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James D. Swed
October 31, 2012

Interview conducted by Lu Ann Jones
Transcribed by West Transcript Services
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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

JAMES D. SWED

By Lu Ann Jones

October 31, 2012

The Ranger Rendezvous

Transcribed by Technitype Transcripts

ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL PARK RANGERS

J. D. Swed and Lu Ann Jones read and corrected this transcript in April and May 2013.

[START OF TRACK 1]

[TRACK 1 – sound check]

[START OF TRACK 2]

Lu Ann Jones: Well, I always start out interviews just asking people for their full name and when you were born and where you were born.

James D. Swed: My name is James D. Swed, but no one knows that first name, so this will be a relief to the public. I go by J.D. Swed. I was born and raised in Gibbstown, New Jersey, on the Delaware River side of New Jersey.

Lu Ann Jones: So, what was that community like?

James D. Swed: It was very industrial. My dad worked for DuPont Chemical Company as a research engineer in the explosives department. There was a company housing area, and we all lived in that. Then probably the most remarkable part of that was that we had pond next to our house, and so I hunted out there, I learned to ice skate out there, and I spent most of my time out in that wooded area between the DuPont plant and my house and this pond. So, there was snapping turtles and muskrats and ducks and geese that would come in there. I never did hunt deer, but small animals, rabbits and that, and I trapped muskrats and snapping turtles and things. But my outdoor experience was through that little pond that was there.

James D. Swed: My dad started the Boy Scouts there, started the Little Midget football teams, and was very active in starting the Little League there, too, so I was very active in sports growing up there. My dad always took us camping. Then when I was in eighth grade, I was looking for a project in woodshop in those days, and I actually built a 14-foot speedboat with my dad, to make that.

[END OF TRACK 2]

[START OF TRACK 3]

Lu Ann Jones: Okay, we'll pick up. Okay, yes, that's fine.

James D. Swed: So, I built this boat with my father, and then I spent a lot of time on the Delaware River running that thing up and down the Delaware River and then the little sloughs of New Jersey. So, I spent a lot of my time outdoors, and I was encouraged by my parents.

Lu Ann Jones: Did you tell me the year that you were born?

James D. Swed: 1952.

Lu Ann Jones: And what about your mom? What did she do?

James D. Swed: Both my parents were from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and so we spent a lot of time going back and forth to Michigan. There was a lot of outdoors around my grandmother's house, so all

summer long I was running around in the woods there and fishing. My mom was a stay-at-home mom for a long while, and then I think when I got into later years of grammar school, she ended up being a clerk for the court, and she was a district court assistant.

Lu Ann Jones: Did you have brothers and sisters?

James D. Swed: I had three sisters, all older. Most of them were moved away by the time I was – I was born seven years after my last sister, so I had my parents to myself for most of my late teens.

Lu Ann Jones: I was an afterthought baby, too, with two big brothers, so you kind of grow up in different families, almost.

James D. Swed: Right. Exactly. But the unique thing about my father was he was blind. He had retinitis pigmentosa. He worked for DuPont, which in those days it was unheard of for them to hire a handicapped person, let alone a sight-handicapped person. My dad never used a cane. He just used dead reckoning and counted his steps, and he would walk that whole DuPont plant without any assistance. He'd walk from one building to another. I still don't know how he did it, and nobody could believe he could do that. But he had seven or eight patents to his name and was very successful at that.

James D. Swed: Then when he retired as a research chemical engineer, then he started working for a radio station for the blind and ended up having his own little company that would buy glasses for people who were at poverty and developed a little deal with LensCrafters. They would give people free eye exams, and my dad would buy them a pair of glasses every year.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow. Do you think you got any—go ahead.

James D. Swed: He lived to ninety-two.

Lu Ann Jones: Do you think you got any of your kind of search-and-rescue skills or your sense from that kind of a gift?

James D. Swed: I find I can do a lot of things with my eyes closed. Places where you're trying to read something you can't see or if it's dark, I have the same traits that he had in how to walk through a dark building where you can't see. So, in my firefighting and those things, if I was in a dark building, I seemed to have an easier time than other people did in that, because I just knew how to do that because I watched my dad walk through our house.

James D. Swed: I think I learned from my dad that you don't have to see the solution, because he couldn't see it. He'd have to ask a few questions. People at the plant would call him in an emergency, and he'd ask a few questions, and they'd tell him what the gauges were reading and that. He would say, "Well, there's that one valve over by Reactor 3 that has a tag on it, and if you go over there, I think

you'll find that that valve's leaking." So, these guys had been running around looking for the solution for hours, and they called my dad, and they'd go over there and, sure enough, that valve would be the one that would be the problem. So, he really taught me, not purposely, I don't think, but I think I just learned that, that if you ask a few good questions, you don't have to look at the problem. You can find out what it is, think it through.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow.

James D. Swed: Yes. He's a remarkable man.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow. That's a great story. It's clear, your parents' influence. Were there other adults in your life as a kid, thinking back, that—

James D. Swed: There was a few. There was a guy next door who was very athletic. He used to play professional football in the old leather helmet days.

Lu Ann Jones: Oh, my gosh.

James D. Swed: Bill Falen, and he was my next-door neighbor, and he had a young son, and we would play together. There was probably six- or seven-years' difference. But Bill would teach me all the things that my dad couldn't, like how to hit a curve ball. So, sports-wise, my dad would still go out in the backyard, and he'd punt me the ball, and I'd throw it and then tell him where it was to pick it up. [laughs] But Bill had a real influence in my life with sports.

James D. Swed: Then probably the next, next person was my sixth-grade teacher, Mrs. Fisher. She was brutally mean and used a ruler a lot. [laughs] But after getting whacked a few times, I decided that maybe I needed to behave differently. She was very into science and biology, and so in that sixth grade is where I ended up getting my understanding of science and biology and building things. We built a space capsule that was out of cardboard barrels and things, and put lights in them and gauges, and I was really interested in that project. I really think she probably had the most influence on me in getting somewhat disciplined with education and certainly discipline. If you were late for her class, she'd bend you over backwards over a table. So that discipline and that interest in science came there.

Lu Ann Jones: What about as you matured into high school? I mean, you were able to take more science courses?

James D. Swed: Well, our high school was kind of probably a mediocre school in the East Coast, very diverse, a lot of Italians and a lot of blacks in the school, so I grew up in a diverse environment. I loved sports, that was my big deal, and I was very good in sports, but I was small. I was very small, but I was very athletic, too, so I could never excel like the taller guys at basketball and that, but I still

played and did okay. I loved baseball mostly. But there wasn't many influential people in our high school. It was just get your diploma and get out of there.

Lu Ann Jones: So where did you end up going to college?

James D. Swed: My draft number was thirty-three in the old lottery system, and that was 1970, so Vietnam was still going strong, and I had a number of my friends who didn't come back. I didn't know what I wanted to do in college. I knew I was going to college, but I didn't know what I was going to take up. With a draft number of thirty-three, the only way to not be involved was to get a student deferment through going to college. So that spurred me to go right into college, and I went to college at Michigan Technological University. That's where my dad graduated, up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan where my grandmother lived, and I had an aunt and uncle that still lived up there.

Lu Ann Jones: What town was that?

James D. Swed: The college is in Houghton.

Lu Ann Jones: I was just there last summer, yes.

James D. Swed: Yes, it's a great little town.

Lu Ann Jones: Yes, [unclear] and all, yes.

James D. Swed: My dad was born in Dollar Bay, and my mom was over in Hancock.

James D. Swed: I wasn't a very good student in high school. I mean, I got Cs and Bs. At the time, it was like the number-three engineering school in the nation. So, my high school grades compared to everybody else in the college were considerably lower, so I struggled for the first year or so. But I had to keep a 2-point to just keep my student deferment, and I did that.

James D. Swed: I ended up there, being very interested in skiing, and I got to be a lift attendant and a ski patrol with the volunteer ski patrol, took first aid and all that through the school, and really got to be a good skier, and I loved the first aid part of it, and that really led me to my first Park Service job.

Lu Ann Jones: What did you like about the first aid part of it?

James D. Swed: I think it was the biology. You had to learn a little bit about how the human body worked, and I think that certainly was the start of what became, even in my Park Service career, one of my most valuable skills and the thing I liked to do the most. It was just helping people too. I seemed to have a good sense of what to do and how to do it in an emergency situation. I didn't ever panic. It just seemed that maybe through all that training that we went

through, that I was able to see what needed to be done and do it in a calm manner.

Lu Ann Jones: What was the first Park Service job, and how did you get there?

James D. Swed: I was graduating from college and the military found out, of course, and they said, "Well, it's just a deferment, so you have to come in now." So, I went in, and I actually had my physical, and, of course, I passed. Then that was when they did away with the draft, and so I never did have to do military time. When I talk to veterans about that, you know, there's some animosity that I didn't go. I feel that, and maybe a little guilt, too, but then I did serve my country for thirty-three years in the Park Service, carrying a gun for my country. So, I feel okay about it.

James D. Swed: I ended up, my sister was dating a seasonal park ranger in Yellowstone, my sister Sheryl, John Jingles. John was a co-worker and friend of Rick Smith. Rick was talking with John – Rick was the Badger Pass subdistrict ranger, and he was talking with John, it was back in D.C. or somewhere, and saying that he was trying to get ski patrolmen, and he needed to hire a few.

James D. Swed: John said, "Well, I think Sheryl's brother is a ski patrolman." And Rick said, "Well, have him send me an application."

James D. Swed: So, Sheryl called me, and I don't even know how I got an application, went to the post office and filled out a 171 with a pen [laughs], and sent it in. The next thing I knew, Rick called and had hired me, and so I didn't even get to go to the graduation service at college. It took me an extra term to graduate. So, I packed up everything I had in my old '65 Ford pickup truck and drove out to Yosemite, and I'd never been further west than Denver before that.

Lu Ann Jones: What was your first impression of Yosemite?

James D. Swed: It was an amazing deal for me, very emotional, actually, still when I talk about it or think about it. I drove into Yosemite Valley, up what was then the Priest grade, really steep, winding road, and I had never been on a road like that before, and it was raining very, very hard. I mean, my old wipers weren't doing it. As I was driving on that road, I thought, "You know, if I go off this road, nobody has any idea where I am." This is way before cell phones, and my parents didn't know what route I was taking, and I took two weeks to get out there just to see the country.

James D. Swed: But by the time I drove into the valley, the valley was all socked in, and, again, winding roads and narrow and steep dropoffs, and it was just at dusk. So, I went into the valley and ended up with not knowing where to go. Of course, I ended up at the lodge.

Lu Ann Jones: The Ahwahnee?

James D. Swed: No, just at the little lodge there. And I said, "I'm working here." They said, "Well, do you know who you're working for?" I said, "Yeah, the Park Service."

James D. Swed: So, they called the park dispatch, and J.T. Reynolds came and picked me up and brought me over to the Ranger Club where I was staying, and J.T. and I have been friends ever since. In fact, he was best man at my wedding, and we've been great friends for all these years.

James D. Swed: So that night it was still raining, and I didn't have any idea where I was, other than in this old log structure, small room. I woke up in the middle of the night because it sounded like somebody was strangling babies out in front of my window. I had never heard coyotes before, and they had made a kill of some sort. Now I recognize the sound, but I didn't then. It was spine-tingling for me then.

James D. Swed: I never did go back to sleep, so I was up and moving around before the sun came up, and I don't know why but I don't even remember looking out the window, but I walked out of the Ranger Club just as the sun was coming up and the clouds were breaking up, and there's the falls right there; you could hear it. And there was snow halfway down the valley floor. It was just spectacular. I had no idea a place like that existed. It was amazing.

Lu Ann Jones: And there you were. You were going to be working there.

James D. Swed: Yes. I spent all day walking around with my head up. I finally got on the shuttle. I never ate breakfast, never stopped for lunch, just went from one place to another, and finally ended up finding a place to eat dinner, and still stayed out the whole day and watched the moonrise. I mean, it was just crazy, beautiful. I just never – I couldn't get enough of it, and it still affects me that way today, even though I've lived and worked there for four and a half years or so.

Lu Ann Jones: So was that a permanent job or was that going to be—

James D. Swed: No, it was seasonal. The Park Service actually hired and uniformed the patrol, and I worked on the Badger Pass patrol for four winters. Two of those we didn't have enough snow to stay open. Eventually after the first year I ended up being the ski patrol director, so I ended up running it.

James D. Swed: After two years, they turned the ski patrol over to the concessioner, so we were supervised by the Park Service, not in Park Service uniform, but paid by the concessioner, and there was all sorts of conflicts with that. Anytime a safety issue came up, the concessioner wasn't as interested in getting it fixed as the Park Service was, and we got caught – I got caught, especially, as the

patrol director – between those two. It was a delicate situation to try to get the concession management to make the repairs that they needed at the pace that we wanted them done.

James D. Swed: But in the meantime, so Rick was my immediate supervisor there, and then he liked me enough that they were just starting the bear management program up in Tuolumne Meadows, and so I got hired, and Rick was the subdistrict ranger up there. So, he took me up there, and I did bear management and just loved that.

James D. Swed: I was a campground ranger, but I was armed. Interestingly enough, I got up there, we opened and shoveled out the whole place, and a bear had gotten into the main cabin, and it took us days to clean that up. I had never fired a handgun before. I was a hunter, but never a handgun. I had hair down way below the collar of my shirt, but that was the thing in those days. After the Yosemite riots, they were looking for rangers that could fit in better with that younger group, college people that were creating some trouble there, hippies.

James D. Swed: They wanted me to carry a firearm and do law enforcement, and so I was sent down to the valley for what I thought was a forty-hour refresher, and that's really what it was. They didn't spend a lot of time on police tactics or techniques. There was a guy from the FBI was talking about sex crimes for a day. And after a week of that, I got what was called a C-card in those days. It was a commission card, but that was all it was. You know, they handed me a gun and box of bullet and a ticket book and keys to a patrol car and said, "We'll show you how to use that stuff all in the next couple of months."

James D. Swed: A funny story I'd like to tell about that was I was moving a patrol car from the valley up to Tuolumne Meadows. After that course, that was one of my tasks, was to drive a patrol car back up. So, I was in uniform. I had just gone through this refresher. They had kind of showed me how to write a ticket then. This was a Rambler station wagon that we used in those days. I don't know what color green it is, like Border Patrol green. We had big portable radios there that slipped into a unit in the dash to make them more powerful. The only light bar we had was there's a spotlight that was on the left windshield frame, and it was a white light, unless you spun the handle, and then it was a red light and it flashed if you flicked the switch the right away.

James D. Swed: So, I was driving up on the road, and some guy passed me on a solid-yellow line. I couldn't believe he'd do that, but he did. Well, I was a ranger, and I had a ticket book. [laughter] So it took me a while to figure out how to get that light turned around and turn it on. I had to flick the switch and then turn it so they could see it.

James D. Swed: So, then the guy pulls over, and I walk up with my – I didn't have a flat hat at that time because I was so new. I said, "Do you know why I stopped you?" He said, "No." I said, "Well, you passed me." He said, "Oh, I didn't notice." I said, "Well, I'm going to write you a citation for passing in a no-passing zone." He wasn't happy about it, of course.

James D. Swed: So, I walked back to my patrol car, and I have this new briefcase that was probably used by other people, but it was new for me, got my ticket book out, and I couldn't find a pen. [laughs] I searched the briefcase, I searched my pockets, of course, I searched the glove box, I even searched between the seats to see if there was one between the seatback. And I contemplated going and asking that guy for a pen, right? But I didn't. [laughs]

James D. Swed: So, after exhausting my search, I decided, well, I was going to let him go. So, I walked up, and I said, "Well, I'm going to let you go this time, and just a warning, and don't do this again." He appreciated that.

James D. Swed: I went back to the patrol car, and I was just sweating profusely because I was so nervous, and he drives off, and I'm just mad that I wasn't prepared. So, then I pull out, and I'm driving down the road, and all of a sudden everybody's using the turnouts, and it's amazing because before, that was one of the things, nobody used the turnouts. Well, I had forgotten to turn the red flashing light off. [laughter]

James D. Swed: So, my first law enforcement experience was not good, that's for sure. Luckily, we do a lot better training now with FLETC [Federal Law Enforcement Training Center] and with training officers and training parks and that. So, I'm happy that people don't have the same issues that I had to face back in those days. [laughter]

Lu Ann Jones: Even going back to when you came there on the ski patrol, I mean, were you given any kind of orientation at that point about, "Welcome to the Park Service. Here's what your duties are"? Or was it really more about whatever experience and instinct you brought to the position?

James D. Swed: Yes, there was no orientation for new employees. I don't recall anything like that. I mean, somebody handed me a park map, or I picked one up in my wandering around the valley for a while.

James D. Swed: I couldn't stay at the Ranger Club very long, so I ended up having to find another house or someplace to live, so I moved up into Wawona and rented a house with Joe Evans and Randy Morgenson, and so we all lived together in a house there. Randy and Joe were backcountry ski patrol; I was front country.

James D. Swed: But there was no orientation. When you got up to the ski hill, Rick, of course, would tell us what we were supposed to be looking for and how to bring people down and what we do when we're down there and how we get them out, injured people out. There was no helicopter stuff then. It was in the back of a Rambler station wagon on a military cot and had oxygen. That was helpful. [laughter] We took good care of people, but it was just that's what we had and that's what you used.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, can you remember some of the first kinds of issues you had to deal with on that ski patrol, as new to the Park Service, or in general what kinds of things you were dealing with?

James D. Swed: Badger's not a real busy place, so if you had an accident a day, it was exciting. You know, it's the snow conditions that dictate whether you're going to have a bunch of accidents or not. We had some pretty severe ones, some fractured femurs and some people running into trees and that. Most memories I have are the people who got lost when they went off the backside. In fact, the first downhill run in the United States was off of the back of Badger Pass called Rail Creek, and you could ski that if the snow level was far enough down, and we did frequently, the patrol guys did. Occasionally a skier would get off there, and it usually ended up in long searches. We usually found them by morning because you could follow the tracks.

James D. Swed: Then there's a lot of backcountry search and rescue that we did. There was one that I recall, a doctor that got separated from his party on the way out to Dewey Point, and we spent days and days looking for him. They didn't find him till next spring at the base of Bridal Veil Falls. But we did quite a bit of that, search and rescue, and that led me to knowing more and more about search and rescue and techniques. I had no formal training up till then.

Lu Ann Jones: How were you getting training? I don't know search and rescue, so if you were going to explain to me kind of the state of search and rescue and the kinds of things you were doing if somebody was lost, how would you try to tell a novice?

James D. Swed: Well, in those days, it was map and compass. So, you were trained and you'd better know how to use a map and compass, because when the weather gets bad or it gets dark, you've got to figure out where you are and how to get out. And then when you go back in, you want to know where you searched.

James D. Swed: But it was way before Managing the Search Function ever came out. We're talking the mid-seventies now. There was a lot of kind of grid search where you'd keep track of each other. You'd always keep each other in sight, especially in the dark or when it's

snowing four inches an hour. That was the way we chose to search because it was just safer that way.

James D. Swed: The training we did mostly was on the ski hill, putting people in litters and, okay, this fake injury here is a broken leg, how are you going to splint it and get him in, into the A-Frame (medical Ranger Station). But it was mostly done in-house by rangers who had been there, Rick in particular, and then the other guys like Joe and Randy had been there for a few more years prior to me, so they were helpful in getting us squared away.

James D. Swed: Then I put a lot of the training on because I'd been a national ski patrol for four years, four winters at Michigan Tech, and so I brought a lot of different techniques, like a different technique to evacuate chairs and things like that that Badger didn't have. So, I brought a little bit myself, but mostly it was gained by on-the-job training or training sessions that we'd have once every two weeks or so on the hill.

Lu Ann Jones: How does one, I guess, just develop the confidence to do that kind of work?

James D. Swed: Well, I think for me it was that I had spent so many days camping with my folks up in Upper Peninsula, Michigan. The one winter I was there, we set the record for inches of snowfall, like 400 or something ridiculous. So, you get comfortable in the snow, and I still camped up there in the snow and things like that and snow-shoed and cross-country skied a little bit. But you just get confident. Once you've slept out in the snow in a big snowstorm and moved around, you just get better and better at it. So, I think that's where I developed that.

James D. Swed: Then in the summers, the summer that I was in Tuolumne, I really learned to climb. I was up there with Rick, and he was an avid climber, and almost everybody—

[END OF TRACK 3]

[START OF TRACK 4]

James D. Swed: —worked up there was climbing. And so, on our off hours, we would go climb. So, they taught me rope techniques and protection and all that. We would climb every weekend, we'd climb after work, and it was so available, we used to joke about belaying from the bumper of your car, you know. We had all the routes and that, and so the more you do it as a hobby and the more interested you are in it, you sit at home and practice your knots in front of the woodstove because there was no radio, there was no television, and we were in tent camps up there. So, I developed a real interest in climbing and hiking, of course, when I worked in Tuolumne.

Lu Ann Jones: At that point, I mean, what did it mean, or did you think about what it meant to be a ranger, a Park Service ranger?

James D. Swed: No. I mean, I don't remember visiting any national parks when I grew up. I don't know that I had the concept of national parks before I got to Yosemite, and then, of course, I got spoiled by being in one of the most beautiful ones and by being in one that has some of the best climbing in the world and learning on that great rock. So that spoiled me for a lot of other things that came afterwards, but I didn't really have a concept of national parks or being a park ranger.

James D. Swed: I know what the uniform meant, mostly because of Rick's insistence that his staff be well uniformed. One of the funny stories about that was I had not been on horseback before, but I was interested in it. J.T. was up there, and he had gone through the horse program in the valley, and so J.T. would take me out to the corral and we'd muck the stalls and do all that. Then I'd go on short rides with him and learn how to handle the horse sometime.

James D. Swed: Rick wouldn't let me do any frontcountry patrol on horseback until I had a flat hat, and in those days, you had to order them from Alvord and Ferguson, and it took a long time to get them. We were wearing straw hats in the summer up there. I'll never forget the first day my hat came in. I wanted to do a horse patrol, so Rick came out and he looked at my uniform, and he goes, "Okay, you can go," because I had my hat on. [laughs] I don't think he believed that I actually had one yet, because he always bugged me, "Where's that hat, Swed?"

James D. Swed: And I'd go, "I ordered it. I ordered it." But I had to borrow Joe Evans' cowboy boots because I didn't have any cowboy boots, and so I'm in Joe's cowboy boots and my brand-new hat, and I'm riding along feeling pretty studly in uniform and in the front country there, and I'm running through the campgrounds, and I'm on this horse called Droopy, who was known well by me after the fact to be a cantankerous horse, and when he wasn't being cantankerous, he'd fall asleep and walk off a cliff if you weren't careful.

James D. Swed: I'm on Droopy, and I decide it's time to go back, and so Droopy knows that we're going back to the barn. Well, I'm trying to get him to cross the Tuolumne River there, and there's people out in the meadow and there's people on the bridge, and it's a real busy summer Saturday. I start crossing the river and got into a little bit of a deep water. Well, as soon as the water touched Droopy's belly, he freaked out. Instead of turning around or going forward, he turned downriver and was jumping like this big gallop like if something was trying to jump out of the water. So, I stayed on him

for five or six of these big gallops or jumps, but he's getting into deeper and deeper water. So now we were going when he'd jump, the water was coming up over my waist and almost over his head. [laughs]

James D. Swed: So, I didn't know exactly what to do. Of course, I didn't have a whole lot of training. I had about as much horse training as I did law enforcement. So, I decided I was going to bail off, because I was afraid, I'd drown the horse. I didn't know better. So, I'm trying to time that and kind of get him over to the edge. So, he takes this one last gallop, and I try to bail off at the right time. Well, I didn't pick the right time, and he kind of bucked me off, and I landed in the mud in about eight, ten inches of water.

James D. Swed: I still had the reins in my hand, and now Droopy's just standing there next to me calm, I mean breathing hard but he's just – and then so as soon as I get up, he rips the reins out of my hands and goes across the creek. So now he's on the other side of the river than I am, and just as I'm looking over there, I look in the water and I see something floating down the river, and it's my hat. So, I kind of have to swim out to get my hat, I pick it up, and there's a hoof print right through the center of the crown of my hat. [laughter]

James D. Swed: Oh, I was so embarrassed, and I'm looking around, and it doesn't look like anybody's seen me. There's still people picnicking in the meadow, they're not looking at me. There's nobody looking at me from the road. So, I had to swim across, get the horse, and then I walked him around across on the bridge. There was no more water involved in that.

James D. Swed: But then I go up to the ranger station. I take care of the horse, I walk up to the ranger station, and water's still squishing out of my boots. I had Joe's boots. And Smith just looks at me. I had my hat behind my hand. He just looks at me, and he goes, "This better be good, Swed." [laughs] So I told him the story and then I showed him my hat, and he just turned and walked away. [laughs] Then I had to go and talk to Joe about his boots being all wet. Oh, it was not good.

Lu Ann Jones: Was there kind of joking among the rangers? I mean, kind of what was the banter like or just kind of the sense of community there?

James D. Swed: The people that were up in Tuolumne that year with Rick Smith were overall quality people, from the fee collectors to the backcountry wilderness people. Almost every night we'd all gather by a campfire there in the housing area. Rick is a pretty good guitar player and would get the guitar out, and we'd sing songs or make up songs, and there'd be a little adult beverages going around, of course. But the camaraderie up there was excellent.

James D. Swed: The rangers that were there tried to be topnotch. Looking back, without the training that we have nowadays, we were lucky we didn't get hurt or killed or hurt somebody else, because we just didn't have the – we had poor equipment. The Ramblers were all because of trying to get the car industry from going bankrupt. [laughs] So we got the castoffs of the worst car company in the nation. So, it was just, you know, not great equipment, certainly not training to anywhere close to what we have nowadays.

James D. Swed: Everybody was involved in safety and thought safety was a big deal, but I don't think we really talked about safety. We didn't do any debriefings. I don't recall any tailgate sessions. We did that around search-and-rescue incidents. My first death was up there that I was involved in, was a little climbing accident that happened on Puppy Dome, a Boy Scout group that was up there learning to climb. Near the end of the day, one of the kids needed a couple of carabiners, so he untied one of the ropes and then tied it off with an overhand, and then took the carabiners out so he could rappel one more time, and another kid rappelled off that rope, and it just came untied and he fell to his death. We had to carry him out and we had to do the investigation, and I was involved in that. So, we talked at those times about safety and things, learning how to do things differently and better.

Lu Ann Jones: How do you learn to deal with the fact that you are dealing with death sometimes? Sometimes it has a happy ending and sometimes it doesn't have such a happy ending.

James D. Swed: You know that death was the first one, and it was pretty vivid. I mean, he was pretty broken up, and there was a lot of blood and brains around, but it was just one of those things. The way we dealt with it in those days was at night we got around the campfire and we drank a few more beers than we did the night when those things didn't happen, and it was a macho deal, I learned later, you know, much later.

James D. Swed: Then my next fatality was at Tetons, that I handled all by myself. That one taught me a lot of lessons, because it was a young woman who rolled her truck and died, and her parents wanted to go to the exact location. Of course, there's a large bloodspot, and I took the fire truck out there and tried to wash it all off and I couldn't. Then, morally, I had to decide whether or not I'd take them to the exact spot because of that bloodspot. I battled with that internally for a little while to try to figure it out, and I don't think anybody told me. I don't know if I asked for any help. I don't recall that. But I decided that it was best to be honest, and I've always done that with all the deaths, and I've handled hundreds with the Park Service in my career now, and that's always paid off well for not only me, but for the people that I was dealing with. I just set it up

for them and told them, because I didn't think it was fair to take them to a place that was a hundred yards down the road, because they would always have the wrong spot. And that's played well for me.

James D. Swed: When I was up in Alaska at Denali, I think the ten years I was there, at one time I added it up loosely, and there was about ninety-nine deaths, almost a hundred deaths in those ten years that I helped manage or dealt with directly. So, I got really good at it, and I still have people who write me letters or notes on the anniversary of their loved one's death and thank me for helping them get through that, and there's a few people I have maintained contact with, even though I've moved around through that. So, it's one of those things that I really take great pride in, in how I was able to help people all those times.

Lu Ann Jones: I mean, it's interesting when you can find those gifts like that inside yourself and are able to use those.

James D. Swed: Yes. There were a lot of people, especially on my staff up at Denali, who didn't want to make that call, couldn't make that call, and I would always take that burden. And it never seemed to be a burden to me because I always felt that I could really help people through. Just through going through a number of those, and then there was some training on dealing with death and stages you go through that I picked up, and I always used that to help people with the phases they were going to go through.

James D. Swed: I just was able to help people. There's this one example that this woman's husband died on a route called the Orient Express on Denali, and they never could recover the bodies. Although they could see the bodies frozen in some ice and snow, they could see some colors, it was too dangerous, and at one point she didn't want anybody to take any risks. Well, when I got there, I just went back and flew that every year to see if there was any chance that we could do it safely and if they had become exposed.

James D. Swed: So, I called her the first year I was there. I found the file and I called her, and I said, "I just wanted to let you know that I just flew the area." She had not heard from anybody for years. She was really appreciative. And I said, "This is what I found. I'm not sure I could see a blue parka through there, but there was a different color change, and I think he might still be there, and if I had to guess, I'd say he's there." And she just was so thankful, because for years she had this thought of him dangling on the rope, blowing in the wind, and that was her image of his death and his state. I just encouraged her, I said, "Why don't you come up sometime. When you're ever ready, you come up, let me know. I'll set up a flight for you. We'll take a fixed-wing, I'll fly with you, and we'll go.

Have you ever been here?" "No." "You need to come up here, because I think it'll be healing for you, but you need to do it when you're ready. Don't do it just because I tell you to."

James D. Swed: So, a year later, she and the wife of the other guy that died came up, and we got in a plane, had lunch, and we flew over. Then we had dinner. I've just kept contact with those folks. It just helped them move on. I don't like "closure," because I don't think there is closure in that, but it helped them move on and get some of the negative images that they had, only because nobody helped them, and maybe they weren't even honest where they found them in the first place. So that honesty dealing with death, I think, is always the best way to go.

Lu Ann Jones: Where were those folks from?

James D. Swed: I think they were college roommates, but one was from maybe Idaho and then the other one was from Washington State, I think. I can't remember. At this point, I can't even remember their names. But lots of dealing with death in my career.

Lu Ann Jones: Where did you go from Yosemite?

James D. Swed: I stayed there for four years. I worked in the valley. I put myself through law enforcement school, mostly because Lee Shackelton, who was a law enforcement specialist there, wanted me to do undercover drug buys because I was young and had long hair. I thought about it, and usually in those days you didn't say no to anybody who was as high as ranked as he was. I talked to some of the other rangers, and they, "Oh, yeah, it's easy. Oh, yeah, one time we had to pull guns."

James D. Swed: I told Lee, I said, "I'm not ready for that. I need more than a forty-hour refresher if I'm going to do undercover drug work." [laughs]

James D. Swed: So, as it turned out, we ended up the ski area closed to the lack of snow, and I found a Law Enforcement Academy with the California State Parks at Asilomar down near Monterey, and I got into that, and a couple other people got into that too. So that was my first police academy, and I learned a ton there, which paid off in a number of ways throughout my career. But then I had at least kind of a degree in law enforcement, and eventually we went to commissions, because I worked the first three years, I never had a credential—four years.

James D. Swed: Then working in the valley, we couldn't carry our guns. If we had a patrol car, you had to have them in the briefcase or in the glove box. Eventually we were able to wear them at night, because then nobody saw them.

James D. Swed: I was a foot patrolman in the campground, and I, again, worked for Rick Smith and convinced those guys that I wanted to carry a gun,

and now I've been through the academy, and I was in the campground. So, they allowed me to carry it concealed, so I had a shoulder holster, but I had to wear it under my shirt, so I had to buy shirts too large, and then I put Velcro in the front and fake sew the buttons on. I carried a little two-inch Smith & Wesson around with me in the campground. I was the only armed campground ranger, and I did the Rivers and Pine Campground.

Lu Ann Jones: And what kind of incidents, real incidents, potential incidents, led you to want to be armed?

James D. Swed: I think it was just going through the academy, and now I knew what to do and how to do it, and I knew what all the laws and I knew how to enforce them, and I knew defensive tactics, and I really got into the defensive tactics. Ginny Russo was teaching stuff with Kubatons. I was trying to think what the name of the course was she taught. And I really excelled at that. I don't know, once you get into law enforcement, you know the rules and the regs, and you have confidence that you can handle yourself in a physical confrontation, then you want all the tools. You want everything in your pockets or on your belt. I don't think it was because I was scared; it was just I thought I was more than likely going to get into something, and if I was going to get into something, I needed to have the tools.

Lu Ann Jones: What kinds of infractions were most likely to—

James D. Swed: In the campgrounds on foot patrol, most of that stuff was drinking, underage drinking, a lot of marijuana use. We were issuing tickets for that. A lot of out-of-bounds camping, parking issues. Ginny and I, between the two of us, one day we wrote six hundred tickets in one night. [laughs]

Lu Ann Jones: And that was mostly for drugs?

James D. Swed: That was for all out-of-bounds camping. I think it was 1976, so it was really busy. There's the apple orchard, and people just piled in there and started camping, and we went in there and rattled cages. We didn't even wake people up. We just wrote tickets and put them on their windshield, but it was six hundred of them between the two of us in one night. Dispatch was not happy with us. [laughter] We weren't filling out the names and all that. In those days, you could just put the date, the time, the location, the infraction, and the license plate number. Then dispatch would run it later and fill in the blank for the courts. So, you could write one in a matter of a few minutes and put it on the dash. We were sneaking around. We didn't want to wake anybody up because it would delay our tactics. [laughter]

James D. Swed: A lot of marijuana use, out-of-bounds camping, food-storage issues for bears, quiet hours. I loved the foot patrol. I worked at night, and I loved that because I loved the cover of darkness. I could sneak around, and I was comfortable in the woods in the dark. Most of it was positive contacts. There's people who'd invite me in for a cup of coffee and I'd sit at their campsite for a few minutes and talk to them, talk to them about what trails to hike. I mean, that was 95 percent of what I did, which I loved that part of it, of course.

Lu Ann Jones: I've read an interview that Brenna Lissoway, who's the archivist at Yosemite, did with Ginny Russo. She was the first female law enforcement officer there, I think. I can't remember the details, but the name rings a bell.

James D. Swed: Yes, she was my partner. She was my supervisor there, but we partnered up a lot. Since I was armed, anything that happened that she was nearby, she'd pick me up and we'd go. We did a lot of search and rescue together. We did a lot of the stranded hikers who'd hike up Yosemite Falls and get stuck up there. I bet you we did thirty or forty rescues in that one place. And I think Rick liked to send Ginny because she was a female and she was pretty good, because the crowds that were there. I distinctly remember we'd hear over the radio that somebody was stuck up there, and I'd be in the campground just, you know, "Please call me. Please call me," holding the radio up. "Call me, Rick, please. Call me, please, please, please." [laughter]

James D. Swed: And sure enough, he'd call, and I'd scoot over there, and we'd perform this rescue, and there'd be several hundred people watching by the time we were done, and we'd walk down. I'd walk across the bridge and people would go, "Hey, good job! Good job!" And Ginny would follow me a few minutes later, she'd walk across the bridge, and everybody'd be cheering and clapping. [laughs] I thought, "What am I?"

James D. Swed: But she and I did a lot of things together. In fact, the nickname for us was Starsky and Hutch, and that was during that era when that was on TV, because we were always getting into something, always getting into something. It seemed like it happened right in front of us all the time.

James D. Swed: One interesting point in my career that happened with Ginny in the valley was we had a bear mauling over in Curry Village. They have tent cabins, they're mostly tent, and then there's a little six-foot-high fenced-in picnic table area in the back that's completely enclosed except for an open door, no roof over it or anything. We get to the scene, and there's a cub up the tree, and the tree is right next to the opening of that fenced area, and the sow is pacing back

and forth right there at the opening by that. And we could hear the lady moaning inside that fence enclosure.

James D. Swed: So, the plan was Ginny was going to watch the bear, and I was going to go around the back to see if I could get it in to find this woman. I had a little more EMS experience than Ginny did. So, I climbed over the fence, jumped over the fence. The bear would walk back and forth across that opening, which was about eight feet away from me. I'm telling this lady, "Be quiet, be quiet," and her nose is ripped off, her ear is missing, and her lip is hanging down way below her chin. I look at her, and her thigh is full of blood, her pants, and I thought, well, he bit her, and maybe she's got a femoral bleed there. So, I didn't have time, but I was going to cut her pants off to look at that, and Ginny yells over the radio, "She's comin' in!"

James D. Swed: And I turn, and six feet away from me is this bear sow, who's not happy, and, you know, it hoofs a couple of times. And I'm at that decision point where I'm wondering if I rip this Velcro off of my shirt to get to my little gun, that's probably not going to do any good anyway, is that going to upset this sow? Or am I better to jump the fence and bail, because I'm a standing threat to this bear? But I can't do that because there's this poor woman here. So, I was at that decision point, and I had not made the decision. Luckily, the bear turned and faced away from me, and so I never had to really draw my weapon or make that decision. But it was one of those that made me really think later on, what would I have done? I didn't do anything because I hadn't had time enough to do it.

James D. Swed: So, we picked this woman up and handed her over the fence, and the rest is okay. But it was one of those career decision points that you make in your law enforcement life, anyway.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow. [laughter]

James D. Swed: But Ginny and I are still good friends. She's remarkable. We did a lot of arrests where we'd have rowdy people, and the guys would want to fight me. Then Ginny and I would confer. We'd already arrested one of these guys in this group, and this other guy's wanting to rant and rave and not let us take this guy. So, Ginny goes up to him, and now he's more calm, right? And she gives that little sweet squeaky voice she had – in fact, that was her nickname, Squeaky. And she'd say, "Well, you know, you're under arrest, too, and you need to just come with us. I don't want to handcuff you, but I'm going to have to because that guy, that ranger that you're so mad at, he won't let you get in the patrol car, and he'll be really mad at me. It doesn't matter about you. He'll be mad at me. So, if you wouldn't mind, if I could handcuff you and then we'll put you in, and I'll get you out of there." She would schmooze

those guys, and, oh, you know, they would put the handcuffs on for her, you know, where they would be down in the dirt with me. So, between the two of us, we really worked well together. I just loved those days that we worked together. That was good.

Lu Ann Jones: Were there times that you think the guys tested her because she was the first female, or how did she kind of earn her stripes there?

James D. Swed: As far as the public or the rangers?

Lu Ann Jones: Well, maybe some of both.

James D. Swed: I think the public, usually we're dealing with somebody who's intoxicated or on drugs.

[END OF TRACK 4]

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James D. Swed: So, you never know whether they're going to be violent or nonviolent, and so you just always have to be careful. But certainly, Ginny knew that she was smaller, but she taught self-defense. I mean, the one thing that she was good at was being able to handle herself and handle bigger people, and she had a lot of experience just trying to handle us rangers in training sessions, because she was the lead instructor for that. So, I think she had the confidence, but she was diminutive. She was tiny and she had this squeaky voice, and so I don't know if people thought that she was actually going to arrest them. "What's she going to do?" you know. [laughs] And the next thing they knew, they're in cuffs in the back of the patrol car.

James D. Swed: I don't know that she had any problems with the staff, with the other rangers. I loved working with her. In fact, we wouldn't work with anybody else but each other there that one year. I'm sure that there was guys on the ranger staff that would rather not have worked with her. I mean, she probably recognized it much more than I would have known. It certainly wasn't overt where the guys were talking about it.

James D. Swed: There was another woman there, too. I think she got her commission later on. But Ginny was the first by far and talented, for sure.

Lu Ann Jones: It just sounds like those Yosemite years were such an imprint on who you were and who you became with the Park Service.

James D. Swed: Right.

Lu Ann Jones: Was it hard to leave there when you did leave, or kind of what propelled you to the next assignment?

James D. Swed: I wanted to do something different with law enforcement, and I had a ticket. Now I had a commission and three years of law

enforcement under my belt, or four years, and I thought I'd go somewhere else. So, I ended up getting a job up in the Tetons as a seasonal road patrol out of Colter Bay. I went up early and I had a real long season there. I stayed through the hunt, the elk hunt that they have up there. I don't recall any overt things, other than the valley was busy. I don't know why I left there.

Lu Ann Jones: At this point you're still a seasonal?

James D. Swed: Yes. I know I was tired of Badger as a ski patrol, because out of the four years, I was director three years, and two years of that, we didn't have enough snow to stay open the whole time. So now I was on unemployment, and I had to drive down to Fresno to get my checks and all that stuff, so it was inconvenient, but it was better than not having any money. When we didn't work, we didn't work. It wasn't the Park Service. When we were working for the park, if we didn't have enough snow, then they would keep us on, and we would work in other places in the park. But the concession, they sent everybody home.

James D. Swed: So, I worked the long season in Tetons. We had a huge drug bust there, just stumbled across it, and ended up in U.S. District Court in Cheyenne for a long time.

Lu Ann Jones: Can you tell me about that?

James D. Swed: I was working nights, I preferred to work nights, because then I could climb and play during the day if I wanted. But I'd heard there was an employee party up at Signal Mountain, so I thought, "Well, I ought to go up there. That's where most of the people are. I ought to go up and check it out."

James D. Swed: So, I hadn't gone up more than a half a mile up the Signal Mountain Road, and there's a Volkswagen van off the road, and there's two people sitting out next to it, a little bit battered, and you can smell the marijuana. They weren't smoking it; it was green. I mean, you could smell it. They had a keg in the back, and it was pretty obvious what was going on. So, I ended up arresting those two people, the one driver, and he had been up at the party. He threw the party up at the top so that all the employees would come up, and then he'd sell them all the dope and then have beer, and he'd sell them beer.

James D. Swed: He had come down to get more dope and was going back up with a new keg and more dope, and so he had a bunch of tie sticks, which were in those days – I don't know if they're even around anymore. I never hear about them. But they're just like a skewer, a meat skewer, bamboo, and they tie the marijuana bud to that, and that's how they sold them. He had a bunch of that, and he had four or five pounds of marijuana and all that stuff. So, we ended up

arresting him. We got his car towed, and then we put it in the impound lot and then inventoried it.

James D. Swed: So, he went to court with us in U.S. District Court in Cheyenne, because, of course, it was a lot of felonies. So, I ended up spending a lot of time going back and forth with all the court proceedings and that, and I was helping the U.S. Attorney do some law review and research, which was really fun, and I spent a lot of time on that case.

James D. Swed: Interestingly enough, he was found guilty on a couple of the charges, but the most of the dope that was in the van, he didn't get charged with. He got off on that because of the way we did the search. Interestingly enough, it kind of changed how search and seizure was looked at, through that court case. Because the car was no longer movable, because it was a flat tire, it was disabled, it was wrecked, then you don't have the same ability to go in and search that incident to arrest. And even though we had moved it to the impound yard, we then – the law enforcement specialist was Finley, Mike Finley, and Finley just said, "Yeah, now we can search it, incident to arrest."

James D. Swed: Well, the court said, no, we should have got a warrant because it was too long after the arrest and we had already moved it, and we had time to get a search warrant. So, we lost some of that stuff. But a big court case, it was huge in the Tetons, and I learned a lot about search and seizure.

Lu Ann Jones: So, am I understanding correctly that he was selling to employees of the park?

James D. Swed: Yes. Not of the park. Well, of the concessions. To my knowledge, there was no Park Service people up there. But it was the middle of the night and trying to get other rangers to help, and my backup was – I was working single unit and I was the only one on. It took them thirty minutes for anybody else to get there. But that was typical in those days. You worked by yourself. Nowadays it would never pass for good procedure, but that's what we did.

Lu Ann Jones: I know since I've been with the Park Service, I've read on the morning report about finding – I forget where it was. It was described as a marijuana plantation inside of the national park. When did that become – I mean, I guess, just when marijuana became valuable, but—

James D. Swed: Well, it was first really – those kind of groves, we call them grow sites. We try not to call them gardens, because garden has a nice connotation to it. [laughs] I ended up my last job was as Chief Ranger at Sequoia and Kings Canyon, and they had a significant marijuana problem there. I got there in 2001, so I think it was

probably ’95 or ’96 that they first found the big grow sites or plantations out there with thousands of plants. We didn’t know what to do with it, you know. The argument that I always gave to people was that it doesn’t matter whether it’s marijuana or broccoli that they’re planting out there. It’s wilderness area, and you can’t be doing that, and you can’t be diverting water and pouring pesticides and fertilizer and rodenticides into the ground just because you want to grow something out there.

James D. Swed: So, when I got there in 2001, it was rampant. I mean, we’re talking hundreds of thousands of plants in numerous locations and diverting water. One of the ways that they found one of the big grows was they had biologists wandering around taking water samples in different creeks for a research project, and then they came back with these really high nitrogen levels in one of the creeks.

James D. Swed: The researcher sent them back out there and said, “There must be a dead cow in the stream up ahead. Walk up there and find that dead cow and take your sample above it.” [laughs]

James D. Swed: So, this guy walks back up that same creek and finds this manmade little dam with all this plastic hose going out of it to feed this water garden. So, he was just lucky he didn’t run into the bad guys up there. So, they came back down, told us, and the rangers went in there and took care of the plants. But huge problem.

James D. Swed: Then it was kind of off the radar screen for Washington, D.C., even though Dick Martin was involved in that. This is the superintendent then before I even got there. They had a congressional inquiry group come out to Wawheap Lodge and hold a hearing, and Martin testified and a few other people, about how big a problem it was, but it still didn’t get any funding for the park.

James D. Swed: I got there and decided that we needed to have some funding increase if we were going to really stop this, and now it was getting to be a problem with our staff couldn’t go out in the woods, they couldn’t go out between 4,000 and 8,000 feet anywhere in the park without worrying about their safety. So, I put in for some base increases two years in a row, thinking, well, if we aren’t going to get special appropriation, then even if it takes us seven years, at least in seven years we’ll have money.

James D. Swed: And it ended up that that got bumped up, and we got two half-a-million-dollar base increases for the Law Enforcement Division, and that allowed us, while I was there, to get a drug dog. We hired seven or eight employees, law enforcement, that were just working on trying to find out what these gardens were, or grow sites, and how they were getting access and what the timing of it was, and we

made a number of arrests, and plant numbers went sky high because we were able to get it.

James D. Swed: Our goal then was we know they're going to grow it somewhere; we just don't want them to grow it in our national parks, and, of course, they're growing it in Forest Service and BLM [Bureau of Land Management] land. But the difference between those lands was the Park Service, we control access to our parks. There's very few roads that actually come in. Forest Service, BLM, have roads everywhere, and they don't have the staff.

James D. Swed: So, we were able to really make a dent in that. In fact, this year, 2012, is the first year that we didn't have any marijuana plants recovered out of Sequoia and Kings Canyon. So, we wanted early interdiction. We want to find them before they plant it or just after they just planted, preferably before they plant it, because they're not doing the thinning, they're not doing the fertilizing, they're not setting up camp, they're not killing bears that wander in their camp, that kind of stuff, and trying to get the plants out early. If we do discover them, we're going to take them early, because when they're mature, they're harder to deal with, but more than likely there's more people up there protecting them, and we're more likely to get into a confrontation with them. But we found guns in every one of those, guns and ammunitions and machetes, and it's a mess what they do to the backcountry there.

James D. Swed: But it's a success story, and I know that the rangers are – because I talk to them here at the Rendezvous, they're worried that their funding is going to be moved. There was a base increase, so the superintendent could move it somewhere in the park. But the idea is that we've been successful getting exactly what we want, now's not the time to go backwards, at least for a few years. If you have success for four, five, six years, then maybe you look at, all right, they've got the message, "This isn't the place to grow. Go somewhere else."

Lu Ann Jones: So, when you were at Grand Tetons, is that when you were at the first Rendezvous, or where?

James D. Swed: Yes. In Yosemite, most of the founding members for ANPR were from Yosemite there or worked there, and so I knew most of those. They were all meeting in Jackson Hole. I was working there then, and I took a few days off, and I was working the night shift anyway, so I could attend the meetings during the day. Again, in the beginning it was mostly social. These are all my old friends and that, and I was there for almost all the meetings, if not all the meetings. When they passed the hat, I threw my five bucks in, and when we voted, I raised my hand. So, when it was off and running and started, it was thirty-two members, but they only counted the

permanents, and I was seasonal then, and so I wasn't considered a founding member. Then Rick Smith and I had a conversation about that. He goes, "Well, you're at all those meetings, aren't you?" "Yeah."

James D. Swed: So, then he kind of got it in his mind that maybe there should be thirty-three and that having a seasonal be a founding member wasn't a bad thing either. [laughs] So I think it was at the twenty-fifth anniversary they voted on it. I don't think it was unanimous. I think there was one guy who said, "You can't rewrite history," but he had a bone to pick with me anyway. So, they voted me back in as a founding member.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow. Interesting.

James D. Swed: Yes. I'm really proud of it, actually.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, how did you see the organization evolve? I mean, first it's social, and it still remains social, but did it begin to take on kind of meatier issues, or where did it—

James D. Swed: Yes. It wasn't far off from the beginning that some of the issues on housing came up and rent, how to wear weapons or whether we were going to be able to wear them outside or still had to hide them, because different superintendents could require different things at their park for law enforcement. Most of those guys – they were all guys – were law enforcement, so there's some heavy emphasis on law enforcement and getting better training, better equipment, better consistent national programs or plans and policies in place. Housing was a big one. Then there was the 025 seasonal park technician, park aide controversy.

James D. Swed: I think one of the biggest issues that they tackled, from my point of view, was the twenty-year law enforcement for law enforcement and firefighters. That was a huge deal. It cost a lot of money. We had lawyers involved. We had to hire lawyers and go to OPM and take them on. Some of those people that worked on that worked tirelessly for a long time, and eventually won that, but then you had to go through all these hoops. OPM made it so difficult to go through the hoops, that they willowed it down to just a few of the hundreds of law enforcement people that either couldn't apply, didn't apply, didn't know how, couldn't afford the time and energy. I mean, that's how I bought my first computer. I went to Radio Shack and bought an old Tandy because I had to put my thing together, and in those days, it had to be all affidavits. So that was a big win and a big, I think, probably the most major issue that they brought on, that ANPR brought on. There's been several others, seasonal insurance and that.

James D. Swed: During that time, the original founding members, there's that core group who – Rick Gale and Finley and Brady, Pentla, Mahallock, all those people, Roger Rudolph – were really active, good leadership skills, good communicative skills, and, man, they powered through some stuff in a gentle way. I mean, I don't think people really knew how effective the ANPR became. So that was kind of at its heyday.

Lu Ann Jones: What period would you count in those years?

James D. Swed: I think over the last ten years or so it's been diminishing. Maybe even fifteen years now. I don't know why. I think maybe some of the big issues aren't as big anymore. We've solved some of those. I mean, there's still some housing issues and things like that, and dual careers, but the issues don't seem to be as important to a lot of the employees, and the employees have other ways of getting answers now. Get on the Internet and find about anything you want.

James D. Swed: In kind of the heyday, you called somebody from ANPR and say, "What's the status of the rental problem that we're having," how much rent they're being charged, and mandatory residency with different positions and things like that. So, a lot of those big issues, I think, probably aren't there. Maybe a little lack of the same kind of really dynamic leadership, but that group, it's fondly called the Yosemite Mafia. You probably heard that term.

Lu Ann Jones: Yes.

James D. Swed: That Yosemite Mafia group of people that were in Yosemite in the seventies, late sixties, they became superintendents and regional directors. They were movers and shakers in the Park Service, not just ANPR, and I think it was just a really talented group, because they changed even the Park Service when they weren't representing ANPR.

Lu Ann Jones: You talk about leadership skills, so what did you observe that you – I'm always interested in how people describe what leadership means. So, what kinds of characteristics, traits did you observe in those folks that you would count as good leadership?

James D. Swed: Well, when I'd look at great leaders, I'd think of Rick. I was just fortunate that he hired me first, and I worked for him for a couple, three different positions. All through my career, when I got into a situation where employees – or how to handle things, I'd go, "Well, what would Rick do?" [laughs]

Lu Ann Jones: You're talking about Rick Smith?

James D. Swed: Yes, Rick Smith. I'm probably not going to be very good at picking out his leadership skills. He was a very good communicator. He was very articulate. He could talk with the

southern folks and the northern folks and Spanish-speaking. I mean, he was fluent in Spanish. He was an excellent writer, and so when you handed your reports in, you'd better have written a good report. He wouldn't send things back with red pens; I don't recall that. I think he'd just sit down with you and go, "What did you do here? Oh, well, you missed that. You probably ought to put that in." And in those days that meant writing the whole damn thing over again because we didn't have a typewriter. We were writing all the reports out longhand.

Lu Ann Jones: Not even a typewriter.

James D. Swed: No. And if you did a felony, then you tried to type it out, but usually you'd write it out and somebody else, a secretary of some sort, if it's a felony or something, would type it out for you, and then you'd reread it and sign it. But if Rick came to you and said, "Well, you missed something," usually it meant you had to write at least that page over again.

James D. Swed: He gave good evaluations. He spent time with his people. He spent a lot of time just with you. Ski patrol, he'd go out and ski with us. Road patrol, he'd go out occasionally with us, or he'd be out there but he wouldn't necessarily ride with us. I remember him walking the campground with me once to see what I was doing. I think certainly with me he knew what motivated me, and it wasn't money. It was if there's a search or rescue going on, he knew I was back there on my tiptoes waiting for him to call me on the radio to go do that. So, he could use that to get me motivated to do about anything for him.

James D. Swed: I've seen him in front of the ANPR when he was president. He was a fabulous president. He could get people motivated, fired up to work on projects, people volunteering like crazy. He'd ask for volunteers; half the room would raise their hand. Issues were important. They knew he was going to provide good leadership.

James D. Swed: Almost all those guys had that kind of same trait. It was almost like they learned from each other. Always good humor. I think they expected us to work hard and then play hard. Then if we got into a little problem with playing hard, they were okay with it. They would get our back because they knew we were working hard too.

Lu Ann Jones: So, what kind of trouble could you get in playing hard? [laughs]

James D. Swed: Oh, boy. I had my twenty-first birthday up in Tuolumne Meadows, and we were in tent cabins up there and had a little party. There was a guy named Neely. I was going to say Fred Neely, but I don't think that's it. Maybe it is. Anyway, he was an interpreter naturalist, and he lived next door to me. He was a much older gentleman. I invited him over because we were a little noisy. We

had a fire pit between our cabins, and he had food and he drank all my beer and got drunk. And I don't know, it was before ten o'clock, which is quiet hours, which we probably weren't going to comply with anyway, but Fred just came out of his tent. He went home drunk, came out of his tent, and he was pissed off. And he yelled at us, cussing, "Turn that goddamn music off."

James D. Swed: So, I said, "Okay, okay." That wasn't enough for him, so he came out, down the steps of his cabin, grabbed his ax out of the chopping block, because everybody had wood-burning stoves, came over to my tent cabin. My girlfriend at the time was in my tent cabin, and he got into my tent cabin before I did, and he ripped the wires off of my speakers. [laughs]

James D. Swed: So, I ran up and hugged him, because you can't ax somebody when they're that close to you, right? I took the ax away from him and I escorted him down the steps. I didn't throw him out. I should have, but I escorted him down the steps, and I told him to get the hell home.

James D. Swed: Well, he went and got the rangers, and Fred Kegler who's been to almost every Rendezvous, came over. He was the law enforcement guy on call. He comes over, tells me, "That's it. The party's over."

James D. Swed: I said, "Well, yeah, it is." [laughs] No problem with that. A guy comes over with an ax, and now he's next door, right? We don't know what to do. But I said, "He ripped the wires off my speakers."

James D. Swed: Fred was mostly on me, and I said, "You know, this is bull. You need to go talk to him. He's the one who came over here with an ax. That's the issue here, not me playing music."

James D. Swed: But Fred just said, "The party's over. The party's over." So, everybody left.

James D. Swed: Well, the next morning, I got called in. Rick was there, and he said that Fred had talked to him and was not happy with how I handled myself with Fred and that we back each other up, we're law enforcement, and I didn't show the proper respect. So, Rick said, "So I'm going to give you three days off without pay."

James D. Swed: I was kind of upset, and I said, "Well, what's Neely getting for that?"

James D. Swed: He goes, "Well, I don't supervise Neely. I don't know what he's going to get."

[END OF TRACK 5]

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James D. Swed: "Maybe nothing. But I do supervise you."

James D. Swed: So, I got three days off, and that was a lesson. I'm not sure I agree 100 percent with the decision for three. I would have learned a lesson with one. [laughter]

James D. Swed: Rick certainly liked me, and I'm sure it was hard for him to do that, but he needed to make sure that people knew that if we were playing too hard, there's a limit to that, and I think he was just sending a message to the rest of the division chiefs that, you know, yeah, we're going to be out of line, but we'll get back in.

James D. Swed: Then at night in the valley we'd have parties out at Cathedral Beach, where we'd build a big bonfire. The party would start at two in the morning when night shift got off, playing Frisbee over the fire and things like that, and a few people would get too drunk, but nobody was driving around or anything like that. So, we played pretty hard.

Lu Ann Jones: When did you finally become permanent with the Park Service?

James D. Swed: I went and worked a season at the Tetons. Then I went and ski-patrolled at Park West, which is in Park City, Utah, and I did a helicopter ski guiding there too.

[interruption]

James D. Swed: I don't remember where I was.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, we were talking about when you became permanent, and I realize that your career is so rich that we probably are not going to be able to get to the in-depth that we'd want to, but I'd kind of like to get an overview and then we could come back to selected points to talk. I know you want to talk about Incident Command.

Lu Ann Jones: Allison Steiner said, "You've got to ask him about the toilets," and there was a toilet at Sequoia Kings Canyon. [laughs]

James D. Swed: I wouldn't have brought that up, but that's a good point too.

Lu Ann Jones: So how about if you do kind of take me through the arc of your career, just kind of sketch that out, and then we can decide to come back to some points.

James D. Swed: I started in the winter of 1974 at Badger Pass, and I worked for four years there in Yosemite, Badger Pass in the winter, and worked Tuolumne Meadows the first year, and then the valley after that and campgrounds.

James D. Swed: Then I went to Grand Teton for the season, then winter in Park City as a ski patrolman for Park West ski area – it's now called the Canyons – and did some helicopter ski guiding there for them. Then got offered a permanent job through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a GS-3 park aide at a place called Success Lake near

Porterville, California, and I took that job. It was pretty interesting because it was a small lake, and they had high crime incidence of a lot of drinking and driving and drunk boating and partying. They had a little campground there. I had no law enforcement anymore. The two guys that did have law enforcement were afraid of using it and getting into a situation that they couldn't handle, so they'd never do any law enforcement. So, it was a frustrating time for me there, and it was really hot.

Lu Ann Jones: What do you mean, you didn't have law enforcement anymore?

James D. Swed: I was just a park aide. I had no—

Lu Ann Jones: So even though you had this commission, it didn't—

James D. Swed: It was a non-commissioned position. So, I was in charge of the campgrounds and then just patrolling. I could go tell people, "You can't park here," but that was it. I couldn't even write a ticket. I'd have to call in these two guys that were retiree sheriff officers, and they didn't want to write a ticket. They didn't want to talk to anybody. They were retired in place.

James D. Swed: So, I ended up spending ninety days there, just ninety days, and I was going to quit after the summer. I was going to get them through the summer. But then there was a vacancy at Petrified Forest for a road patrol, and so I got hired there on the north side of the park. Andy Ringgold was the chief ranger there, and Joe Evans was there, Dennis Burnett so there's some people I'd worked with before, and I think they probably had a hand in me getting the job too. Andy would say, "You know this Swed guy?" They'd probably say yes.

James D. Swed: So, I worked there. I did transfer down into Rainbow Forest, which is down in the southern end, and I actually transferred into interp, interpretation. Rick Smith told me back in Yosemite that he thought it was really important for people to have varied backgrounds in all the divisions, and yet you needed to have a rural park experience, an urban park experience, and something in a regional office, and to be successful that was his recommendation.

James D. Swed: So, there was this chance to go into interpretation and run the museum down in the south end, and I remembered that, and I was able to keep my commission because they needed extra people. So, I took that for a while, a year and a half, and then I had a run-in with a fellow ranger down there, who I found out later was sleeping with the chief of interpretation, my boss, and things got bad. [laughs] I learned a big lesson about better find out who's sleeping with who.

James D. Swed: So, then I went back up to the north side again as a road patrol. I moved from Petrified Forest about four years after that at Petrified

Forest, and I did a lot of horse stuff there, loved the horses. Joe was real good about teaching, and he had been through the Yosemite Horse Patrol School, and so we spent a lot of time on horseback.

James D. Swed: Then I went to Grand Canyon as the assistant shift supervisor, a GS-7 [whistles], and worked for Fred Hemphill. Fred was another natural leader, great person, very articulate, very good instructor, and ended up being a very, very good friend of mine. He eventually got cancer and died. So, then I was acting shift supervisor, and then I was also in charge of the horse patrol program.

James D. Swed: From Grand Canyon, four years there, I did a little work in concessions. I rode the river there a bunch because I'd done it privately before. So, I ended up being kind of a go-to guy if somebody got sick or injured. So, I flew in sometimes to take over a boat. I hiked in sometimes to take over a boat. So, I did probably fifteen or twenty trips down the Grand Canyon on a raft.

Lu Ann Jones: But when you say you flew in, were you piloting yourself?

James D. Swed: No, a helicopter would fly. So, I spent another four, four and a half years, so this would be have been '86 I left Grand Canyon, went to Glen Canyon as the subdistrict ranger for Halls Crossing, a GS-9. I thought I went to heaven. I'd made a 9. That was my career goal at one point, was, man, if I can just retire at a GS-9, I'll be happy. [laughs]

James D. Swed: So, I was the subdistrict ranger there for four years under Ross Rice. Then Ross moved on. Kind of a funny story. They offered me the Bullfrog district ranger position, and I had applied for a job up in Talkeetna, Alaska, as the district ranger for the southern part of the park. Before I told Glen Canyon yes, I called up and talked to the chief ranger, Ken Karrer who was one of my ski patrolmen, worked for me at ski patrol. Now he's the chief ranger up at Denali. And I said, "I'm about ready to say yes. I know I applied for this job, so I guess I need to pull my hat because—."

James D. Swed: "Can you give me a couple of days?"

James D. Swed: I said, "Well, if you're serious about me being in the top few, then, yes, but otherwise I—."

James D. Swed: He called back a couple days later and offered me the job in Talkeetna. So, I went home. I had two little daughters, they're five and three, I think, and I said, "Well, we have a choice. We don't get to do this very often where we have a choice of jobs. Do you want to go to Bullfrog, or do you want to go to Alaska?"

James D. Swed: The girls, I don't know how they got information about Alaska, but they started jumping up and down, dancing up and around, and

they put thumbs down, and they go, "Boo frog, Boo frog." Then they go, thumbs up, "Alaska, Alaska!" They did that for five minutes running around the house.

James D. Swed: So that was how that decision was made. So, I went up in '91 to Talkeetna, and I stayed up there from '91 to 2001. At the end of that period, I ended up working for Steve Martin as a management assistant, and I did a stint as a chief ranger for Ken when he did a detail.

James D. Swed: Then I transferred from there to Indiana Dunes as the chief ranger at Indiana Dunes, working for Gary Traynham and Dale Enquist, and I spent three years there, interesting years. It was completely out of my comfort zone, which was something I was looking for. I didn't need to get back into search and rescue or high-altitude mountaineering. I had wrote the book on that, pretty much. So, this was a whole different experience with seven different communities and seven different chiefs of police. It's a sporadically spread-out park and very urban and lots of issues there. So, I was there for just three years and then transferred to the chief at Sequoia and Kings Canyon for the last.

Lu Ann Jones: What does it mean to be the chief ranger?

James D. Swed: Well, I'll use Sequoia because it's the biggest job there. I was in charge of the law enforcement, emergency medical, search and rescue. I had wilderness, all the backcountry rangers, structural fire. Wildland fire was underneath me, big whole different separate unit of wildland fire, and campgrounds and entrance stations.

James D. Swed: So, at the peak season with all the fire crew in there, there's probably over two hundred employees, two to three hundred employees with all the fire crews and including a hotshot group. And the helicopter operation fell under fire, so the budget was probably between five and seven million, depending on the fire year with hundreds of accounts because of the fire brought a lot of accounts into play. So, it was really busy.

James D. Swed: There was a lot of responsibility. There's a lot of employees, a lot of money to make sure you manage properly. Everybody's wanting a little bit bigger piece of the pie and politicking for it, and you get to decide kind of where that goes and who gets it. Then there's the whole marijuana issue that was huge on our plate. Out of all the parks, Sequoia was the spear point for how to manage that and also the largest number of grow sites and the number of plants. So that took up a lot of time with California Forestry, U.S. Forestry, BLM, HIDTA [High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas], which is drug and narcotics groups of people that all coordinate with on that.

James D. Swed: It was fabulous. I had a great staff. Out of all those people, I had one problem employee, and was easy to manage. Just fabulous staff made it easy. I didn't have to get into the weeds and couldn't. There was too much going on.

James D. Swed: I think that job in Sequoia is the best chief ranger job in the system. It's big, it's busy, you don't have the political scrutiny that Yosemite has, and I think it has the best backcountry of any park in the system. Glacier may be close, but Glacier, if you're out hiking there, you're not at the top of the food chain, and the weather gets really bad there. Where in the Sierra, you might get a snowstorm that comes in, but two days later, the sun's out and the snow's gone and the weather is fabulous. So, I think Sequoia and Kings Canyon are the best, certainly, chief ranger job in the system.

Lu Ann Jones: At what point did you start seeing beyond the GS-9, as the height of your career began to look ahead and really sort of think about where you were going to—

James D. Swed: Well, when I got that Halls Crossing job, I thought, "Well, I'm really being competitive for the jobs that I apply for, and I must be doing something right." When I was at Halls, I got to be a park medic. I went to the park medic place. I think early in the interview we talked about my EMS stuff and first aid. There was no skill that I learned that was more important than being a medic, for me, and no skill that I was able to use better to help people than that. Glen Canyon's a really busy place to use that. I didn't get to use it very long, because I ended up in Alaska, and even though we did a lot of high-altitude stuff, there wasn't as many opportunities to use that. For me, especially as a district ranger, it was harder to get out on those runs. But in there, in Glen Canyon, it was fabulously useful, and I use that information today to help me diagnose my kids and me. So that was a skill that I would encourage other people who have an interest in to get, to pursue it hard. It was really a rewarding thing.

Lu Ann Jones: So, when you talk about high altitude, I mean, how did you translate what you had already done to this environment in Alaska?

James D. Swed: Well, I'd done a number of hikes and mountaineering, and winter didn't scare me, from going to college in Michigan Tech and all the others and all the ski patrol, but I didn't know a whole lot about mountaineering. But when you get to be a district ranger of a place like that, you don't have to know and have every skill. I mean, there's very few people that had as many skills as I did in the system, but I didn't have that mountaineering stuff. So, you really need – by that time, you're starting to learn administrative things, how the hiring process goes, the Rule of Threes in those days. How do you fill a job? How do you get somebody to announce it? So,

you're starting to do that. I was starting to do that at the subdistrict level and then the district level, and so you just get better and better at knowing the administrative part. You're having to run a budget.

James D. Swed: So, the interesting thing, you have to analyze what's going on in your unit, and are we getting better, are we getting worse, and what's important and what's not? The first year that I was at Denali was '91, and we had thirteen deaths that year. It was a horrible year, the most deaths that's ever occurred, and that was trial by fire for me. I mean, I literally lived in the ranger station until I could buy a house, so that winter I was living in the ranger station with my family, and we had a morgue set outside the house where these bodies would be brought in until the coroner could come back that spring. So, it was easy to force you to look at, "Is this getting better? No, it's getting worse. What's causing it?"

James D. Swed: So, sat down with all my staff after that climbing season, said, "We can't go through this. The annual death rate is seven people a year. So, what can we do to solve it? What can we do to fix it? What's the issues?"

James D. Swed: Well, the issues were that people were coming to Denali and not being prepared and didn't know what they were getting into, because you could just fly into Anchorage, drive to Talkeetna, and the next day get a permit and go on the mountain. So, we came up with a multi-stroke plan of people need to preregister so that we can look over their application. We need an educational program so that we can teach them what we want them to know before they get here. And that preregistration, ninety days – I mean, we debated how far, but ninety days before you climb gave us the ability to educate them, gave us ninety days to get them information, they could ask questions, we could review their thing, and then they could make their plans and go.

James D. Swed: To pay for all that, we instituted a special-use permit. It was very controversial. Coming up with the numbers was interesting. Then we had to go around and do public meetings. I was not a friend of the climbers, you know, because nobody wanted to preregister. It's the freedom of the hills. "We just want to go, and we don't want to pay. We don't have to pay now. We don't want to pay. And who are you to tell us we can't?" I mean, it was a big issue, and I did a lot of politicking with the mountaineering community and the American Alpine Club and all that, but we instituted it.

James D. Swed: It's one of my primary success stories of my career, because we went from an average of seven deaths a year to less than two, and I don't know what it is now. I haven't done the math. But we went from forty major search-and-rescue incidents a year to twelve. The

Koreans were at one time 60 percent of the deaths and rescues, and we got that down to they were less than 1 percent. So, I actually traveled over to Korea and spent three weeks talking to every climbing club in Korean, at the expense of the Korean Alpine Club, and didn't show them one scenic shot of Denali. [laughs] My slide program had frozen fingers and amputated limbs and dead bodies and tents being blown off.

James D. Swed: But even the American Alpine Club had come forward and said, "We know we fought this, but it really has been better." Not only were we saving lives of climbers, but anytime we can limit the amount of exposure to our rescuers who are doing those kinds of things in bad weather and high altitude is good. So, we did a lot of that.

James D. Swed: Part of that was we got this helicopter program going there. I instituted a short-haul program. I wrote, with a number of other people, the handbook on short haul. I mean, you can't just do that stuff; you have to write a handbook. I invented the process that's used by everybody now for hanging a rope under the helicopter and being able to release it with the pilot. I invented that, and it's still used. But you can't just invent it; you've got to come up with an idea. You have to get it manufactured. Then you have to go through FAA to get it approved and tested. It was a big deal.

James D. Swed: I invented another piece of equipment with a helicopter company that used to do logging, and I got them to change how they picked up logs. So now there's a thing – it's called The Grabber – that we can put underneath the helicopter, and we can go retrieve bodies or packs or whatever, but mostly bodies. So, we weren't sending people in avalanche-prone areas or high-altitude areas. We can fly in, and the helicopter pilot can manipulate this three-clawed device to grab things and eliminate.

James D. Swed: So that high-altitude program there, I told the superintendent, Russ Berry, at one time – he was talking about how the staff went from just one person, me, permanent in the wintertime, to eight or ten because we had all this preregistration and things to do. He said, "Well, you're growing a little empire down there."

James D. Swed: I said, "Russ, I'm just trying to run the best-run high-altitude mountaineering program in the world. Is that okay?" [laughs]

James D. Swed: He said, "That's what I want. It's all right. We're in agreement."

James D. Swed: That was a great ten years there in Alaska. I helped design, with Brad – I'm not going to remember his name, an architect out of the Anchorage office. Hopefully I'll remember his name. But he and I sat down and designed a – it's not a Visitor Center; it's a ranger station down there. The locals wouldn't tolerate a Visitor Center.

I'm extremely proud of that, and the director of the Park Service came and found out we did it under budget and on time, and didn't use the Denver Service Center, and made me write up a bunch of stuff about how we did that, and then went back and gutted the Denver Service Center. [laughter] I didn't know he was going to do that.

James D. Swed: But it was a really good time there, with lots of stuff going on. Southside Development Concept Plan being developed. I was going to tell you another story, but I can't remember what it was. It slipped my mind.

Lu Ann Jones: What about your family? At what point did you get married and—

James D. Swed: I married a woman, Maureen O'Donnell, that I met in college, and we lived together for seven years. Then I got married when I was at Lake Success. I asked her to marry me, and we got married in the Grizzly Giant, in the large sequoia tree in Wawona Mariposa Grove.

Lu Ann Jones: Yes, I've been there. [laughs]

James D. Swed: Yes. Right at the base of that. I had the reception at the old gray barn there in Wawona because we lived there in Wawona. So that's where we got married and then went to Petrified Forest and all that. Then had our first child in Grand Canyon, Anika, and then Kara was born in Salt Lake City when we were in Halls Crossing.

James D. Swed: The kids had a really tough transition going from Halls Crossing, which was a one-room school, about ten kids, all the way up through high school and there was only ten kids, and t-shirts and flip-flops and shorts most of the time, to when we arrived in Alaska on January 1st.

James D. Swed: Oh, I know what the story is. When we arrived at Talkeetna, they were picketing the house we were moving into, the ranger station. It was 35 below zero, and there were a half a dozen people. I don't know how they knew when we were going to arrive, but when we drove up, they were picketing our house with signs that said, "Flush the NPS," and that guy had a toilet seat around his neck, and "Down with the NPS" and "No Visitor Center."

James D. Swed: There was this big controversy because Senator Stevens had announced that he found funding and wanted a Visitor Center built for the National Park Service in Talkeetna. Well, we had not done any of the normal planning that goes on with that, and the people of Talkeetna, half of them, really split down the middle, didn't want a Visitor Center. It would change their community and all that. Other people said, "Yeah, if we have a Visitor Center, man, it's going to bring in jobs and money and more visitors." So, all the businesspeople said yes, all the other people said no. Alaska, and

certainly Talkeetna, is full of a lot of people that are running away from government. So, they didn't want this Visitor Center, so that's what they were doing.

James D. Swed: The mayor there, when she introduced me, I went to the first Community Council meeting, and she introduced me as "the guy who's come to ram the Visitor Center down our throat." And "Don't worry about getting to know him, because he won't be here long." I mean, that was my introduction.

James D. Swed: And, of course, I was there ten years, and we didn't get a Visitor Center. But it's not often that you come into a community where you're so controversial, and that was a real challenge for my family and I to get in and be accepted into the community. There was birthday parties that my kids didn't get to go to and celebrations they didn't get invited to because of their dad. But generally, they had an absolutely fabulous growing-up. They both live in Bozeman now because they want that Alaska style of outdoor life, fly fishing, hiking, snowshoeing—

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James D. Swed: —skiing outdoors all the time, and that's their lifestyle, and that's why they chose Bozeman, because that's there. But they tell stories, like they'd be in college classes, and they would be talking about grizzly bears, and the professor would say something that wasn't quite true, and they'd raise their hand, "Well, actually, the grizzly bear—."

James D. Swed: And then the professor would say, "Now, how would you know that?"

James D. Swed: "Well, we lived in Alaska, and we had grizzly bears in our front yard. Sometimes we couldn't go to school because there was a grizzly bear. We couldn't get out to the bus." So, they had great stories to tell, and they're really proud of growing up in the parks. They're just wonderful people, young women, and I'm really proud of them.

Lu Ann Jones: You said that Indiana Dunes was a little out of your comfort zone, so how did that change come about?

James D. Swed: Maureen's folks, my ex-wife now, were not in real good health, so I needed to get out of Alaska, and ten years in Alaska, man, is a long time. The winters are brutal, summers are great, but ten years of that is long enough. I was ten years in that park. That's double what I've spent. It was the perfect time, because my oldest daughter, Anika, was just graduating from high school, and so it was absolutely the time to get out and get closer to Maureen's

folks. We ended up trying to get into the Midwest, and that's how I ended up at Indiana Dunes.

James D. Swed: It was just so different because it's so urban, sporadically pieces and parcels all over the place, and then you couldn't do anything without connecting with your partners, which always were reluctant partners, the chiefs of police. There's one chief of police there, Beverly Hills, who's as bigoted a person as I ever met, and I told him so and walked out of his office and never talked to him again. He had made some remarks to his staff about a black employee that I had.

James D. Swed: It was just different because even though I had fire there with resources, it was all patchwork, and there were so many community fire departments you had to help manage, lots of law enforcement agencies that you had to do things with. We had a lifeguard program there that I had never run anything like that, but it's not much different than ski patrol, you know. You guys are here to save lives and limit injury. It was just more urban than anything I had ever been.

James D. Swed: But I made more friends there in Indiana in my local community where I bought a house than I did anywhere else. I was immediately accepted as a local. Alaska, I was never, even after ten years. But Indiana, I will never forget how nice they – and I still have lots of friends there in Indiana that we keep in touch with. But it was mostly just they accept you as soon as you – "Hey, you been here a week? You're local." And that made it really nice for those three years.

James D. Swed: I had a lot of employee issues there, a lot. I knew that going in. So that ate up all my time. The only way I could handle that was – a because I don't particularly care for that kind of thing. It's a lot of work, but I dealt with it just like I would if it was a criminal case. I kept chronological dates. I kept meticulous notes. I kept every piece of paper that was generated towards that thing. I did it all with the idea that I was going to end up in a court, and I did, and we won, the park won, the Park Service won. But that was the only way I could manage those three years was to act like this was a criminal case, and I knew how to do that stuff, and so that was how I went and made it through, for me, and it worked. When it did go to court, the U.S. Attorney just came and said, "I've just never seen anything quite like this." [laughs]

Lu Ann Jones: Could you – I know you wouldn't want to or couldn't name names, but just a sense of what the issues were there?

James D. Swed: There was an employee there – I'm sure I'm going to say "she," so I'm just going to give it. There was a woman employee there who had gone from an SCA to a GS-12, Step 4 without competing for a

job. She had done that through the grievance process. She was an expert with the grievance process. She had tried to get my chief job, and they hired me. Well, she grieved that, and the park didn't tell me that she had, rightly so. And even though I was named in the grievance, I never knew.

James D. Swed: So then whenever I tried to get her to do anything, she fought it. I wanted to change her title to a title that meant something to the rest of the world, like I wanted to change it to assistant chief ranger, and she fought that. I mean, everything that came along, she fought. Then she had an employee that was very poor, and he was a supervisor, and she wouldn't take any actions against him.

James D. Swed: It was so bad when I got there, I brought in an outside mediator and had my whole group go through this mediation of several weeks and fill out anonymous forms about what was going on. There was some illegal things going on by this employee, and I found out about that. And even after the mediation, you know, there was no change in these two employees.

James D. Swed: So, they did away with the criminal investigator positions, and I had two of them there. One was a regional employee, one was mine, and so they were no longer underneath my umbrella. That criminal investigator did a lot of our park things, and so somebody had to absorb those. So, I had a group of people, Mary Martin being one of them, come in and do an operational evaluation of my function. How should we look when we need to do that, and how should we do this? And they did this whole operational evaluation, and we took their thirteen points, and I instituted every one of them.

James D. Swed: One of them was this reorganization, and, of course, that started another grievance procedure, and then that was when this woman said, "You only did this because I grieved this other thing." And I went, "You grieved this other thing?" She said, "Yes." I said, "Oh, well." I marched down. I said, "You guys didn't tell me that." "We thought it was better not."

James D. Swed: "Yeah, I think you're right. In hindsight, it was better you didn't tell me, because I didn't know." Any action I took was not based on anything else, other than trying to get the division squared away and in good shape. But we went through two court processes on that.

James D. Swed: One of the issues that the park has in law enforcement that it has to solve is that if you have a Park Service employee law enforcement that either is involved in the performance plan or has anger-management issues, when you do this particular training and you take those steps, when that person transfers, none of that information transfers, and after a few years, that goes away. So,

you can have an employee that has lots of issues, that shouldn't maybe even be in law enforcement, and if they move enough, then that next chief ranger that deals with that employees calls you up and says, "Oh, yeah, oh, yeah, oh, yeah, you don't have that in the file?"

James D. Swed: "No, no, no." And you can't use that after a certain time period. So, in other police departments, that's never the case. If something's in your record, it's always in your record. I think that we have a real problem on our hands for a few individuals that are in law enforcement that shouldn't be, and they move around enough that personnel can't do anything with them, and they just can't do anything. But that's a side note.

Lu Ann Jones: It's interesting that you often – you've talked about the various places that you went, that you mentioned the people that you worked for. Which of those people that you worked for, were they – well, I tried to answer here. Well, I guess I'm just struck by that, because that's an important thing. Who you're working for is going to affect the way you're going to be able to do your job and—

James D. Swed: Yes. I always wanted to know who I was working for, and I needed to know what and who they were and whether we were going to do okay. I've never been a "yes" person. I'm an idea person, and I want to do new things and try different things. If the superintendent or whoever I was working for wanted me to do something that I was reluctant to, I'd tell them and give them reasons and that and pushback and feedback. But if they certainly told me that they'd like to go in that direction, that's the direction I went and happily and supported that, whatever that was, even though I might not agree with it 100 percent. So, I needed to be able to have that kind of a relationship with my boss, and I always did, for the most part. There's a few in there that I didn't mention. You don't always get good bosses.

Lu Ann Jones: Did you see people who were "yes" people that you thought, "We need somebody that is willing to push back more than this person"?

James D. Swed: Oh, certainly. In the division chief level when you start getting into where decisions are made, there's always more weak division chiefs, I think, than strong ones. So, you see that a lot of times, and I would do my best to help them out. If they're in a meeting and they're being overrun by somebody, I kind of felt like it was my job to make sure that things were even or at least not balanced in one direction more than another just because the division chief was a little weak. So, you can be supportive and ask them questions that makes them bring up their side. You can help them

manipulate. I don't know if "manipulate" is the right word, but you can help them get stronger, I think, if they know that somebody else in the room isn't criticizing them.

Lu Ann Jones: That's interesting. So, then you go from there to Sequoia Kings Canyon, yes?

James D. Swed: Yes.

Lu Ann Jones: So, Allison Steiner, who I met a couple of years ago at Yosemite when I did the oral history training and who I just couldn't believe this slip of a young woman was this backcountry ranger when she – I'd been communicating with whoever the wilderness manager is there or somebody.

James D. Swed: Gregg Fauth.

Lu Ann Jones: Yes, who did communicating with me and registering her, and then there this Allison shows up, and I'm just in awe that she's just come out of the backcountry.

James D. Swed: I have to tell you a story about her if you don't mind.

Lu Ann Jones: Yes.

James D. Swed: We used to take the – we still do—take the military. There's an overfly zone that's protected over Sequoia Kings Canyon, and the military flies over it, and sometimes they fly in it, underneath it, and through the park. At one time they had two hundred incursions of low-flying aircraft in the park. Well, in an effort to get that rectified or changed, I think it was Debbie Bird, the chief ranger then, said, "Well, let's try to get these generals from the nearby areas to come in, and we'll take them on a backpack trip."

James D. Swed: So, it ended up being a horseback trip, so I think there are fourteen, fifteen years now we've been doing that. So, I was on this one trip. We were taking the generals from Edwards Air Force Base, China Lake, and Lemoore, and then somebody from Washington, D.C. in the military out on a horseback trip in this beautiful country. I encouraged my backcountry rangers to meet us, because I wanted them to hear what it's like to live out in the wilderness.

James D. Swed: Well, this one night, Allison hikes in to meet us, and she shows up after dark, and she's got this huge pack on, and, as you mentioned, she's diminutive. I wouldn't even guess how much she weighs, but she's five-foot, maybe, or something. But she walks up, and I call her the pack that walks like a girl, because the pack is so big it just has a pair of legs sticking out of it.

James D. Swed: These generals are looking at her going, "Well, where did you come from?" "Oh, I came from Tyndall Ranger Station." "Oh, how far is that?" "Well, it was thirteen miles." "You hiked thirteen

miles today with that backpack on?" "Yes." "Well, is it a flat?" "Oh, no, I crossed over two 12,000-foot passes to get here."

James D. Swed: And they just couldn't imagine. Here these big military studs, right, with all these military people, that this young lady is out there by herself with this huge pack, weighs as little as she does, and she's as fresh as they are, and they rode a horse all day. [laughter] They just couldn't believe it. She was the talk of the whole trip. She's a fabulous employee, she's bright, and I'm really proud of the work she does out there.

James D. Swed: So, the story she probably wants me to tell is when I got to Sequoia, you're looking at this job that you have, and one of it's wilderness. We have Mt. Whitney in the park, the highest peak in the Lower 48. So, I got to manage the highest peak in North America and the highest peak in the Lower 48, which is kind of fun, because that at one point was my goal. When I got a 9 job, my goal was, "I want to be a ranger at a big mountain park." So, I did. I got to do that.

James D. Swed: So, I was looking at Mt. Whitney, and I found out that there's a toilet up there at 14,000 feet and that we fly the human waste off of there every year. I know what high-altitude flying is like and how dangerous it is, and I couldn't imagine that we were flying human waste off of there. There were some horror stories that went with it. I talked to the maintenance guys and the fire guys. The fire guys and the pilot, "Oh, yeah, it's just another job."

James D. Swed: Well, so I went over to the Forest Service, and I said, "I'm going to take out the toilet off of Whitney. What problems am I going to run into?" And they just looked at me like I'd fallen out of a spaceship. I said, "I'm serious about this. I don't want to risk people's lives flying human waste. It's a wilderness area. People ought to be able to handle themselves. Let's come up with a different plan."

James D. Swed: So, after they actually thought I was serious, I said, "We're going to use WAG bags." It's this human waste disposal system that's portable, you know. I said, "So I'm going to do it next year."

James D. Swed: They said, "Well, you can't do that because we have these toilets down at these other places that are still as high, and they still fly their human waste. We still have those, and you guys will dropping – and everybody will be using those and not that one. You can't do that, and it's going to inundate ours, and what are we going to do with ours?"

James D. Swed: So, I said, "Well, let's close them all. Let's put a WAG bag program in, and let's see. We won't take them out. Let's just shut them down, do a signing program. Everybody who comes up the hill has to get a permit from you guys, and we'll hand them a

WAG bag. Everyone will get a free WAG bag. That's much cheaper than flying this helicopter out."

James D. Swed: So, the Forest Service and I bundled some money together. We bought cases and cases of WAG bags. We got a deal from the company because they wanted their WAG bags to be used, and we shut down the toilet on Mt. Whitney. And the backcountry rangers thought I was crazy too. They thought they were going to be picking up poop everywhere and WAG bags everywhere, and what are we going to do.

James D. Swed: So, the end result was after a year, maybe twenty WAG bags they had to pick up that people didn't carry out, and people were happy to use them. The Forest Service shut down their toilets, and now you have to be self-sufficient climbing Whitney. [laughter] But I'm to blame for that. We still have the little buildings that you can go in to get some privacy, because there's nothing up there at high altitudes, so you have a little building there that you can hide behind, and there's signs, "Don't leave your WAG bags here."

James D. Swed: And it's just been amazing to everybody how responsible the public has been, and generally I find that to be the case. If you can get organized enough to get a permit to hike Whitney, you ought to be organized enough to handle your human waste. [laughter] So that's Allison's little story.

Lu Ann Jones: We want to get to Incident Command, and so what is that, for the layperson who doesn't understand what that is, and how did you get involved in that?

James D. Swed: It's a way to manage incidents that usually overwhelm the local authorities, whether that be Park Service or police department or fire department. It's based on the large fire organization that you used to use to manage fires and organize people in logistics and finance. So generally, for our teams, we used to call them all risk. Now they're all hazard teams, they're called. But it's an incident commander, sometimes a deputy incident commander, then you have a finance chief, logistics, planning – I know I'm missing another one here – information officer, usually a safety officer. Logistics, finance, plans, operations. That's a pretty important one to forget there for a minute.

James D. Swed: So, you have one person usually in each of those positions, and you train as a team, and you get know each other's personalities, and you're not irritated by if somebody's pissed at you some day. But the more you know people, the more you can work together, and we did some training.

James D. Swed: So those teams would go along with anybody else they wanted to, and the idea behind Incident Command is it can expand and

contract as necessary to manage the incident, and it can be used for planned events, certainly for emergencies, the stuff that's going on in New York City and Jersey Shore right now with the Hurricane Sandy. Every one of those agencies is working under incident management, Incident Command, from FEMA on down.

James D. Swed: But back in the nineties, there was none of that around, and there were some big incidents that required some organization on how we're going to solve this. So, the Park Service, under Rick Gale, who was in charge of fire operations and was a fire Incident Commander Type 1, ended up deciding with a number of other people – and I don't know exactly the history. It's all written up, though. But they decided they were going to form some national teams, and then eventually the national team said, "Well, we need a feeder group that's going to be trained so that they can come up and fill in behind us as we leave or retire or sick or need to expand further."

James D. Swed: So, they formed two national teams, Type 1. Type 1 means that they're going to go and handle the biggest, most complex events. Type 2, a little less complex, but still certainly a big event. Then Type 3 is usually a local team. So, they formed the two national Type 1 teams, and then four Type 2 teams. One of those was Alaska, and so I was asked to be the plans guy on the Alaska team, and we were going to go do this training, and I was excited about it. I mean, I was doing a lot of stuff there at Denali, and we used a similar incident management team, but it was Type 3, just local, all my staff. So, we went down, and we did some training. As I remember, it was in Vegas. Rick Gale taught it with another guy. And then we went back up to Alaska and we did a little bit of training. We had some meetings of this whole team.

James D. Swed: Then the first incident that our team was used was a search over in Katmai for a female employee named Shocti Epling. She was a VIP [Volunteer in Parks] and was crossing a river with two friends on a backpacking trip the Lethe River and got swept down.

James D. Swed: So, our team got called over there by Bill Pierce, who was the IC on one of the national teams, so he knew the value of having a team. Well, the IC for our team wasn't available, so they bumped me up to incident commander. We brought somebody else in to do plans, which is good, because I was not a very good plans person. I'm a much better IC than I was plans. [laughs]

James D. Swed: So, I ended up being the IC on the Alaska team. The other IC, Fowler, Joe Fowler, transferred out of Alaska, and so I became the Alaska IC for that team. We built that team, and we were very active and went even out of state but handled a lot of things in Alaska and proved to be a really, really good team. Then there was

an eastern team, a western team, and an intermountain team, I think is what they called it, or Midwest team at that time.

James D. Swed: Then somewhere probably around 2000, maybe, they needed some incident commanders for the Type 1 team, and Rick Gale called and asked me to be the Type 1 IC. Then eventually we only had one team. Skip Brooks' team kind of dissolved away, and so I became the only IC for the Type 1 from 2000 to when I retired in 2009.

James D. Swed: We did big hurricanes, of course, and Katrina being my biggest, and Isabel and then Rita and all those others that came through. I've done some things like totem-pole raisings and international park dedication at Klondike. That was the Alaska team. We've done some planning efforts like Quaga mussel and VHS in Lake Superior, so just some sit down with a bunch of -ologists and plan things and get things done and written up.

James D. Swed: The one thing that most people don't understand that teams do and can do, and we did successfully, I think, is President Bush was trying to look at budgets and asked the Park Service – the Park Service was complaining that we needed more money and all that, and he said, "Well, what do you need it for?" "Well, we have these maintenance deficits." "Well, how much are they? What are they?"

James D. Swed: Well, we couldn't answer the question, and so the chief of maintenance in Washington then, Dale – anyway, he called and asked the Type 1 team to come in. "Can you guys come in? Because we need an answer for President Bush soon, and we need somebody that can organize, manage, and figure this out."

James D. Swed: So, we went into Washington. I was there, like, thirty days, I think, thirty-three days, and we brought in every carpenter, electrician, plumber, everything that we needed to know about, and we built a program on how to track the deficits. First, we had to figure out how big the problem was. And what that led to was the FMSS program that maintenance uses to track all their labor and costs. We had contracts, multimillion-dollar contracts with Price Pfister Waterhouse to develop all these computer programs and that. Now it's evolved a couple times. I think it's changing again now, as we speak, on how we do that or how maintenance uses that to track all their costs. Still, it was several years before we could tell Congress what our deficits were and where they were and whether it was roads, roofs, or electric.

Lu Ann Jones: What was going to Katrina like? At what point were you called in or your team called in to work that?

James D. Swed: Interestingly enough, it's really frustrating at first because we're on conference calls, I am, with regional directors and park

superintendents of the areas that look like they're going to be hit. The regional director in Southeast Region at the time that Katrina hit, and Isabel hit is not a fan of anybody helping her, and certainly not incident management. To get help at Isabel, she had to be ordered by the deputy—

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James D. Swed: —director that she would have me and my team in there. My delegation came from the deputy director of the Park Service; didn't come from the regional office. Well, that meant I could do whatever I want as long as it was in the delegation of authority and that the regional director could tell me to do something. And on one occasion I told her, "With all due respect, ma'am, I get my delegation of authority from the deputy director, and I can't do that for you. But if you want to talk to the deputy director and ask him to change my delegation, I'll be happy to follow through with that." [laughs]

James D. Swed: So, it's very frustrating at times, and it's frequent that the park superintendent or the managers or the regional offices don't want teams to come in. Mostly it's because they either don't know how a team works, because we work for them, or that they think it's going to cost too much. And it does cost more to have a team come in, but usually we save hundreds of thousands and, in some cases, millions of dollars for the Department of Interior by being well organized.

James D. Swed: So, for Katrina, we knew it was coming, the regional director didn't want us in there, and finally I got a delegation through the deputy director again. Then we staged in Houston, so I called up all my team, and then they call. We kind of have a little conference of, all right, how big do we need to be? And the logistics guy, which is Steve Holder at this time, said, "Well, you know, you can't be any bigger than you are right now, because I don't have hotel rooms for you and I can't feed you. So, I'll go down and I'll let you know how big you can be," which was perfect for him.

James D. Swed: So, we staged in Houston, and then when it hit, Steve Holder and a couple people took off into the melee to try to find a place for us to work that had power and size and all that, and we knew how big we were going to be. So, once he located that, we ran in, and we were in Thibodaux. I got there early enough that there was still streets flooded in three or four feet of water in downtown New Orleans, and when I could actually drive, I drove into the Superdome.

James D. Swed: They were still flying people out, even though they could drive out. I often though that weird. I think somebody in FEMA or the military thought that the people would enjoy a helicopter ride and would be disappointed if you put them in a bus, because it just made no sense. Because we could have had a lot of those people out of there a day earlier than we did, because we weren't flying them at twenty people at a time. It was very odd. But it was a mess. It was organized poorly. When I flew over, there was fifty helicopters in the air at any given time you could see, and nobody was controlling them. It was really difficult.

James D. Swed: One story about that is they divide into communities, and Fish and Wildlife will have this section, and Bureau of Prisons will have over here, and Forest Service. We had an employee from Mt. Rainier call and said that she had a father down near the Ninth Ward that was elderly, and she hadn't heard from him, could we check on him. She said, "I'm pretty sure he's not alive."

James D. Swed: So, I got the address, and I called the IC who was managing that area and I said, "Hey, I need to get into this address. Can I send a couple of my SET team members down, and we could boat them in there?" And he said no. I said, "What do you mean, no?"

James D. Swed: He says, "We're going house to house in an organized fashion, and we're not going to move off of that." I said, "Well, this person may be alive, and we knew he's eighty-nine years old and lives by himself. When are you going to get there?" "Well, I can't tell you." I said, "Well, if he's alive now and he's going to die in a day or two—," you know. He said, "No."

James D. Swed: And I said, "Look it. We're going in there then. I'm just telling you that I'm going in there. I have the Park Police helicopter. I've got Eagle One." It's the only time it's ever gone out of the immediate area, and I brought it down to New Orleans. I said, "I've got Eagle One here at the Park Service Park Police ship, and I'm going to hover over that house, and we're going to winch people down, and we're going to enter the house through the roof or whatever we have to. We're going to go in there, and we're going to check that house. So, I'm just telling you. Do you want me to tell you when the aircraft is going to be in your airspace?"

James D. Swed: He goes, "You have a helicopter?" I said, "Yeah, I do. I have Eagle One."

James D. Swed: He said, "Oh, maybe – I bet you we could get in there tomorrow if you want to send your people down. I'll boat them in, but I sure could use a couple hours to fly over my area and take a look at it."

James D. Swed: I said, "I'd be happy to fly you over for a couple hours." [laughter] And so that was how we bartered in at the incident-commander

level to get into that house. Unfortunately, we found out that he had died.

James D. Swed: Just some of the little things that you can do for people, like I told the SET team guys, I said, "When you go in there, I want you to bring out any memorabilia that looks important that you can find. Anything of real value, bring stuff out." So, when they found him, they were able to bring out the family Bible and some photographs of his military history and all of that. Everything had already started to mold.

James D. Swed: So, then I got that stuff, and then I brought it over to some folks, and they got it. We were doing a lot of stuff with weapons and things, historic weapons, and so I got some of the museum cultural people to start preserving that stuff for the family. So, you can do little things, if you think of them, that really make a difference to a family like this who's gone through a loss. Even though I had to call her and tell her, her father was dead and all that, she was relieved to know that he wasn't suffering and things like that.

James D. Swed: Huge, huge issues going every day. You need to be organized, and the Incident Command team is very organized. The meetings are short and curt, and there's an agenda, and we don't deviate from it, and it's amazing what you can get done, amazing.

James D. Swed: Probably my proudest thing of all that is all those hurricanes and all those incidents that I took care of, I never had a lost-time injury on any of those. We're talking thousands of people doing tree work on sprung trees and chainsaws and traffic lights out and power lines down. Safety was always a big deal for us. We really took it seriously. Not to have anybody have a lost-time injury was – I mean, we had beestings and hit my thumb with a hammer kind of stuff. [laughs]

James D. Swed: The other nice thing I did, I think, on Katrina was over in the Ninth Ward is Chalmette Cemetery, and its Revolutionary War, Civil War, and even Vietnam vets are buried there. Well, it was under seven feet of water. When it dried out, we got over there and all these trees had been uprooted, and in those uprooted trees were the remains of very old soldiers, all exposed burial.

James D. Swed: So, we secured them, and then I called in some cultural cemetery specialists, and there's actually – I can't even remember the exact names for it, but we called in teams of these people, and they came with, and with the really good recordkeeping the cemetery kept, we could identify whose bones those were and from what gravesite and get them all back and secure them. And before we repatriated them, we called all the relatives that we could find, and some of them had no idea they had a family member buried there. Then we did full military honor reburials, and family members came in, and

it was really a cool experience that you wouldn't think out of a tragedy like that that there's some of these fun things that you can connect people with, good stuff.

Lu Ann Jones: When you look back over your Park Service career, I mean, you've already pointed to many things that you're proud of, just to kind of sum up, were there things that you just feel like, "Here's my legacy," or, "Here's some of the things that I left behind"?

James D. Swed: Actually, I never really thought about a legacy. I think certainly the ranger station in Talkeetna will stand there for a long time, but I don't think anybody will remember that I helped designed it and got it built. [laughs] Maybe whoever listens to this will remember. My name's not on it, and I don't want it to be, but those are the kind of lasting things.

James D. Swed: The invention that I used for short haul, that was pretty cool, and just the whole mountaineering program at Denali where we're killing less people. We wrote a book on what we wanted people to know about the mountain, and it had everything from medical stuff to climbing techniques and ropes and equipment, checklists, and all that. We wrote that, and then I had it put into nine different languages, and I got all that done by free. I'd contact people who spoke Russian and got them to do all that stuff for free, and then I'd have somebody from Russia who could climb read it, and "Does this make sense for you?" Because mountaineering terms don't always translate very well. So, I think just that safety issue of dropping the number of rescues down and the number of deaths down there at Denali is something I'm very proud of.

James D. Swed: And no toilet on Whitney. You know, it had been up there so long that people were saying, "Well, it's historic." I said, "I don't care. We're getting it down." [laughs]

James D. Swed: The other thing I did, I think, at Indiana Dunes was interesting. We didn't talk about that, is when Indiana Dunes was created, they drew boundary lines that encompassed entire communities, and before I got there, they had given these twenty-five-year life leases to people. So, when I got there, those life leases were coming up, and so a lot of people had moved out, and the houses were never taken care of because they didn't need to take care of them. They're supposed to, but they're not going to put a new roof on a house that they're leaving in a few years.

James D. Swed: So, they had one guy there that was working to try to get those houses removed, and he had been closeted in that position. He had done something wrong, and they had put him in there, and he was not motivated. I was able to motivate him and show him the importance of his work, and I treated him well, like he should have been treated. I said, "I don't care what your history is. Let's see

what we can do from here on." Tom Goldman was his name. He got geared up, and we got some money. We put in for some money, and we ended up taking out, I think, some three hundred homes in the three years I was there, and he had taken out two or three prior to that. You couldn't get them through the SHPO [State Historic Preservation Office], and the park historian wasn't helpful. Well, we got all those people moved and then motivated, and it was costing $15,000 a house to take out. He got it down below $7,000; $7,200, I think, was the average at the end.

James D. Swed: And not only did we get houses out, we had the power company lined up to take all the power poles out, and then we could take the roads out. Now I went back there just a year ago and rode through where we had taken houses and trails, and you cannot tell now that there was communities in there. It's all back to natural. And no one will ever remember that, but Tom Goldman and I are pretty proud of that. When I went back there and saw how that country recovers, it was pretty impressive, and it's taken a lot of years to do that, but it was pretty fun to get all that stuff back and restore that.

James D. Swed: Another kind of nice legacy that Greg Fauth worked tirelessly on, but I was there helping him probably by just staying out of his way, but politicking for him, is we got additional acreage added into wilderness for Sequoia National Park, and that doesn't happen very often, and I'm pretty excited that we were able to add wilderness to the park while I was there.

James D. Swed: But I don't know what my legacy is. I think legacies are determined by other people, right? Not by me. [laughs]

Lu Ann Jones: Are there people that you feel like that you mentored along the way that you can maybe not by name or just sort of how you—

James D. Swed: I often gave people second chances, and I often gave people who ran into rough times a chance, sit down and have a good discussion with them, say, "This is what it's going to be. You're not going to embarrass me, you know, but if you do this, this, and this, we can go big places."

James D. Swed: Tom Goldman was one of those guys. He was fabulously successful. Gave him a step increase for his work, and he did all that with no injuries of anybody, either so that was a good deal. We recycled all the building materials and all that, so we got to do some fun things.

James D. Swed: There was a guy named Steve that I often say I rescued. But we were able to work through his problems and manage them, and he was very successful at Lake Powell, changed the way we do water quality at Lake Powell, changed the boat-design business for boats

that are out in the lake and the ability to discharge wastes that were aboard, completely changed that. He completely changed the houseboat business on generators and where the exhaust can come out on that due to drownings. His work on carbon monoxide and boats on lakes has changed the boat industry and changed safety issues, and he was awarded Boatman of the Year by U.S. Coast Guard and recognized nationally, was a very, very successful medic. His life completely changed over.

James D. Swed: Both those guys would say I helped them, and there's a number of other people I think liked working for me and felt I gave them fair consideration. Even when they did something wrong, we were able to work through that. There's probably a few others out there.

Lu Ann Jones: What was it like to retire from the Park Service, to leave it behind?

James D. Swed: Well, I actually screwed that up. [laughter] I retired a little earlier than I needed to. My birthday is in August. I could have worked till August, but I felt like if I left in August, that that's the middle of the marijuana season and the middle of the summer and it's the middle of fire season in the park, and that if I left, that it would leave the park in problems. They, I'm sure, would have been fine. It's probably more an overestimation of my importance than anything. [laughs]

James D. Swed: But I decided to retire in January so that they could announce the position and fill it before the summer, and that would give the new chief ranger a chance to get his or her feet on the ground and that. But it cost me financially later. I figured it out that it was not a smart thing to do. But, again, I was doing it for the Park Service or for the park, and I guess I should just be okay with that. [laughter] Because that's the way it is, and there's nothing I can do about it now.

James D. Swed: But I tried to work longer. I wasn't ready to quit. I wanted to kind of continue to give back to the park, because they'd spent a lot of time and energy and money on me to get me to where I was, and I thought I could be a good superintendent. I mean, I'd been acting superintendent hundreds of times and managed $7 million budgets and 300 employees and huge incidents and interacted with lots of superintendents and regional directors on those incidents.

James D. Swed: I thought I'd be a good superintendent, and so I applied for a number of superintendents near the end of my career, hoping that I could get out of the 6-C position where I'd have to retire. But the Park Service wasn't interested, and I don't think it wasn't that they weren't interested in me as much as they now were in this culture of if you're going to be a superintendent, you'd better have been assistant superintendent and a management assistant and started at

the GS-12 level or lower, because that's who was getting those jobs.

James D. Swed: I really think – in fact, I told the FLETC class when I gave a commencement speech, that I thought that was going to be the most difficult thing that law enforcement faced as we go forward, and that is that in the old days, most of the superintendents came out of the ranger ranks. I mean, you can look at all our founding members. They almost all ended up as superintendents, and now it's very, very rare. So, 6-C has contributed that because you want to be in your covered position until your twenty years. Well, that usually takes you up past the GS-9, -11 level, maybe even the -12 level, and so you're not really willing to give up that retirement, early retirement opportunity because it makes money, and it means a different retirement program if you sit to be a superintendent.

James D. Swed: Then if the Park Service as a whole is not willing to give people who have twenty-year careers in and then can get into the superintendency, you're going to lose that whole cadre of people to choose from for superintendents, and that's what they're doing now. There's only a few, few chief rangers that are getting superintendent jobs now. I can count only a few, two or three in the last seven or eight years that I know of.

James D. Swed: So that does two things. One, it takes away a lot of qualified people because you've made some arbitrary decision that we can't do the work, so we're not going to consider you. The other is that you lose – all your superintendents now come from other areas that are less operational. The only other division that's really operational is maintenance, and there's a number of superintendents that come out of the maintenance ranks, more now than before, I think maybe because there's more opportunity for them because rangers aren't going in.

James D. Swed: So now you have a bunch of superintendents at a superintendents' conference or whatever, planning what their future's going to be in the region, and they only have a few superintendents who are operationally skilled or have that knowledge and experience, and I think that makes for a weaker group. Anytime you get a less diverse group of people together, you're going to have less productivity, and it eliminates the law enforcement people out of there. It does that.

James D. Swed: It also means that you have a lot of superintendents now who have less and less experience with law enforcement, and that is problematic in that you really need to know what law enforcement does if you're going to be a superintendent, because that's a critical thing that can go wrong in your park if you don't pay good attention to it, and it can get you into trouble. And now you have a

lot of superintendents who don't have that knowledge base of until they get the job, now they have this.

James D. Swed: So I just think that it's a real challenge for chief rangers now because their superintendents are going to be less operationally trained or experienced, and they're not going to understand law enforcement, so the chief ranger job becomes much more difficult and much more important that they are very active in working with their superintendent to make sure that he or she is up to speed on the things that they are doing.

James D. Swed: So, I'm disappointed, because I would have liked to have tried to be a superintendent somewhere. There's no doubt in my mind I have the background to do it, but it was clear by the people who they were selecting instead of me that I didn't meet the criteria. I hope it wasn't me, because I don't think I'm that poorly thought of in the Service, but I think it's this kind of unwritten rule that you had to have done a stint as assistant superintendent. And I wasn't applying for promotions or GS-15 superintendents because I think you do need to be an assistant superintendent somewhere before you go in those jobs. But GS-13, and 14 superintendents, I was willing to take a little bit of a down-cut in pay to go on.

James D. Swed: So, once I figured that out, I quit applying, you know, because there was some jobs, I was perfect for, and so I knew that I needed just to do something where I didn't wake up the next morning and have nothing to do and didn't know what color of pants to put on. I've talked to enough people who retired who had real difficulty. So, I made plans with a couple of friends, and I jumped on a motorcycle two days after I retired, and I rode down to the tip of South America. [laughter] So I was on a very long, extended vacation, and so I didn't miss work at all. I didn't. I was focused on something completely different, and the transition for me was very easy.

James D. Swed: I miss being on the incidents. I miss that big time. I'm absolutely appalled by what the Park Service has done in the Washington office, the incident management team. Right now, we have no Type 1 team now once I retired. There's no Type 1 team. There's two, maybe, Type 2 teams that are fairly active or could be called out, but even then, when they go out, they go out with people that aren't qualified.

James D. Swed: For us to go from the spear point of all-risk incident management, we were the first and only agency to have all-risk teams, to go from that to where we're circling the drain with our program, it's just horrible, because we had a good steering committee, we had places to go and we had people lined up to do it, we had work

projects ready to go. And that was all crushed by one guy in one office, Dean Ross, who just singlehandedly killed the program.

James D. Swed: I talked with Rick Gale about this in Santa Fe a few years ago right after I retired, and he and I were going to work on – he has bigger, better, higher connections than I did, and we were going to work on it, and his untimely death stopped that. So, I don't have any hope for the incident management program in the Park Service, which is really sad.

Lu Ann Jones: What about during the Gulf oil spill? I mean, was that—

James D. Swed: Well, they brought in some of the eastern team, but the eastern team couldn't manage to get together because some of them were working in the parks that were affected, so they brought in a team just to manage Gulf islands for a while. But then it became so large that they started looking at it.

James D. Swed: I went in as a safety officer under Fish and Wildlife. The Park Service wouldn't even bring me in to help. Then, of course, when I got on scene, they remembered me and they go, "What are you doing? Oh, no, you're not over there." So, they reorganized and that, and then I became the Deputy Ops Director for Sensitive Lands, I think it was. [laughs] So I managed all the cleanup spill on any Department of Interior lands, so Fish and Wildlife and Park Service lands. But I still had to be hired by the Fish and Wildlife Service, because the Park Service was screwed up, and Dean Ross didn't want us there. Frankly, if you looked at who was there in the higher-up positions, it was almost all retirees. Dave Latimore, Greg Stiles, Steve Holder, Dale Thompson, probably twenty of us were all – Bill Pierce [unclear] came in. Bill Blake was there, I think. So, you end up with twenty or so—

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James D. Swed: —of the retirees in there in the top positions because we can't put current employees in there because they aren't trained up and they aren't ready for it. I think that's a good use of us. I don't complain about that. I think that they ought to use us to mentor some of these other teams that are still out there, but there's no incentive or issue wanting to do that.

James D. Swed: So, we wrote a letter, Greg Stiles and Dave Latimer and I wrote a letter and sent it to Washington about we would like to help mentor other teams and we'd be helpful to teach, and we're pretty darn cheap. To lose all that corporate knowledge and just let it go away at an instant is not smart, in my opinion. Most other companies don't do that. If you're in the private sector, you have somebody's who's your top person, you usually keep them on some way to

help mentor people or make sure the transitions go to bring them in on particular issues.

James D. Swed: Right now, the whole East Coast is getting slammed. There's probably thirty or forty Park Service units that are affected by this. Could we, the guys like me and Latimore and Stiles, and the people who set up how we managed the FMSS program and set up those teams that go in and do evaluations of damage, could we be useful to those parks now? Go in there and set up and we could be there for a month. Instead of having to have people rotate through, we could go in there for a month and get all the figures and numbers together about all the restoration or damage assessments together. We've done that several other times in big areas. Could we be helpful in that? But do we want to go? My phone rings, I'm outta here. But I don't see that happening. That's distressing to us because we'd love to be out there. We know how to do it. We could help people learn. The work will get done. I mean, people, they'll do fine. They'll reinvent the same stuff that we invented. And I don't mean to be bitter about it, but I just think that when you go through that, I know what the learning curve is because I've been there, I've done that. For new people to go through that learning curve again, it just makes it that much more inefficient.

Lu Ann Jones: Where do you live these days?

James D. Swed: I live in Reno. Sparks, actually.

Lu Ann Jones: That's right. That's right.

James D. Swed: Yes, Sparks. It's been just a year, but I really like it. A couple of reasons. One, I love the Sierra, and it's at the foot of Sierra, so in a half hour I can be at 8,000 feet in the Jeffrey Pines and ski. I love to ski. I have a pass on Mt. Rose there. And I could be in the other big ski resorts in a matter of an hour. There's a lot of really good entertainment that comes through Reno. Almost any weekend you can go to a concert that you want to go to. And the fact that they don't have any state income tax makes a retiree's money go that much further. And because of the economy, they're just about giving houses away. So, it was a good move for me and my fiancée. Carolyn Wells works for Fish and Wildlife there. So, we'll be there for a while.

Lu Ann Jones: I went there. I visited a friend there last – well, earlier this year. My husband and I have gone to the cowboy poetry gathering in Elko, Nevada, for the past couple of years. So, one year we flew into Salt Lake City, and the next year we flew into Reno and went from the west. So, it was an interesting place, and I can see how just the—

James D. Swed: Yes. It's a small enough city that it's not too overwhelming for a guy like me that doesn't really particularly like cities. I lived in Salt Lake for a while prior, just for six months before we moved to Reno, and that was too much, too big. You have to be on a freeway to get anywhere and crowded. So, this is about the right fit. There's a lot of stuff going on, but it's not too big, and there's lots of activities and cultural things we could do. So, yes, right now we love it. I'm pretty happy there.

Lu Ann Jones: Is there a favorite place? I mean, you talked about Yosemite, but of all the places you've been, I mean, you've just been in some spectacular natural places.

James D. Swed: Alaska's fabulous, and I was fortunate enough to be able to do enough incident management stuff and search and rescue in different parks that I was able to go play in a lot of the parks there.

James D. Swed: My favorite place in the Lower 48 is actually Tetons when I was a seasonal there. There's the beauty, there's the mountains, there's the lake, there's kayaking or canoeing or rafting on the Snake, great skiing, and the wildlife is right there in your windshield, more so than I think in Yellowstone, unless it's bison you're looking for. I mean, I was riding down in my patrol car, and a tree fell down in front of my patrol car. I had to screech on the brakes, come to a halt, half into the tree foliage. I get out and there's a beaver looking at me. He'd just cut the tree down. It fell into the road. [laughter]

James D. Swed: I don't know. It's just the variety of wildlife, fishing, and bald eagles' nests and osprey, and a couple of backcountry cabins and some good climbing. It just seemed to have everything there. Unfortunately, it's really expensive to be there. But in Lower 48, I think that's great.

James D. Swed: Sequoia's backcountry is the prettiest, I think, and the most accessible. So, once you get up about 8,000 feet, you don't really go below 8,000 feet. You go up to 12, and up to 13, and 12, and 12, and 11, but you don't usually go below 8,000 much. So, once you get up there, it's pretty easy hiking. Well, not easy hiking, but it's good hiking, and the weather is fabulous.

James D. Swed: Kings Canyon, I think, is remarkably good and remarkably undiscovered. You can hike in the back of Kings Canyon and not see anybody. Evolution Valley and Darwin Peak and all those back there, Florence Lake area is breathtaking.

James D. Swed: In Sequoia, my favorite is the area around Miter Basin. I took one of those generals up there, and there's a little trail that you go up by Penned-Up Meadow, and then you turn left to get into Miter Basin, and you turn kind of a corner and all of a sudden you look

down the valley. He actually cried; you know. I mean, I don't know that people see four-star generals cry very often.

James D. Swed: I've had an absolutely fabulous career, fabulous career. I've only had a few months where I didn't like work, and that was because I didn't figure out how to manage my supervisor. Once I figured that out, I was happy again. But I've had fabulous experiences, got to go to Korea, Cambodia, helped set up a park in Cambodia. I helped Parks Canada do some stuff with that. I got to do a lot of things with helicopter short haul and search and rescue and lived in fabulous places. For the most part, had great bosses and really good subordinate employees. Yes, it's a fabulous place to work. The money in retirement is okay. I mean, I have to be careful, but I have a house in Baja that I share with a few other people, and I'll be able to do a little bit of traveling and go see what I want. So, it's all good.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, this has been fabulous. I have enjoyed the conversation enormously.

James D. Swed: Thank you.

Lu Ann Jones: Just had a blast. And I know we could have gone the depth in all of those places, but, yes, this is a great beginning. I'm going to ask you to sign the release form.

James D. Swed: Okay.

Lu Ann Jones: And give me your address. Once we get this transcribed, we'll send the transcript to folks so that – so just write your name there and the signature, and we'll ask you to spell names that we might not know how to spell and that kind of thing.

James D. Swed: Okay.

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[END OF INTERVIEW]