hours from where we were up to the Blue Ridge Parkway. But that was my first real, honest-to-goodness stint. The other job was a general ranger, I did everything. I remember one of the high points. One of the things that was the most fun was we had a separate unit [Anne laughs] that had a lot of archaeological mounds where they used to – but it hadn't really been developed and there was a lot of wild hogs down there. So, he said, "I'm going to give you an ATV, a weed-eater, a chainsaw and I'm going to give you an old M1 rifle and your job for the next couple of weeks is going to be to clean up the mounds and to ride around this swamp in an ATV with a rifle and shoot hogs."

Dusty Warner: And I said, "You're going to pay me for this?" [laughter]

Dusty Warner: So, I did. You know, it was interesting, and I only wrecked the ATV one time. It was one of those things I remember, I actually had to do some other work at the same time. So, I had this huge, long weed eater, probably about six or seven feet long and I had it strapped to the ATV. And I was going after a hog and I forgot about it and the trees were too close. [laughter] I caught the weed eater on the back of the ATV and kind of bent the pole a little bit. But it was all right; he was very forgiving. He said, "Well, you were a little too enthusiastic about shooting the hogs." [laughter] But the job worked out great and he gave me a great recommendation and I got the second position and that was where I really started in interp. But I was also still interested in going to fire.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Dusty Warner: But the person that I worked for on the Blue Ridge Parkway, she was really accommodating. I knew that I was going to have to build up a lot of credentials fairly fast and there were lots of programs that the state ran, state of North Carolina ran, which were general ranger education programs, but they were open to National Park Service

employees. So, she would kind of pave the way for me to be able to go to some of these other programs. It was really great. It was a good opportunity to work independently, and it was also a great opportunity because they didn't have a medic. They didn't have a park medic in the section I was in and it was on the Blue Ridge Parkway. So, there were a lot of accidents. There were a lot of climbing accidents; there were a lot of road accidents. So, every week I was getting two, sometimes three calls. We had two law enforcement people there and neither one of them were EMTs. And they really were accommodating, so as long as I didn't have a program going on, I could work with them on that. I think we had one small wildland fire, so I actually had a chance to work on that fire while I was there, so that was good. And then, what was—

- Anne Warner: Then from Blue Ridge Parkway we went out to Great Basin in Nevada and that was really the – the break for me because at that point there was no more commuting back to north Georgia—
- Lilli Tichinin: From Nevada. [Lilli laughs]
- Anne Warner: No, no, no. And one of the hardest things for me was we had two dogs and they had told us at Great Basin that our dogs would not be allowed, we could not bring our travel trailer. We later found out after we got there that that was not true. I think the hiring person, Dusty's supervisor, wanted to get past him as a veteran to someone else, so she actually told us some things that were not correct. But we found somebody that would dog sit, but that was wrenching for me to leave my dogs behind because I love those dogs. But anyway, we went out to Great Basin, high desert, very brown, very different than any place I had ever been. Took me about two weeks to get used to looking at the beauty of that area, you know coming from the southern Appalachians, lots of green, lots of water.
- Dusty Warner: And we were living at 8,000 feet where our little cabin was. And the cabin was probably half the size—
- Anne Warner: It was an old CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] cabin. It was a great place to live. It was a good experience. I don't think you were thrilled about doing cave tours every day, but it was winter in the desert.
- Dusty Warner: It was okay. It was winter.
- Anne Warner: You could hike up and then you'd be in pines and streams. And I did go through EMT at that point, although I really always knew I was not ever going to be a very good EMT person. But then from there we went to Acadia as a seasonal for a summer season.
- Lilli Tichinin: How long were you at Great Basin?
- Anne & Dusty Warner: Six months.

- Lilli Tichinin: Okay, yeah. And that cabin was in the park, it was park housing?
- Anne Warner: Yes.
- Dusty Warner: Yep, it was park housing, there were a number of nice units and then there was—
- Anne Warner: Where the permanent people lived.
- Dusty Warner: Yeah, where the permanent folks were.
- Anne Warner: Larger houses.
- Dusty Warner: Because it was a long way to any real housing.
- Anne Warner: A long way to anywhere. Period.
- Lilli Tichinin: To anything, yeah.
- Dusty Warner: Ely [pronounced EE-lie], which I guess was—
- Anne Warner: Ely [pronounced EE-lee].
- Dusty Warner: Ely was about a two-and-a-half—
- Anne Warner: Well, maybe more than that, but that's where we would drive to get groceries.
- Dusty Warner: —three-hour drive, but that was where the grocery story was. So, everybody used to really get excited when the Schwan's truck would come by. I don't know if you've ever seen one of those or not, but that was like the highpoint of the week. But it was another good job for me too because I had cave tour responsibilities. But it was in the winter, so there wasn't really much else for me to do, and the person that was the chief ranger there had a lot of extra work because he didn't have any people to work there. The fire engines needed maintenance, and there were fences that needed to be mended because we had to try and keep the cattle out. So again, it was almost a hybrid job. I was mending fences; I was working on the wildland fire engines and doing some other stuff along with it. So, it was kind of a mixture sort of thing that kept up both busy. She actually got a job then, working for—
- Anne Warner: Yeah, I ended up doing a sixty-day emergency hire assistant to the superintendent and then I did my first stint waiting tables at the small café that they have there.
- Lilli Tichinin: In the park?
- Anne Warner: In the park, yes, the gift shop, and then a little restaurant. And the woman that ran it was very, very gracious and very kind and forgiving. [laughter] But, as I said really my first and last waitressing job, but it worked out well.
- Dusty Warner: She used to get excited about the tips that she had, and she would always come home and said, "Look how much I got in tips!"



- Anne Warner: I mean, I didn't get that much, but most of the people there knew I was really trying, and they would really tip me very graciously [Anne laughs]. So, it was fun. It was a good experience.
- Dusty Warner: And that was where I really learned about the ranger competency program and all the skills I needed to learn. So, I really started working. I said, "Well, if I'm going to be able to get these jobs I really have to try and get something that's going to make me stand out." One of the things I thought would do it would be the ranger competencies and see if I could finish as many of those as I could. So, I kind of focused on that. Because for us being older it wasn't like we had an infinite amount of time to get to where we wanted. It wasn't like we had – we had a window of like, if we're really going to enjoy this it's going to be twenty years, it's not going to be extending to thirty years or forty years or something like that. So, I knew that I probably needed to reach permanent status in five years.
- Anne Warner: But, you know, that was never really *the goal*.
- Dusty Warner: No.
- Anne Warner: Permanent status. It was that stint at Big Bend, when you had that issue with your tooth, and we made three round trips to Midland and Odessa to get that tooth fixed.
- Dusty Warner: [speaking at the same time] Yeah, that was the closest dentist.
- Anne Warner: And we realized we are not getting any younger and that we may need to live closer to services and then you took that term position in New Orleans.
- Dusty Warner: Yeah
- Lilli Tichinin: Oh, okay.
- Anne Warner: Which I was not keen about. [Dusty laughs] I was born and raised in Louisiana. I never really wanted to go back and live there [Speaking at the same time; unclear].
- Dusty Warner: But her dad was close enough.
- Anne Warner: My dad was close by and it turned out to be a great experience and we spent eleven months at Jean Lafitte [National Historical Park and Preserve].
- Dusty Warner: Yep, and she actually, that was the first—
- Anne Warner: That was my first interpretive job.
- Dusty Warner: —uniformed position.
- Lilli Tichinin: So, at what point was that? So, you were at Great Basin.
- Anne Warner: We were at Great Basin the winter of 2000. There we lived from '99 to 2000 and then we came to Acadia summer of 2000.

- Dusty Warner: Acadia. Worked a summer season. We didn't spend – we tried not to spend too much down time. We still owned our house in North Carolina—
- Anne Warner: In North Georgia.
- Dusty Warner: North Georgia, I'm sorry. So, we might have two or three weeks at home, in between stints. But what I wanted to do – I didn't want to take that hiatus of six months off because I knew that that wasn't really going to help me as far as developing the skills I needed to get hired for something else. So, I tried, hmm, I tried to learn how the system worked in terms of being able to get hired as a seasonal and I think we were successful.
- Anne Warner: We were very successful you know, because, because we did—
- Dusty Warner: I did a lot of applications.
- Anne Warner: Yeah. But we always had – you always had a summer job and a winter job. So, you know, Blue Ridge Parkway to Great Basin to Acadia and then to Big Bend for another winter season. Then, the Big Bend season ended early when you got that term position in New Orleans. As it turned out, we learned before we even left, they had something like a \$700,000 budget shortfall and they were going to be releasing their seasonals early anyway. So that was kind of a godsend for us. But we went to Louisiana and then you got the call from Acadia, I guess in January? I can't remember. We went in February.
- Dusty Warner: Something like that. I had gone from, I had a really good opportunity at Acadia in 2000 because they were hiring a few GS-7 seasonal interpreters, so I got one of those. But then I went back from [GS-]7 to [GS-]5 when I went back to Big Bend. But since I had already been a [GS-]7 for the requisite amount of time, when this term GS-9 position opened up—
- Lilli Tichinin: At Acadia.
- Anne Warner: No, that was at Jean Lafitte.
- Lilli Tichinin: Oh, right.
- Dusty Warner: I'm sorry.
- Anne Warner: We're bouncing back and forth.
- Lilli Tichinin: No, no, that's all right. Yeah, the term position, yeah.
- Dusty Warner: There was a [GS-] 9 slot, [GS-] 9 term position in interp opened up, I qualified for that job. So that was when we went there.
- Anne Warner: And then I got my first, as I said, uniformed interpretive job there. And then when Doug Jones called you from Acadia—
- Dusty Warner: To work in fire.

Anne Warner: —about that new fire position it was like – in fact, I think you had accepted the job before you even asked me about it because I wasn't home yet.

Dusty Warner: Oh, yeah.

Anne Warner: But I was certainly keen to go there.

Dusty Warner: He called me at, like, 2 o'clock in the afternoon. And it was a hybrid sort of position. It was a fire prevention specialist which meant that there was a lot of skills from the skillset of being an interpreter combined with the skill set of being a working firefighter. I had done both, so that kind of put me in a unique position as far as the KSAs [Knowledge, Skills and Abilities] were concerned so I could take that job. And it was really a regional job because I worked for about eleven different parks at that point.

Lilli Tichinin: Wow.

Dusty Warner: The bad part about it was I had to go back as a [GS-]7, because it was a [GS-] 7/9/11 job. But I thought about it a while and said, "Well, what's the big deal?" You know, I'll go back, and I'll spend six months as a 7, six months as a 9 and then I'll make my 11. And we did, we moved to Acadia then.

Anne Warner: Yeah, and then in the summer of 2000 I got a job as a fee collector. Because of my accounting background I scored really high on the visitor use fee collection, but it wasn't until 2004 that I actually got into interpretation.

Dusty Warner: She used to say, what was it? You would break somebody's leg—

Anne Warner: No, no, no, no, I didn't say that. I said, "Somebody would have to break their leg for me to be able to get in," because I just didn't – I mean, Acadia's a very competitive park. And so, I – well, I spent a summer at a museum, so that was kind of sort of. But, you know, to get one of their naturalist jobs, you know, I had way too much competition.

Dusty Warner: She was way down on the register.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Dusty Warner: But in mid-season—

Anne Warner: 2004, one of their seasonals left to take a permanent position at Carlsbad Caverns [National Park] and they called me, and they said, "Would you consider?" And I said, "Would I consider?" [Lilli laughs] "I have been dying for this." So, I've been coming back ever since.

Lilli Tichinin: Wow.

Dusty Warner: And I retired in—

- Anne Warner: You retired almost four years ago.
- Dusty Warner: But I worked a lot. It was a good job. I worked in prevention a lot; I did a lot of prevention stuff. But I also worked, I had come up through the ranks, through crew boss and I did a lot of prescribed fire and then I went to strike team leader, from strike team leader to task force leader. And I was actually in the process of becoming a division supervisor on a regular wildland fire. So, I had, like, these two plates there. I had the plate that was the prevention specialist and the information officer, but then at the other side, I had the operation side, which was when I went out. And some years I'd get to go out two, sometimes three times on a wildland fire, which was great because that gave me the background and the fire experience that I really wanted. It was kind of a surrogate sort of thing. I wasn't really a full-time operational firefighter. I was doing prevention work, doing a lot of talking.
- Anne Warner: Well, and that was the time when the wildland-urban interface, when that came in. And our park is, you know, the borders are very, what shall I say, rather high-dollar resources on those convoluted boundaries. [Lilli laughs]
- Dusty Warner: And we were really worried because it did have a fire in 1947, destroyed—
- Anne Warner: 17,000 acres.
- Dusty Warner: —about a third of the park. So, if the stage was set again, it theoretically could have happened again. I used to go to battle every once in a while, with the local fire chief. And he would absolutely — it was an elected position, and he would absolutely promise everybody that it would never happen again. And I would say, “Well, you know, if the conditions are right. If we don't get any rain for three months, and we have — yeah it could happen again.”
- Dusty Warner: So that was a kind of ongoing thing. But it was a short career. I qualified for retirement and when I turned sixty-two, they were downsizing the fire management program in our park. The folks from region asked me if we should really retain the position. I had had one or two really big, mega projects that I had a lot of SCAs [people from the Student Conservation Association] working on. We mapped the entire Park Boundary (we call it the Wildland Urban Interface in fire lingo) we did a lot of stuff, we interviewed every person, every person that had lived on the boundary of the park, every single house and every person that lived on the boundary of the park.
- Anne Warner: Multiyear project.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yes, yes, of course.

- Dusty Warner: It lasted three years and we did all the GIS mapping. It was like, okay, we've done absolutely as much as we can as far as prevention is concerned. And region was agreeing with us. And they said, "Okay, well, we'll downsize the whole program." So, when I left, they didn't replace my position. And I served as FMO [Fire Management Officer] for my last year, because the FMO retired almost a year before I retired so I transferred from that prevention specialist to the fire management officer for the majority of my last year, somewhere along there. And she's [Anne] still hammering away.
- Anne Warner: You know, when you come to something that you love so much late in life, I really hate to give it up. And, you know, I know there will probably come a time that I won't be able to do what I do now. And, I don't know, I'm just not eager to give it up and I know that Dusty would like to come and do a season, say, someplace like Glacier or Rocky Mountain [National Park], but it's really hard for me to leave Acadia.
- Anne Warner: I grew up in Louisiana, but my father was from Upper Peninsula, Michigan and almost every summer we'd go up there for two or three weeks of vacation time and I just, I was in heaven. And so when we came to Acadia, it was like, this is good. I knew I was going to love it. I just love the great North Woods, so there's a real personal connection for me to that part of the world. And Acadia is physically beautiful, and it also has a really rich cultural history that I love also.
- Dusty Warner: It kind of met our expectations in terms of – when we lived at Big Bend, Big Bend was a good job, but it was so remote. It was three and a half hours to Wal-Mart, and I did have to have a filling done and it was—
- Anne Warner: Well, it was more than a filling. It was three round-trip—
- Dusty Warner: Yeah, three round trips to Odessa and I said, "No, this is probably not a really great idea," because it was so remote. So, when the position opened up at Acadia that was just – I mean, that was almost perfect because we had been there before, and Acadia was a nice mix. You couldn't really do any backcountry camping, but you could go on a day hike and you could get the sense of being in the wilderness, especially if it was off-season. But, then again, it was only forty minutes to Wal-Mart [laughter] and, you know, you could go out to eat at a restaurant.
- Anne Warner: Hospitals were close.
- Dusty Warner: For all the different things it was like, okay, this is really a happy medium. This is a good place for us to finish the retirement. And I spent ten years working at Acadia, basically, in fire.

Anne Warner: Well, and, I mean, even though you haven't had exactly a regular job since you retired, you've done a ton of volunteer work for the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Because we live in Southwest Harbor, so there's a Coast Guard base there. And you've done a little bit of work for the ambulance service there. Last summer you volunteered, you did two walks and an evening program for the park. So, there's – we just have really been pretty blessed in terms of what we can do. And, you know, we still have our house in north Georgia. We have children and grandchildren in Atlanta and Alexandria, Virginia; Dusty's daughter lives in Bar Harbor. So, you know, we see the children a fair amount.

Dusty Warner: We were fortunate in that all the pieces fit together because at any one spot, if we had had, say, a six-month hiatus where we couldn't have worked, then we would have had to take a job someplace else. I mean, the military retirement is not enough, it is nice, and it gives you a lot of flexibility, but it's really not enough to live on. You know, if you could combine that with Social Security, eh, that would be kind of marginal, but it's still—

Anne Warner: Well, and I've always been adamant about that money that we save for retirement would be saved for retirement and now that we're kind of, sort of retired it's like, "Why can't we use any of it?" Well, I'm not sure, but it's just not to be used [laughter].

Dusty Warner: I think we'll have to be seventy years—

[END OF TRACK 1]

[START OF TRACK 2]

Dusty Warner: —old before we can —.

Anne Warner: We definitely are very different people. I am thrifty to the point of being cheap. And him, on the other hand, is a little more laissez-faire about the money spending business.

Dusty Warner: Yeah. I officially think we've crossed the brink, at least for me, crossed the brink into retirement. But the, I mean, the Park Service is wonderful. I mean, I really enjoyed every minute that I worked for the Park Service – just about. I mean, I had some good supervisors and I had some that were a little more difficult, but by and large, you know, every day I enjoyed coming to work.

Dusty Warner: I think one of the things was when I – after I made GS-11 I was living in kind of a mystery. I didn't realize I was going to have to do quite so much paperwork. And the field portion, I really, really liked the field portion and moving into a supervisory position was, eh, it was not my dream at that point. But it was great because I would get to go on a wildland fire. So, it was kind of like, let the kids go out and play until they get really tired, then I'll come back and take a nap. [Lilli laughs]

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Dusty Warner: So, it was a good combination. Because once I kind of got up to here [gestures] with paperwork and stuff, or the park itself – the politics in the park, then it would be great to just go out and work a fire for a couple of weeks, and then come back. And she [Anne] was always appreciative because she would say, “Well, that will be a new kitchen if you go out for a couple of weeks.” [laughter]

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah

Anne Warner: I was excited to see you go and always very happy to see you come home.

Lilli Tichinin: Well, you know, you had mentioned that were – you knew you were really interested in the Park Service initially, and so I’m curious, kind of, at what age you really started thinking about that and what drew you to the Park Service. What aspect of it really, you know, attracted you?

Dusty Warner: I think the first – I went back, and I kind of did this – I gave some serious thought to where I actually started thinking about being a park ranger, and I think it was the sixth grade because I remember doing a book report. And I did a book report, and it was on – it was something about wildland fire. And I was really enthralled, it was a small book, but I was a sixth grader. I did my book report, and I didn’t get a very good grade on it, but it was really something I really liked. So, about two months later we had to do another book report and I wanted to write a report on park rangers. We lived in a really small little town in Vermont and there were no books on park rangers, so I made one up. [laughter] I thought it was a great book report, but my teacher obviously saw right through it. [laughter] So, to me that recollection back then was probably the earliest.

Dusty Warner: And I never really lost it. When I went to the University of Massachusetts in forestry I knew exactly where I was going because basically there wasn’t, in the sixties, there wasn’t a lot of disciplines. You could be a biologist, you could be a forester, but there wasn’t a separate wildlife biologist discipline. There were a few, but as far as going into the Park Service. Because I had kind of done a little background work, but I found out that most of the people who were going into the Park Service, it was still back when it was, most people were general rangers. There wasn’t a differentiation between law enforcement. And you started low and it was kind of one of those jobs that you gradually, if you worked your way into it, but you would work, you might work some wildland fire, you might do some – what do I want to say? – wildlife management to a certain degree if the resource management guys wanted you to do some of that, but it would be a big mixture of different things. And that really appealed to me.

Dusty Warner: Of course, Vietnam got in the way, but I never lost sight of it. I served multiple tours in Vietnam, but I would always kind of say, “Umm, this might benefit me.” How to be a medic or something like that might benefit, or, I wasn’t exactly sure, but I never really lost sight of it because I have to say that I spent an awful lot of time in school when I was in the military because they sent me through my undergraduate program while I was on active duty. And I had a few years after that that I worked for them, but I had a great job. And then, I went back to graduate school and got my MBA and they paid for that. So, by the time I was done with all of that I think I had, like, seventeen years in towards my twenty years. So, kind of a no brainer to hang out for three more years.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Dusty Warner: I never really lost sight of it, I just knew when I got out that, after talking with – I had gone up and I had made friends with Dave Panebaker at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which wasn’t very far from where we lived. And he was more than willing to, you know, to mentor me, and say, “Well, you’ve got some things going for you, but you have other things that – and you don’t have a lot of time to fool around. If you can go back and get your paramedic, or you can do this, or you can do that. It will make your chances better.”

Dusty Warner: And that was really true because I remember when I got my first job, my first real job at Ocmulgee, I asked my boss, I asked the chief ranger, “Why did I get this job?” because there were a lot of people who applied for it. And he said, “Well, you were a paramedic.” Okay, well that’s great. So, he was honest. Other people looked at the diversity of experience and said, “Well, you’re not boxed in. So, we wanted somebody for independent duty,” sort of. So, that was good for me making that transition. Because I think if I had to tell anybody that was going to be dual career, and I see a lot of people that are dual career now, and they do ask me about it, you don’t have a lot of time to waste. If there’s something that you can do in preparation for it, you know, you got to do it. You can’t just sit there and whine and say, “Well, I can’t get this job,” or “I want this job.” You have to look at it, you say, “Well, here’s the KSAs [Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities],” and it’s very straightforward and you don’t have them all. But if you really want this job, you’ve got to get them. Then, it’s a great idea to continue working because I think one of the biggest things to get into the Park Service is, at least for me in a supervisory point of view, is to, if I’m going to hire somebody that last step is to call somebody up in the Park Service and say, “Okay, what was this person like?” That’s kind of the make or break. If they say, “Well, it’s a great person. Really was great to work for.” Or, if on the other end, “Oh, yeah, well they weren’t really great.” And that



really doesn't show up a lot on the resume. But to get as many different experiences in the park. Because I tried to do the mountain park, the urban park, the seashore park, I tried to do them all in terms of, "Let me see if I can get all these different experiences lined up." That, I think, helped. At least I think it helped to get—

Anne Warner:

Well, I think it did.

Dusty Warner:

Yeah, to get the permanent position.

Anne Warner:

Because, I mean, you got, that first year – well, when you first sent out your application, it didn't work out very well and Dave Panebaker kind of said, "Well, this is maybe how you could do better." And then that next year, you basically took the first job offer you got, which was the Blue Ridge Parkway, and then after that time – did you get forty offers? It was some incredible number. You know, and he was committed to the Parkway. So, I think you really did, you studied it and you figured out, you know, how to make it work, which is one of your characteristics. When you're interested in something, you look at it very seriously and you work very hard to make it happen. You don't expect it just to happen, which is kind of the way I am. [laughter]

Dusty Warner:

[whispering] She's not that way.

Lilli Tichinin:

So, you were talking about, sort of, that early mentorship that really helped you. And I'm wondering what sort of characteristics he had that really – that you see as being—

Dusty Warner:

Our personalities, they were very similar. He had started off as a backcountry ranger and worked, I think, probably his first seven or eight years as a backcountry ranger and he had a lot of different experiences. He worked in a remote cabin—

Anne Warner:

Well, you guys were probably close to the same age.

Dusty Warner:

Yeah, we were probably close to the same age and we, I mean he would – he was very flexible. He would say, "Do you think you can learn how to use a chainsaw?" This was back before all the regulations and everything.

Dusty Warner:

I said, "Sure, I know how to use a chainsaw." [laughter]

Dusty Warner:

He said, "Well, we need some folks up here to clear the trail." And this is in the Smokies.

Lilli Tichinin:

And this is when you were a volunteer, right?

Dusty Warner:

I'm still a volunteer, yeah. And he said, "Well, I'm going to send you to a regular maintenance chainsaw class. And I'm going to send you through saws, fire saws. But you're still going to be a volunteer."

Dusty Warner: So, he was willing to stick his neck out for me. And then, I kind of paid him back, in that I used to do some of the early, open the trails, in terms of when the snow was off the trail and the bears were out. [laughter] I ran into a lot of bears during those phases, but yeah. But he felt good about me. You know, he was always more than happy to say – and kind of everybody did there because they let me start. I went from Dave’s position, with him, to working in the visitor’s center when there weren’t a lot of volunteers working in the visitor’s center back then. And then, they needed assistance with some of the children’s programs or with some of the adult programs, the stream programs they used to have. So, that really helped. Everybody there kind of bent over backwards to help me get my first job. They would review my applications [laughter] and say, “Oh, no, no no.” And they even said, before I even had a uniform allowance, before I even showed up to the park, I had almost all my uniforms because I showed up down there and there was all the secondhand uniforms from the uniform lockers. And it was like, “Just need a badge and you’re all set.”

Lilli Tichinin: That’s wonderful.

Dusty Warner: He was a lot of help. And probably, I know it wasn’t my frustration level, but it probably shortened the whole process. I may not have even made it, because I think a lot about *his* recommendations to spend the time, go to paramedic school and then, really get serious after that, and that I connect those dots with my first employer and asking him, what was the thing that tipped the balance. Well, it was, “You were a paramedic.” Well, he had checked that I had only been a paramedic for six months, but still.

Anne Warner: Well, you were.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Do you feel like you had a chance to sort of be a guiding force or in a mentor role, to other people, later in your career?

Dusty Warner: I did, because we had a lot of – well, in two respects; one, we had a lot of SCAs and a lot of seasonals that would work that summer at Acadia because we had a lot of clearing that we used to do, we had a lot of boundary maintenance work that we did. And then, I had several, four or five, interns that worked for me under SCA on the GIS projects that we had, and they were all kind of typical. And then, the process of leading a fire crew, you know, twenty folks, and about fifteen of them were probably under the age of twenty-two. And they have a lot of questions. A lot of them are working in fire, because they want to get some time, some place, they want to get a permanent job, or at least a temporary job working in fire and for the moment the best they can do is just work in fire as an AD [administratively determined], or something like that. So, I would

spend a lot of time talking with folks the same way that Dave did about, basically, how to get a job, what you have to do.

Anne Warner: Well, and how to behave. Some of these kids are so young and some of the stories that you would come home with, and we don't need to name names.

Dusty Warner: No, we don't. [laughter]

Anne Warner: A box of trail bars and one kid takes them and dumps them all in his pack. Well, you know that's not how you, how you do this kind of thing.

Dusty Warner: So, I had got him behind the bus and I'm screaming and yelling at him. Well, he said, "I like those." I said, "It doesn't make any difference if you like them, you've got to share them there are nineteen other people." [laughter] It was just a lot of experiences. A lot of kids growing up and the process of growing up.

Anne Warner: And too, in the Marine Corps, you supervised at your last duty station, what, three, four hundred people? So, I mean, it wasn't like a supervisory role was something that was new.

Lilli Tichinin: Absolutely.

Anne Warner: So, you know, there had been a lot of that in the background. And you were not the typical Marine in many ways, some ways you were, but not every way. So, you were good at that.

Lilli Tichinin: How do you – do you feel like there are parts of your experience as a Marine that were directly applicable to your time with the Park Service.

Dusty Warner: Sure, to fire, really. Especially the fire, because there was times when we were on a fire that things were a little hairy. And to be responsible for twenty people, basically, in a wildland fire, especially if things were getting a little tight and being able to make those decisions and say, "Okay guys, we need to leave. Now!" That I didn't have trouble making those decisions.

Dusty Warner: And we almost got burned over once. We came pretty close. We lost all our pumps, we lost the engines, everything. They all got burned over, but we made it to safety. But I didn't have trouble executing those decisions. [Anne laughs] Once I made my mind up that this is the way, I didn't second-guess myself.

Anne Warner: And you didn't have any trouble relaying those decisions to the people that were [laughs] your responsibility.

Dusty Warner: Yeah. Well, on either side. I didn't have any trouble being in my boss's face if I really felt like this was something serious. I made a decision and I'm sticking with it. And then the kids too, sometimes

you have to do more than just ask. Sometimes you really have to direct on wildfire.

Dusty Warner: I don't think it had so much – well, I know the Marine Corps helped in my public speaking for the interpretive part, because by the time you finished a career with the Corps I had spent a good bit of time as an instructor. So, I was already on the podium. I was already speaking in front of people. So that helped in terms of – it didn't help me as far as the interpretive skills, but it did help me with the shyness, or being able to get up in front of people at the—

Anne Warner: Comfort level.

Lilli Tichinin: Absolutely.

Dusty Warner: Yeah, that sort of stuff, and being able to talk to people. Because I really, that was fine, I had gotten over that hurdle already, so that wasn't something I had to worry about. Basically, the leadership roles, whether it happened to be in wildland fire or whether it happened to be in the Marine Corps were very, very similar. It would be hard to differentiate, especially when I was a task force leader. I had probably a hundred, a hundred and fifty people that I was responsible for. And we were all camping out. [Anne laughs]

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Dusty Warner: It goes with the problems that come along with it that are tactical problems of fighting fire, but it also comes with lots of personnel problems. You know, it's not just as simple as just going out there and fighting fire. You have guys that do just stupid things over and over again. There's no difference between a Marine that would get blisters all over his feet because he was afraid you were going to yell at him to a firefighter that would have blisters all over his feet because he was afraid someone was going to yell at him. There's no difference. Same background. It was a good segue, I guess.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. You said that getting a permanent position wasn't necessarily the ultimate goal in the beginning, so I'm curious, you know, when you'd had this desire to be a park ranger for a very long time, and when you really made that decision to pursue that. Did you have an ultimate goal that you were looking toward? Did you have a plan of how you wanted it to go? [laughter] Both of you, I mean.

Dusty Warner: I don't think we really did. We were going to try it.

Anne Warner: Winter season, summer season, winter season, summer season. That was kind of the – because the deal was, we wanted to see the national parks in greater detail, greater depth than just going there for two weeks on vacation because we had certainly done a lot of that. But we thought if you could live there for five or six months, then you're certainly going to become more familiar with it and that was kind of the plan, at least as far as I remember.

- Dusty Warner: It didn't really change much until, I think, the Big Bend experience.
- Anne Warner: Yeah, with the—
- Dusty Warner: We had been seasonals then for a couple of years and the seasonal life is – I mean, it's hard enough for somebody that's young. It was, [sigh] it was hard having a home and knowing the comforts of home and then being a seasonal on top of it. It wasn't that it wasn't fun, because it was fun, and there wasn't a lot of responsibility that went along with it. But you also, at least at our age, were looking for somewhat of a settled process. Because we had picked up and moved, well, I think we probably would have lasted maybe another two years.
- Anne Warner: It's hard to say.
- Dusty Warner: Hard to say.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Dusty Warner: Six months at a stint. So, it would have been four more duty stations and I think we probably would have said, okay, that's, that's enough. So, when we left Acadia, one of the last things we did was we went out to one of the old CCC cabins on one of the outlying islands. It's a really old cabin and we spent a—
- Anne Warner: Isle au Haut.
- Dusty Warner: Yeah, on Isle au Haut. We spent a weekend out there at the cabin and we did a hike, and we were out on a way far shore, it's beautiful. I mean, Acadia is beautiful, anyway, but this place was beautiful. And we're both sitting down on this cliff, and she just says, "We've got to come back."
- Anne Warner: I said, "There's no way we're not coming back to this place." I mean, there was just a real connection with me.
- Dusty Warner: So that may – may have been a target there, but I knew nobody left Acadia unless they died.
- Anne Warner: Or retired. [Lilli laughs]
- Dusty Warner: One of the two. So, I'd always had on my watch list and if anything came open, other than in administrative – I knew I didn't want to do administrative work or anything like that. I wanted to be outside. So, if anything came open.
- Lilli Tichinin: That was a target place to go.
- Dusty Warner: Yeah, that was really a target place to go for us.
- Anne Warner: And it just fell into place.
- Dusty Warner: It did, yeah.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

- Anne Warner: The timing was right; it just really worked out well.
- Dusty Warner: And I had worked for Doug, even though I was in interpretation, I worked for him in fire also at the same time, but of course, they wouldn't let me go out.
- Anne Warner: Well, you know, I think – we did those couple of courses. You know, because I was trying to get a few things checked off my list too, but it was, I think, an example of the USAJOBS, it is a very impersonal kind of thing, but when your name showed up on the list, Doug knew you, even if he didn't know you well. He knew you and he knew people across the lawn that he could call and say, "All right, what about this guy?" You know?
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Anne Warner: So, that's the hardest thing, I think, to get hired, is that impersonal way that it works. So yes, that definitely, I think, helped.
- Dusty Warner: I think at that point, it was like, not so much that I wanted to be a permanent, but that if we were going to continue our Park Service thing, that the idea of being a seasonal five, six, seven years—
- Lilli Tichinin: For that many more years.
- Dusty Warner: I mean, it would be interesting, but it wouldn't be fun.
- Anne Warner: I mean, I'm a nester. You know, I do that really well.
- Dusty Warner: It would be a different story if we didn't have a home, but we had a home already and we would go back, and I noticed after a couple of years that we would come back and we would only be home for three weeks and then be gone again. And it was like our nursery was taken over. And say, "Yeah, it would be really nice to stay here for a while." Then one thing led to another, and we talked about it and said, "No, let's start looking." And I hadn't really made up my mind, I mean, I wasn't looking everywhere, but when I found out about this position opening up in fire at Acadia, it was like, "All right, I'm sending my application in."
- Anne Warner: And you know that progression is typical of the way you operate. Because once we had that Big Bend experience with that tooth, then when you took that term position in New Orleans, even though I did not want to go back to Louisiana, I mean, that was just kind of part of it. You knew that this is kind of the next step that would lead us to a better goal. And so—
- Dusty Warner: I knew I didn't have the qualifications to become permanent because I'd only been with the Park Service—
- Anne Warner: A couple years.
- Lilli Tichinin: So, the term position was a really important stepping-stone to that.

- Dusty Warner: Yeah.
- Anne Warner: Yeah, it was.
- Dusty Warner: And I got lots of really neat experiences. I won the STAR Award and a bunch of other things while I was working at that park. I had a lot of developmental stuff I had a chance to do. I hated to leave, but, and I may not have, I may have stayed out the whole term, but it was just when this position opened at Acadia, it was just too many different things that kind of came together.
- Anne Warner: Too many good things.
- Lilli Tichinin: All the pieces fitting, as we've been saying.
- Dusty Warner: Exactly.
- Lilli Tichinin: So, Anne, I'm curious, did you have any inkling when you were a child growing up that you would ever be involved in the Park Service?
- Anne Warner: Nope, nope, we never went to National Parks. My dad was a carpenter in the paper mill in Bogalusa, and you know, we went to Michigan, that was our vacation. But we hardly ever went anywhere but there. And, you know, if we went down to the Gulf Coast it was for, like, a long weekend, but Michigan was it. So, never visited a National Park. And the first time I ever went to a National Park – and I mean, this is my second marriage – was with my first husband. We took our kids camping out of Fort Pickens in Pensacola, Florida – or near Pensacola. You know, national parks were just not a big thing on my radar screen; I just never had thought much about them. So, of course, when we [Anne and Dusty] got married, one of the first places we went was Easter weekend to Great Smoky Mountains on our very first backpacking trip. Well, it snowed.
- Dusty Warner: [whispers at same time] It snowed.
- Anne Warner: Boy Scouts died on that mountain that night.
- Lilli Tichinin: Oh, my gosh.
- Anne Warner: So, that was what could have been a horrible experience. You know, he never told me until after we were down the mountain how dangerous it had been for us. I had a three-season sleeping bag that my sister had – no, yeah, I guess I can't remember where the bag came from – we just about froze to death.
- Dusty Warner: And the tent was going like this because it was snowing.
- Anne Warner: Because it was snowing so hard. So that was really one of my first experiences at the national park. [Lilli laughs] But, you know, it evolved. I mean I've always been active, and I've always loved the natural world. That's why I loved Michigan so much because it wasn't Bogalusa the paper mill town. But, you know, and I'm old

enough that, you know, we kind of follow our husbands, kind of sort of.

Dusty Warner: It's a team deal.

Anne Warner: It's a team deal. But I knew that when you got the idea that you were going to be in the park service and we made the decision we were going to work toward that goal that I would come with you at some point. And I was not very happy that first, for sure, that first year. Umm, because I, like I said, I'm a nester.

Dusty Warner: She was a CPA.

Lilli Tichinin: You mean that you were commuting or the year that you were both seasonal in Nevada?

Anne Warner: Both. That time it was a little over a year. And granted, we've always made lifestyle choices over money choices. And when he retired from the Marine Corps and we moved from Los Angeles, at that point, I had always said, "Oh, If I could live in Rabun County" – southern Appalachians – If I could live here, I'd wash dishes. I'd do anything." And basically, he said, "Put your money where your mouth is." We had a little cabin there and so we sold our home that we had kept, in low country South Carolina and we lived at the cabin. So, I mean, we had already made some step. I didn't ever have to wash dishes, but I did have to work for a heck of a lot less money than I had been working for before. But, you know, I had nested there for almost ten years and then it was time for us to go do something else. So, I really wasn't all that happy. It took me a while to really get comfortable and to say, "You know, this is going to be okay. I can be satisfied doing this."

Dusty Warner: And she is such a good interpreter, and everybody would agree at the park. I mean, she is basically the go-to interpreter.

Anne Warner: Well, but I mean that—

Dusty Warner: And Acadia is a big park that has a really big—

Anne Warner: We have a good staff, but, you know, I have found something that I am apparently pretty good at and that I do love. As I said earlier, I'm really not quite ready to give it up yet. [laughter]

Dusty Warner: That's right.

Lilli Tichinin: So, now you're making him wait.

Anne Warner: Well, you know.

Dusty Warner: That's part of the deal. I mean, it's kind of like I tell people, when I'm giving a hike, I tell them, "I'm a retired park ranger and I really love it. That's why I'm back here doing it. But one of the other reasons is my wife is still working here." And it was kind of an unsigned sort of agreement that she kind of followed me for a while



and now that I'm done and she wants to stay here that, yeah, I'll find something to do.

Anne Warner: Well, and you know, he's a traveling fool. All he wants to do is travel. [Lilli laughs] And so, it's kind of a give and take. You know, okay, I'm not ready to do the round the world cruise yet, but, you know, we will try to take three weeks off next summer, and I'm hoping that we can work that into the schedule. So, I mean, we are going to take a couple trips, you know, this winter. We're still sort of balancing out what both of us really want to do and trying to make it work.

Dusty Warner: I'm sure if she was still a CPA it wouldn't be an issue for her to retire.

Anne Warner: No. I'd be happy to leave.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Dusty Warner: She loves her job and they really like her where she is.

[END OF TRACK 2]

[START OF TRACK 3]

Dusty Warner: So, it's like, yep, well, I'm not going to get between the—

Anne Warner: It's very fulfilling to me. I think everybody – well, maybe not everybody – but both of us need to be engaged, we need to feel like we're doing something that is worthwhile and it's nice to feel needed and feel like you are filling some sort of a niche somewhere.

Lilli Tichinin: Absolutely, yeah.

Dusty Warner: But the pressure's off for her because she's never wanted the permanent position.

Anne Warner: Well, I never felt like that was part of what would be available to me. I did have our chief say that "If you wanted to apply for this assistant to the chief," basically an admin job, she said, "I'm pretty sure you could get this job."

Anne Warner: And I said, "No, I really am not interested."

Anne Warner: Number one, I didn't like working in the office all the time and I wouldn't have a furlough, so we wouldn't be able to go back down south for the couple months in the winter, so that I could kind of reconnect with family a little bit easier. So, other than that one little brush with the possibility of a permanent job, like I said, we've always made lifestyle choices pretty much over what would maybe be the more financially secure decision. So, yeah, I will always be a seasonal and I'm happy with that.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah, that's wonderful. So right now, so you're spending your summers at Acadia and then, you're spending your winters back in Georgia, is that right?

Anne Warner: Right, yeah, volunteering for the state park system down there on a very small level.

Dusty Warner: A couple days a week.

Anne Warner: He's doing some substitute teaching and I may pursue that this winter. We need to be kind of busy, but I can, I can putz. I can do travel diaries—

Dusty Warner: Yeah, she can putz.

Anne Warner: —on the computer. You know, I have all kinds of things that I can do. But yeah.

Dusty Warner: And for me it's like, well I can do that to a certain degree, but then I do like to travel. But we took some really long vacations. We took almost three months in Europe and some other ones. And I just love doing that. The thought being – of driving through a town, or something like that, in Europe and not speaking the language and just doing stuff is okay with me. I'm fine. Right.

Lilli Tichinin: All right, well.

Dusty Warner: Okay, thank you.

Lilli Tichinin: Thank you.

Dusty Warner: I don't know if it's what you wanted or not, but it's what you've got.

Lilli Tichinin: Absolutely.

[END OF TRACK 3]

[END OF INTERVIEW]