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**Clair Roberts**  
**October 30, 2013**

Interview conducted by Alison Steiner  
Transcribed by Teresa Bergen  
Digitized by Marissa Lindsey

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ANPR Oral History Project

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The narrator has reviewed, corrected, and heavily edited this transcript.

Audiofile: ROBERTS Clair 30 Oct 2013

[START OF TRACK 1]

Alison Steiner: Okay. It is October 30, 2013. And this is an interview with Clair Alpine Roberts, the interviewer is Alison Steiner. We're at the Ranger Rendezvous Number 36 in Saint Louis, MO. This interview is being recorded. Are you okay with that?

Clair Roberts: Yes.

Alison Steiner: All right. So usually where I like to start is where you're from, when you were born, and just a little bit about your childhood. It seems like childhood experiences often play into the careers you end up choosing.

Clair Roberts: Well, I was born in 1951 on Guam, out in the Pacific. I was a military brat as my dad was in the U.S. Air Force, at the time. We moved all over. My older brother was born in Texas, my younger brother was born in Montana and my sister was born in Kansas. My mother was from Wisconsin and my dad was from Montana. They met at Yellowstone in the 40s but neither worked for the NPS then. We moved back and forth between Wisconsin and the West a lot as a child, but I mostly grew up in Wyoming. I went to the University of Wyoming in Laramie and graduated from there in 1974. A few years later I went to Alaska for the first time.

Alison Steiner: Can you tell me a little bit more about I guess your family? You mentioned you have several siblings. Are you the oldest? The youngest?

Clair Roberts: I'm the second oldest. My oldest brother also worked for the NPS, but not as a career employee. My two younger siblings never worked for the government. My dad was a jack of all trades; he was in the Navy, the Army, and the USAF; was a laborer, a watchmaker and woodworker, a long-time schoolteacher and he worked in Yellowstone as both a young and old man. My mom taught in a one room schoolhouse in rural MT, with only a high school education. During the summer she worked as a housekeeper in Yellowstone, where she met my dad. After all the kids, they both got college degrees in WI and each retired from teaching, before moving back to MT and Yellowstone. My dad retired from the US Postal Service at Mammoth in Yellowstone.

Alison Steiner: Let's see. So, you said that you spent a lot of time in Wyoming. Can you tell me a little bit about where you grew up there and what it was like?

Clair Roberts: Okay. The first time I remember living in Wyoming was around first grade, I think. We lived in a little bitty railroad town called Granger, Wyoming, which is in southwest Wyoming. My parents were both schoolteachers; two of the four schoolteachers in the school. It was a little town out in the prairie West that was just basically a split on the Union Pacific Railroad. One route went down to Salt Lake and the other one went up to Idaho. Not very much there. Like I was telling somebody today, I remember one of our field trips that the school took (with only about 20 kids in the school), was to Fossil Butte. At the time it was not a

park service area, and everybody came home from Fossil Butte with a busload full of fossils. (laughs)

Clair Roberts: Anyway, then we moved back to Wisconsin to an Indian Reservation, then back to Wyoming and then back to Wisconsin. Then a last move back to Wyoming where we pretty much settled in Casper, Wyoming, when I was in seventh grade. I went to high school in Casper and was never a big athlete, but I did play on the golf team.

Clair Roberts: During and after I graduated from high school, I thought I was going to become an architect. I went to the University of Wyoming and during freshman orientation at Laramie is when I got involved with the UW Outing Club. I decided to change my life and become an outdoors person rather than an indoor person/pencil pusher. The whole impetus for that was the desire to learn to rock climb and specifically to climb Devil's Tower.

Clair Roberts: So, I went to climbing school down there and started rock climbing out at Vedauwoo. It's a rock area that's just east of Laramie that is known for rock climbing. It's not as famous as Joshua Tree, but it's similar and it is a well-known rock climbing area.

Clair Roberts: I spent all my money the first year buying outdoor equipment, like ropes and carabineers and pitons, backpacks and camping equipment, a kayak and cross-country skis and bicycles. I just did everything outdoor-related, including sky diving and used up all my money. So, I had to move back home to Casper and live with my parents. (laughs) The next three semesters, I went to the junior college, Casper College, because I had spent all my money buying this outdoor stuff and going on adventures. Living in Wyoming I was a hunter and a fisherman, but I wasn't that big of a backpacker or anything like that until college.

Clair Roberts: My very first backpacking trip was with my best friend as a treat after graduating from high school in 1969. Chris and I went on our first backpack trip into Green River Lakes in the Wind River Mountains of Wyoming. We had army pack frames and we carried in canned food, a big cast iron skillet and a canvas tent. (laughs) Anyway, it was crazy. Later in Casper, my climbing partner, Jim and I organized a small local mountaineering club. We got an older climber/mentor to teach and lead us. I was the first president of this climbing club, the Casper Mountaineers. We climbed all over Wyoming including several times up Devil's Tower in subsequent years. [phone rings] I'm sorry. (Break in interview session.)

[END OF TRACK 1]

[START OF TRACK 2]

Alison Steiner: Okay. So, I think you were talking about when you became interested in outdoor activities. I'm kind of curious, I guess, backing up a little bit, you said that you went on your first backpacking trip at the end of high school.

But were you hunting and fishing before then? Like were you doing outdoor activities?

Clair Roberts: Yeah.

Alison Steiner: And then also, kind of what was the culture at the time? Was it unusual to go backpacking, or was it something that was, were you surrounded by people who were kind of interested in those sorts of things?

Clair Roberts: Well, Wyoming was and is very conservative. In high school I was a pretty (sighs) quiet obedient, straight kid that basically did what my parents expected of me. I didn't date or drink. I didn't do drugs. Without partying, you know, hunting and fishing was what Wyoming outdoors was. So, we hunted a lot. One of the first elk that I ever shot, I shot in Grand Teton National Park. But I did it legally because they had the elk refuge migration and everything there. Even though the '70s were the beginnings of the outdoor recreation explosion, I don't remember much about these other activities. I had been skiing before, but those other activities weren't really a big deal, especially the extreme sports like today.

Clair Roberts: In the summertime, we'd go back to Wisconsin where we had a place near where my mother grew up. We fished, swam and boated and stuff like that on the little lake there. But until college, I didn't really get into backpacking and climbing and other stuff.

Alison Steiner: You mentioned Grand Teton National Park. Did you visit national parks when you were growing up? Did you know what a park ranger was? Or was that something you came to later on?

Clair Roberts: Mostly later on. We visited Yellowstone and other places on family vacations, but not too much. We did not have a lot of money as schoolteachers didn't make much then. I'm not from a park family, even though my parents met in Yellowstone in the '40s. They weren't working for the NPS but were working for the concessionaires. After my dad retired, he worked for the NPS in Yellowstone, seasonally, on the road crew. He was never a "parky" and I wasn't from a park service family. I really didn't know anything about the National Park Service until much later.

Alison Steiner: And did you end up graduating from college? Or did you kind of take another path after you became entranced with climbing? (laughs)

Clair Roberts: Well, both. I changed majors three times but did graduate. And because of a failed love affair, I dropped out of college. In high school, I wasn't a social person and kind of stuck to myself. In college I became an environmentalist and started doing what I WANTED, other things that weren't necessarily approved of by my parents.

Clair Roberts: I dropped out in 1973 and went on a two-month expedition to Baja. Four of us went down there with a plan to hike and kayak down the Sea of Cortez side all the way down to La Paz. Well, we had way too much stuff

to start with and then some of our gear and food got stolen. We only ended up going for two months and we didn't make it to La Paz. It was my first real expedition and was a really big adventure. I had the biggest backpack available at that time and I have a picture of my backpack filled with nothing but food and water, except on top were lead diving weights! (laughs) We had so much stuff; a collapsible kayak, wet suits, spear guns, bow and arrows, plus a still for making fresh water from seawater. It was ridiculous. We went very slow because of double and triple ferries, running out of food and water, and expedition fatigue. But anyway, it was fun.

Clair Roberts: I can't remember exactly when it was, but it was before Baja – in early '70s. I went to NOLS, the National Outdoor Leadership School, on a 35-day training/backpacking trip into the Wind Rivers. Later, I also did some other significant expeditions. I first went to Alaska and successfully climbed Mount McKinley in 1977. Later, I led a winter ascent of Gannett Peak, which is the highest point in Wyoming. We skied in there and made a successful New Year's Day winter ascent of Gannett Peak. That was pretty special, too.

Clair Roberts: Also, in college, I got into kayaking. So, I've been paddling and floating ever since. Much later with my wife Liz, we paddled my Klepper, which is a collapsible kayak that I've had for over thirty years. Liz and I have paddled that Klepper around Point Barrow in the Arctic Ocean, the northern-most point of Alaska. Plus, we have paddled it in Baja several times, once through the sea arch at Cabo San Lucas. We've rafted many wild rivers also. Anyway, I diverge.

Alison Steiner: Can you talk a little bit about, I noticed from your SF form 71 that you spent a few seasons before becoming a park ranger working for BLM and the forest service. And I'm curious how you transitioned from being in love with the outdoors and doing these expeditions to actually working for these agencies.

Clair Roberts: Like I said, I changed majors in college three times. I finally ended up graduating from the University of Wyoming in 1974 with a degree in outdoor recreation and park management. Like many people back then in the '70s, I had a hard time getting a job in my field. Just like it is now. (laughs) So I worked for a moving van company and did whatever I could do. Oil patch, construction, surveying and you know, whatever.

Clair Roberts: So, my first federal job came from the BLM. I was hired to work on an EIS, an environmental impact study, in Lander, Wyoming. I was hired to work on the recreation portion of this EIS. I worked there as a summer seasonal and then they kept me on during the winter. I think I worked for about 11 months total. I compiled all this data from the previous two summers. Then I gave the recreation portion of the final data as part of the EIS presentation.

- Clair Roberts: But I really didn't like that all that much, so I abruptly left to work for the US Forest Service. Because of college training and previous surveying experience, I got a job as a survey crew leader with the Shoshone National Forest in Wyoming. So, for two years I led a survey crew with the forest service. It was still seasonal work.
- Clair Roberts: Much to my chagrin, I guess I was part of the timber beast culture, because we surveyed logging roads for clear-cuts and other stuff on the Shoshone NF. We also did some surveys for trails in the wilderness in the Wind Rivers and other stuff like that.
- Clair Roberts: Because of those two years, I got to know one of my best friends, Gary Weigel, in Dubois, WY. He hired me as a wilderness guard on the Fitzpatrick Wilderness in the Wind Rivers. That was really one of the best jobs I ever had in my life. He just turned me loose in the Wind Rivers and I backpacked for the entire summer. He said, "I want you to spend part of your tours on the trails." Cleaning up campsites and trash, doing trail work and contacting visitors. I explored the Wind Rivers, on and off trail and climbing lesser peaks. It was amazing! In the winter I wrote up trail/route descriptions and produced a Wildland Ethics program. The next year I did similar work in the Washakie Wilderness, in the Absarokas.
- Clair Roberts: I'd have to look for exact dates, but maybe 1980 was when we did the winter ascent of Gannett Peak with some coworkers, USFS people, and other outdoor friends.
- Clair Roberts: So, yeah. I started with the BLM. Then went to the US Forest Service. I likely burned bridges at both the BLM and USFS when I left. But a friend/coworker who had worked previously in Alaska for the NPS at Katmai called me up and said, "They just passed ANILCA. They're going to be hiring people for the new parks in Alaska. I think we should go to Santa Rosa to the law enforcement academy this winter so we can get jobs in Alaska." This was in December of 1980.
- Clair Roberts: So, we went to Santa Rosa and completed the seasonal law enforcement academy in the winter/spring of 1981. It was a result of that training plus my EMS, SAR and other experience that I actually got offered my first park service job.
- Clair Roberts: I had already been to Alaska in 1977 to climb Mount McKinley. That was a major achievement (high point) in my life, summiting Mount McKinley! I really wanted to get back to Alaska, so when ANILCA passed with all these new parks, I jumped at the opportunity.
- Clair Roberts: One issue resulted from applying all over. I had an interview and actually had a job offer from the park service at that big reservoir up in Eastern Washington. I can't remember what the name of that is.
- Alison Steiner: Lake Roosevelt?
- Clair Roberts: It could be Lake Roosevelt NRA. Yes, it was, and I was considering that because that was my first NPS job offer, you know, so I'm thinking.

- Clair Roberts: And then within a day or two of that, Mike Tollefson called me. A lot of people know Mike Tollefson as he's a well-known persona in the NPS. He called and offered me a job at Lake Clark National Park in Alaska, where he was the first Chief Ranger. That was in the spring of 1981.
- Clair Roberts: I didn't know anything about Lake Clark National Park, so I called up Roger, my friend that had told me about ANILCA and had worked at Katmai. I said, "Roger, I have a job offer from this NRA in Washington, but I also just got a job offer from Lake Clark."
- Clair Roberts: His quote I remember just as clear as day; he said, "There is no choice to be made." If you do not go to Lake Clark, then you're stupid, or something like that that I probably shouldn't repeat.
- Clair Roberts: So, I went back up to Alaska. I went on the ferry and may have taken my truck. I went up early and went to Glacier Bay. I've gone up and down, back and forth on the Alcan and the ferry many times and I can't remember one trip from another. But anyway, I had my Klepper and tried to get some of those other young folks on the ferry to go with me paddling in Glacier Bay. Nobody wanted to go with me, so I went by myself.
- Clair Roberts: As part of my introduction to Alaska, I had read John Muir's *Travels in Alaska*. I had decided that I wanted to go see Muir Glacier. Okay? Well, Muir Glacier had retreated a long, long way from where it was when John Muir went there. I took the tour boat up and it dropped me off with my Klepper. Then I paddled up bay and camped. This was when I was still young and foolish and did things that were a little bit wild. (My nickname was Maddog.)
- Clair Roberts: But I paddled right up to the face of Muir Glacier. It was calving but nothing fell where I went, so I paddled right up and reached out and touched its face, just like this. (gesture) I was feeling great and it was far out! Then I went back and sat on the beach, out always. I ate my lunch, took photos and just sat there and took in the whole spectacle. That was memorable. Then I paddled back to camp. Several orcas went around me, and we had a good time, but I didn't get good photos of them. So, it was a good re-introduction to Alaska.
- Clair Roberts: Then on to Anchorage and out to Lake Clark and started my NPS career at Lake Clark NP&P working for Mike Tollefson. Mike had prior Alaska park experience and gave us a profound lesson that I took to heart and remembered the rest of my life. He said, These people up here, are independent and they have been living out here and have not/are not used to being told what they can and can't do. He told us, "So foremost, you always need to be reasonable! What is reasonable to expect of these people?" That has stuck with me ever since.
- Clair Roberts: I'm really proud of this; that I was one of the very first park rangers to work in one of the new ANILCA parks in Alaska. I cut my teeth on ANILCA; I'm telling you. Those independent minded people up there



were suddenly surrounded by a 4 million acre park and preserve and were subject to many new regulations. And they didn't like it! Our job was to listen, try to educate, and document everything. We did an unbelievable amount of resource data gathering, which became the data base for this brand-new national park.

Clair Roberts: There were four of us seasonal rangers and the first two summers I was mostly out on the coast patrolling around in an inflatable Zodiac along the coast of Cook Inlet. We camped out and inventoried anything we could.

Clair Roberts: I really didn't ever want to be a cop. But becoming a law enforcement ranger, was my foot in the door. I tried later to become a resource management specialist and actually went to the training at Grand Canyon, that weeks long NPS program, but I never got hired into resource management. But fortunately, much of my career work was in big, resource-oriented parks, so I did a lot of resource management work.

Alison Steiner: That's one thing I noticed – I'm just going to check this and make sure, okay, it's going. That's one thing I noticed about your SF171 is in the descriptions of your jobs, the law enforcement, it seemed like your jobs were very diverse, what you were actually doing. I guess can you talk a little bit more about, I mean, I'm very interested in the fact that this brand-new national park. And like you're saying, your relationships with the community. And how that, you talked a little bit about how that affected your approach to resource protection. But just some of the other things you found yourself doing that might not today be considered law enforcement. (laughs) All the different aspects.

Clair Roberts: Well, like I said, the first two summers I was primarily on the coast and we interviewed people that lived in the park like the set net fisherman. At Lake Clark National Park, one of the primary reasons why it was established, in the enabling legislation, was to protect the habitat for the world's largest Sockeye salmon run, okay? The interior waters of the park. Red salmon spawn in a lake rather than a river or a stream. So, Lake Clark and a bunch of the other lakes that are in the park and preserve up there were set aside for red salmon habitat.

Clair Roberts: So, we dealt with those folks. I remember the first time we landed on the coast at Chinitna Bay, there in an OAS goose. We taxied up onto the beach and set up our camp and the local fishing family, the Haig family came down to greet us. They were actually pretty positive and happy that they were now in a national park because they believed the park was going to preserve their lifestyle. Living out there in the bush and fishing. One of the compromises in ANILCA was to allow for traditional uses to continue in Alaska, even though they may contradict what traditional NPS regulations are in the lower 48. Many were subsistence related, but not all. Part 11 of 36 CFR authorized these regs for Alaska.

Clair Roberts: But as soon as hunting season started, everything changed, okay? as this brand-new national park went into hunting mode. We spent the rest of the

summer and fall mostly doing hunting patrols. Trying to stop illegal hunting in the park, as many of the new parks in Alaska allow some hunting. There were more restrictions in the “hard” park vs the preserve. It basically only allowed subsistence hunting. So, you had to be a permanent resident and be authorized to hunt within the hard park. Although anybody, even sport hunters or people from out of state could hunt in the preserves.

Clair Roberts: For many Alaskan parks that was a huge challenge. Lake Clark had trophy hunting for brown bears, moose, caribou and Dall sheep. So, it was a big hunting area. Many of the boundaries of the national parks in Alaska during ANILCA were created based on hunting interests. The hunting lobby argued that “Oh, well, no, you can’t put that part inside the park because it’s a trophy Dall sheep area.”

Clair Roberts: Some of the other parks like Wrangell-St. Elias in particular, had much more difficult and bigger legal battles over hunting in their park boundaries than we did at Lake Clark. Some of my coworkers can tell you, or maybe they have already, their stories about the hunting issues in their parks.

Clair Roberts: Through the years at Lake Clark I was instrumental in a lot of hunting cases. One in particular, I was the case agent for a triple wanton waste moose case. It was a really big deal. These hunters flew into the Preserve and then shot three bull moose about five miles from their camp. Too far to pack meat so they basically just took the antlers and very little meat. Wanton waste is really frowned upon in Alaska and I believe it is a state felony. It’s about as bad a hunting case as there is. We caught three hunters in one group that did this and successfully prosecuted them.

Clair Roberts: On to other things. We did some archeological work, but besides Kijik, there wasn’t a lot of known archy stuff at Lake Clark. We collected plants for the park herbarium and collared caribou. I flew many hours in the back of a Super Cub, tracking and counting caribou, moose, bears, wolves and eagles. Plus, we collected and removed a lot of trash, including many wrecked airplanes.

Clair Roberts: Another big thing was doing cabin and campsite inventories. Not developed camp sites but hunting campsites and river campsites when we floated the rivers. There are three Wild and Scenic Rivers in Lake Clark NP&P. So, we floated these rivers and inventoried them. We also inventoried almost every cabin in the park, whether it was private, a ruin, an in-holding, a trespass cabin, or whatever it’s status.

Clair Roberts: A woman from Washington DC, now a good friend, Kim Hoagland, came up doing history surveys for HABS, the Historic American Building Survey. She also documented historic structures inside other new national parks. She went out to the coast with us. I didn’t realize it at the time, not till many years later when I visited her, she says, “That was the most frightening experience of my life to be camping out there with all those

grizzly bears. In a tent! Right there on the coast of Cook Inlet.” There were lots of bears there, but we just hiked off to survey this old trapper’s cabin.

Clair Roberts: When I asked her, “Well why didn’t you say something?” You know, back then. “Oh, I couldn’t do that. I was a woman from Washington, DC and you two guys, park rangers, were there to protect me.” I had no clue that she was so freaked out.

Clair Roberts: And of course, Dick Proenneke; everybody has heard of Dick Proenneke and *One Man’s Wilderness* and his story of living there at Twin Lakes for 30 years. He missed the deadline, just by days, for filing his homestead claim on his cabin at Twin Lakes. Then here comes the national park around him and he was denied title to his acreage there at Hope Creek. Since he passed away, the park service has acquired it and manages his cabin there as a National Historic Site. They have either a ranger or a volunteer there now, all summer to preserve and interpret it for all the visitors. It’s a very popular place now because of the movies, books and his published journals, etc. Dick was a legend at Lake Clark, and it was pretty neat knowing him. My third year, I went from the coast into the interior and really got to know Dick a whole lot better then. At Dick’s memorial I told a funny story about Dick, but I won’t repeat it here. He was an amazing man and became a very dear friend of mine!

Clair Roberts: But anyway, some of the other thing we did; we started doing route surveys and route descriptions. We’d hike all across the park in those initial years. We landed on undeveloped dirt strips and then go hiking and later, write these route descriptions. A historic, native route called the Telaquana Trail goes from Lake Clark to Telaquana Lake. John Branson is the park historian for Lake Clark NP now and he has written extensively about that trail. He and I hiked on that trail and we did all kinds of cross-country backpacking trips. Then we wrote descriptions for the public so that they would have some kind of idea what to expect in this wilderness park. There were no “constructed” trails in the park, although we did improve, develop and maintain a short trail to Tanalian Falls from Port Alsworth.

Clair Roberts: Later, when I went back as a permanent ranger, we – not just me, other park rangers – we went and climbed the volcanoes and some mountains. I was one of the first two park service people to climb Mount Iliamna, one of two volcanoes on the coast inside the park. We climbed Iliamna volcano on duty, and it was great; a break from basically doing resource protection, especially during hunting season. But also, commercial fish poaching on the salmon streams coming into Cook Inlet on the coast. Some fisherman would place nets across the mouth of these streams and that was illegal. I probably wrote some tickets for illegal fishing, but not very many.

Clair Roberts: And bears, my God, the bears. Learning about brown bears was something else that never ever left me. At first, we were extremely cautious, carrying a shotgun all the time. Later I became more comfortable with bears, but still, always took precautions. I have several great bear stories but won't go into them here.

Clair Roberts: I skipped over one thing that was important, when we first went out to Port Alsworth, where the field headquarters for Lake Clark was and is. It's 150 air miles to Anchorage, where the park headquarters is and there is NO road out to Port Alsworth. I don't remember which one it is, but one of the private foundation groups bought some private property at Port Alsworth there, a historic cabin called the Bly House. They ended up donating that or transferring it to the NPS. Port Alsworth was an in-holding of the Alsworth family, on Hardenberg Bay, a very safe float plane landing spot on Lake Clark proper, not on the ocean. Through native allotments, the Alsworth family got a lot of private property there on the lake and there wasn't much property available there for field headquarters.

Clair Roberts: Anyway, NPS got the Bly house and one of the very first things we did there, was to start building. We had a couple of maintenance people hired then and they started to rehab the Bly house as field HQ. We built four tent platforms with frames for employee housing and it was crowded but they kept the rain out. The first one was for the superintendent and his family. The chief ranger and his wife lived in one, the maintenance head and his wife lived in one, and the four seasonal rangers shared one, about the size of this room. We weren't all there at the same time as we were out on patrols a lot. Frank Moore was the maintenance head, a very talented and knowledgeable person. Some nights, Frank's wife, Jeannie, would cook up a big meal and we all would go in the Bly house and have a group feed or potluck; very special! It was an unbelievable time and we were like family. Mike Tollefson was the first chief ranger and Paul Haertel was the first superintendent at Lake Clark. So those were my first two supervisors.

Clair Roberts: Then over the course of the years, the infrastructure at Port Alsworth expanded extensively. The park ended up buying some property on the big runway from Bee Alsworth, the oldest son of the original homesteader there. It just expanded into a great big giant field headquarters now. But in the beginning it was a little log cabin and four tent frames. It was fun.

Clair Roberts: As you can tell, I just ramble. But go ahead with your questions.

Alison Steiner: This might apply to what you've been talking about and probably applies to what we'll get to in a little while. But you're talking about, it doesn't sound like there have been very many employees at Lake Clark. You're saying that a lot of these other national parks that were created at the same time had kind of contentious relationships with the community. I guess I'm wondering if as park service employees throughout Alaska, if there was community between parks? It sounds like there was good community

at your park with the eight of you, or however many there were. But did you have conversations, or did you know people who were working at other parks and dealing with similar issues?

Clair Roberts: In my field, yes. Before ANILCA there were four park units in Alaska: Mount McKinley, Glacier Bay, Katmai and Sitka. I said three, but I was mistaken as there were four.

Clair Roberts: So, the Alaska Region was now probably 10 times the size from what it was before ANILCA. I don't remember the exact numbers. The RO organized and put on for many years, not just initially in 1981, an Alaska Region law enforcement training and orientation at the beginning of the summers. So, all these rangers from all the parks came to a joint training. A week-long 40-hour refresher, where we were taught about ANILCA & ANCSA, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, which was the precursor to ANILCA. So yes, we did. I don't think the interps or resource folks did that, but before the parks got fully staffed – we were those employees.

Clair Roberts: The interaction between parks was nothing like it is today. I mean, nowadays park rangers from one park go to details all over. But back then, that didn't happen very much, I don't think. But we flew to Katmai with our airplanes for special events and while I was at Denali, I went to Katmai on a special bear detail. Later on, I also volunteered in other parks, but the interaction with our fellow law enforcement rangers in the springtime was the most interaction that we really had. But I know some of them had a much worse time than I did.

Clair Roberts: To your knowledge, has Jim Hannah ever done an interview with ANPR?

Alison Steiner: No, he hasn't. Although that name sounds really familiar.

Clair Roberts: Well, he comes to Ranger Rendezvous a lot and he should be interviewed. Jim worked as a ranger pilot and chief ranger over at Wrangells. He actually got into some more physical/bad incidents over there. But he can tell you about that.

Clair Roberts: One of my claims to fame (not!) relates to the land claims and Secretary James Watt. Basically, when the feds divided up land for the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, there was competition for many of the same lands.

Clair Roberts: In theory, the native claims got the first priorities, with their homelands or whatever. But the oil pipeline, of course, took precedent over everything else and was the reason for ANCSA. Then came the national interest or D2 lands, which were named for the section of ANCSA that allowed for the future ANILCA reservations. They were protected, i.e. "locked up".

Clair Roberts: Well, the natives said, "Oh, no. You can't take this land, It's part of our homeland." And the State said, "Well, we want this land as part of our Statehood appropriation."

- Clair Roberts: In 1978, when the ANCSA clock (the timeline for protection of national interest lands) was running out, at the last hour, the Alaska delegation refused to allow ANILCA to be passed. President Carter by Presidential Proclamation designated most of the D2 lands as National Monuments. Otherwise, those lands would become unprotected and open to a free for all.
- Clair Roberts: Of course, the State just went ballistic and said, “He can’t do that! It’s unprecedented on 56 million acres.” They sued but the proclamation was upheld by the courts, because of a little clause in the Antiquities Act that basically says, “the amount of acreage necessary to protect the area for the reason the area is established.” But 56 million acres by Presidential Proclamation was unprecedented.
- Clair Roberts: Well, two years later, the Alaska delegation compromised and ANILCA passed with those compromises to allow for traditional uses, etc. It was really significant but did not resolve the land disputes. I really don’t think the land issues will ever be completely resolved.
- Clair Roberts: I digressed again. Anyway, Secretary Watt came to LACL on a show-me trip, to see some of these native-select lands in the Preserve on the Tazimna drainage. These lands were eventually transferred to the native corporation there as private lands. So that was the basis for his show-me trip, but in reality, it was to go fishing. (laughs)
- Clair Roberts: I was the only uniformed park ranger to go on this float trip. Everybody else was a VIP. My job for this trip was to tend the rafts, hold the shotgun and to watch for bears. Before we started on this float trip, I asked Secretary Watt if I might take photos to document the trip. It was a private event so there was no press or anything like that.
- Clair Roberts: He said, “Oh, Sure. Give your camera to my assistant,” who was probably a Secret Service person, but I don’t know that for sure. “And sit down here beside me and let him take our picture.”
- Clair Roberts: Mr. Watt with a park ranger. Okay? I probably shouldn’t go into this, but anyway, the guy took a couple of pictures. The first picture he took was without posing, while the second picture he took was staged. The difference in those two pictures is like night and day.
- Clair Roberts: Before I worked for the National Park Service and went to Lake Clark, I signed a petition against James Watt. (laughs) Here I am posing with him as my “buddy.” It is so ironic and just one of those untold stories that’s so funny. So funny! (laughs) Let’s see. Where were we? I got carried away again.
- Alison Steiner: Hold on. I know that you were at Lake Clark for several years. Then at some point, did you move to Yellowstone? Or did you move to Denali next?
- Clair Roberts: After three years at Lake Clark, (I worked during the winters also and once I worked more than the allowed 180 days.) I went to Denali as I

wanted to work there because of climbing Mt. McKinley. So, my fourth season in AK, in 1984, was at Denali. Because of my experience at Lake Clark with ANILCA I got hired as the Kantishna Ranger. That was when I was the field rep for the NPS on the active gold mining operations out in the Kantishna district. It was a special management area there that was surrounded by Denali NP. But the gold miners were allowed to continue mining under the auspices of the Mining in the Parks Act. Which they didn't like at all, man, being told what they could and couldn't do. Especially gold miners.

Clair Roberts: I lived at the Wonder Lake Ranger Station, which was the most impressive/wonderful spot that I have ever lived in my life. It's right there on the tundra at Wonder Lake with the north face of Mount McKinley, which has the highest vertical relief of any mountain in the world. Everybody that goes to Denali says, "Oh, yeah, we did see the great white mountain, it came out, blah, blah, blah." Well, the great white mountain is something very spectacular, but for the few who have had the fortune to live out there, the real thing is the great pink mountain with wildlife in the foreground. The Great Alpenglow Mountain. I really got into photography there and have some amazing photos.

Clair Roberts: That year at Kantishna our goal was to have all of these gold miners, whether they were patented or unpatented claims, do two things under the auspices of mining in the parks. One was to use settling ponds in their placer mining operations. Settling ponds were really important because of the heavy metals that are a result of the outwash of the wash plants they were using. I mean, huge scale 24/7 operations and smaller one-man operations. All to use settling ponds.

Clair Roberts: The second goal of that year was for them to file a Plan of Operations with the National Park Service. So that was basically what we were trying to get these miners to do. Two baby steps in managing and controlling gold mining operations in a national park. Some of the miners were hostile and resisted, so it was a big deal. (laughs)

Clair Roberts: So, I did that, and it was kind of before the days of ATV four-wheelers. I had a four-wheel drive pickup truck, but that wasn't very useful in the tundra or in the streams in the mining operations. My other patrol rig was a surplus military amphibious personnel carrier. A track rig that was amphibious and that's what I used to go across the tundra and go out to these mining claims and climb up over the tailing piles and go up through the rivers and all that kind of crap. It was really pretty cool, even when a track would break. I'd have to fix the track out in the wilderness with the spare parts that I had. (laughs) It was amazing and fun. A lot of fun.

Clair Roberts: So that was my first summer at Denali. Then for whatever reason, I don't remember, but I decided to work at Yellowstone.

Clair Roberts: My first year in Yellowstone was 1985 and I was so very fortunate to get a job with Joe Fowler. A lot of people probably don't know Joe, but I am so

grateful and indebted to him. He gave me a job as a backcountry ranger at Lamar. Upper Lamar, because of my experience working for the forest service as a wilderness ranger, a little horse experience, and because I already had an NPS law enforcement commission.

Clair Roberts: That summer I basically patrolled with a horse and a pack mule in Upper Lamar. I cleared trails initially in the spring, put up food storage poles and checked backcountry camping site and stock permits. And yes, I did have a couple solo backcountry rodeos! Later I did boundary patrol for hunting, up on the East boundary. We also did elk-antler poaching patrol in the spring as the northern elk herd drops many of their antlers in the park. Antler poaching was and is a big deal because of the Asian aphrodisiac market.

Clair Roberts: Again, I did more campsite inventory work. But these were developed campsites on the trail system in Yellowstone, as opposed to undeveloped campsites. Let's see, I don't remember what happened after the summer, but two winters I worked for the concessionaire at Mammoth.

Clair Roberts: I missed Alaska, so I went back to Denali for a couple more years. I worked as a backcountry ranger, supervising the BC desk at the visitor center part time. I also patrolled with the SCAs and even climbed some peaks. One year I worked for maintenance as a road laborer. One spring I got to paid to dog mush at Denali. Al and John, the experienced mushers, and I mushed out to Wonder Lake with dog teams. I was a LE commissioned ranger and we went out to prevent the miners from Kantishna from snowmobiling in the old park. Old Mount McKinley NP and that part of new Denali didn't allow snowmobiling. Dog mushing! That's why Denali has dog kennels. They do their patrols with dogs (and aircraft). So that was a highlight also.

Clair Roberts: Then I went back to Yellowstone for a couple more years and without looking at my SF-171, I can't tell you the times and dates and details. But I worked in the south district of Yellowstone. Two summers I worked on Yellowstone Lake and at Grant doing boat patrol and front country patrol. I was based at the VIP cabin on Peale Island and had to vacate whenever park management wanted to visit there. I also worked for Yellowstone's legendary ranger, Jerry Mernin, along the south boundary doing hunting patrols.

Clair Roberts: The last time at Yellowstone, Joe Fowler was instrumental and helped me get my first permanent status job; in Yellowstone. I took the written clerk's test and I got status in the communication center at Mammoth. They used it as a revolving door to get worthy seasonal park rangers into a permanent job. Because then it was hard for some types of people to get hired permanently. So, I am very grateful to Joe, and he is a very good friend of mine.

Clair Roberts: So, this particular job was a split half and half job. There were two of us and while one was in the dispatch center, the other was learning as a front



country law enforcement ranger, road patrol at Mammoth. Then we switched off.

Clair Roberts: Well, I didn't last very long in the com center. I didn't like it and I didn't do a good job. The chief ranger at the time was Dan Sholly and almost everybody knows about Dan Sholly. He came and talked to me and said, "Well, the dispatch supervisor tells me that things aren't working very good for you in the dispatch. So, we think you should do something else."

Clair Roberts: I said, "Fine. Do I get my status?" He said, "Yes, you get your status."

Clair Roberts: So, I just resigned my first permanent job, in which I worked a very short time. (laughs) But I got my status which was really the only thing I was trying to do. Up until this time, I didn't really care whether I was permanent or not. I was living the seasonal ranger lifestyle, traveling, living in these beautiful places and doing what I wanted. But now I was getting a little older and I said well, maybe I should get permanent status. So, I did.

Clair Roberts: After I resigned and went back to seasonal ranger work, I applied for a permanent job at Death Valley. The supervisor there said, well, no, I can't hire you in a permanent job, but I do need a seasonal, winter ranger here. So, I went down there and worked front country road patrol at Stovepipe Wells in Death Valley. Even in winter it was too hot, and I didn't like it. That winter at Death Valley I was applying like crazy for permanent jobs. It was frustrating, just like nowadays with younger folks trying to get a permanent job. For a non-veteran, non-minority white boy like me, even though I had experience, it was near impossible to get a permanent job.

Clair Roberts: So, I went back to Alaska again, as a seasonal ranger at Lake Clark for my second tour of duty there. During this interim period, lo and behold, my dear friend Joe Fowler became the chief ranger there. He said, "Oh, yeah, come on up. I'll give you a job."

Clair Roberts: Now I'm indebted to Joe again. I go up there and the first year back, I'm still a seasonal law enforcement ranger. I'm not proud of this, nor am I ashamed of it, but I worked 15 years as a seasonal with the feds. Not just with the park service, but with the BLM, the USFS and the NPS. Fifteen years as a seasonal so I think I paid my dues, before getting a permanent ranger job with Joe at Lake Clark.

Clair Roberts: This was the time when ranger careers was taking off and there were three of us park rangers at Lake Clark at the time. One was Leon Alsworth, a young pilot who was a grandson of the first guy that settled Port Alsworth. The other was Lee Fink and then I was the third.

Clair Roberts: Joe Fowler was the very first recipient of the national Harry Yount Outstanding Ranger Award. He is savvy, competent and dedicated. A special guy. Anyway, Joe went through this ranger careers process and had Position Descriptions (PDs) written up for the park's 6C ranger positions. Okay? This was still pretty early on, but they reorganized the

park into three districts. Joe had district ranger PDs written for Leon, Lee, and myself, and made each one of us a district ranger. So, I became a GS-9 District Ranger. Many, many thanks to Joe once again.

Clair Roberts: This is a little bit of an aside, but it raises my blood pressure whenever I talk about this, and I will never, ever get over this. Joe had these PDs written by the regional office HR/personnel folks as 6C-covered positions and they were approved by Washington, DC. Later on, some of us were having our law enforcement work adjudicated by FLERT up in Boise to see whether or not we'd get enhanced annuities and the early, 20-year retirement. But it had a huge impact on my career, plus some of my fellow seasonal LE rangers. They basically passed a law that said from now on, if you're going to be covered under 6C-enhanced annuity and 20-year retirement for law enforcement and firefighters, there were new rules/parameters for qualifying.

Clair Roberts: Well, later on they made those rules retroactive. How they legally did that I don't know, but they did it. Some of us had to go through this unbelievable amount of documentation and submission hassles to get our prior law enforcement work accepted under the new rules, okay? Even though Joe had these PDs approved by Washington, DC as 6C-covered, Lee Fink and I both had the first year under these PDs denied by FLERT. Denied! I filed an appeal before an administrative law judge. I had worked so long as a seasonal and the 57 years age limit was a factor for me. I was going to be 57 just about the same time when I would get my 20 years if I continued in law enforcement. FLERT denied me two seasons of law enforcement coverage toward my retirement of 20 years.

Clair Roberts: During my appeal, I suggested to the judge, "They made a mistake. Two times they gave me credit for this year, but they didn't give me credit for that year, and it was basically the same job at the same parks."

Clair Roberts: The lawyer for FLERT said, "You're right. We made a mistake. But we made a mistake in his favor. If he continues to pursue his appeal, we're going to re-evaluate his application, and we're going to deny all four years."

Clair Roberts: I said to the judge, "That sounds like legal blackmail. Can they do that?" The judge says, "Yes, they can legally revisit your case and deny. Your only option is to hire a lawyer and fight it." Which is what several of my friends have had to do. Lee Fink had to hire a lawyer to get his first year as a DR to qualify. It's the biggest bunch of BS from the OPM and was not fair or REASONABLE!

Clair Roberts: The FLERT lawyer said, "According to our calculations, if Mr. Roberts stays in a covered 6C position for the rest of his uninterrupted career, he will be able to meet the 20-year requirement for enhanced retirement by age 57".

- Clair Roberts: So, the judge said, “Mr. Roberts, you probably should take this deal.” I relented and dropped my appeal. I stayed in a law enforcement 6C-covered position the rest of my career and I bought back all of my seasonal time (with years of interest), whether it was law enforcement or not. I did get my 20 years three months before I turned 57. I am so happy to have my enhanced pension. I diverged again. (laughs)
- Alison Steiner: When you went back to Lake Clark, was it different? Was your experience different in terms of the issues that you dealt with in the early ‘80s, had they calmed down at all?
- Clair Roberts: Yes. Quite different. The infrastructure out at Port Alsworth now was completely different. The park had bought up a bunch of Bee Alsworth’s native claim there, including a large area on the big runway. They remodeled and built houses, the hanger and other buildings. The Bly house was a residence and there was a multi-purpose Visitor Center.
- Clair Roberts: Hunting was still an issue, but not as big as earlier, as it had been about 10 years since the park was established. We still dealt with hunting in the Preserve and subsistence hunting in the hard park. I think it was around ‘91 when I went back.
- Alison Steiner: Yeah, ‘91.
- Clair Roberts: Yea things had changed, but there were always issues. Johnson River on the coast, was a mining area that one of the native groups had claimed. So, some of the land issues were still not resolved. I started posting right of way signs on native lands that Watt had inspected near the lower end of Lake Clark, down near Nondalton. The NPS negotiated for rights of way across these native lands, so the public could cross them from the lake to government lands beyond.
- Clair Roberts: What were some of the other issues? There was no Chief of Interpretation at the park then, so I became the acting interp chief. I wrote budget proposals, attended the interp meetings in Anchorage, hired staff and prepared interpretive handouts and displays, etc. John Branson and I also traveled to several area schools to give live educational/interpretive programs.
- Clair Roberts: Tracking caribou and doing wildlife surveys continued. Poaching, of course, was still an issue and hunting patrols will always be an issue in the parks in Alaska. We did all the scenic river inventories which was fun. It's great because the management at the time, Joe and others, had this belief that it wasn't just rangers that needed to have firsthand knowledge of park resources. It was during this time that I met my wife, Liz. She came up and became the Administrative Officer for Lake Clark NP & P. She went on some float trips, including two Wild and Scenic rivers with us. One of the seasonal interpreters got to go on one of these river trips also. Okay? So, the management of the park was really good about letting other staff experience the park's resources firsthand. Joe wasn't the only supervisor

to allow that and that had a profound impression on me and my career. Many times, the lower paid, lower graded seasonal employees are really the workhorse people that are dealing with the public. Everybody has seen this, where the person that's answering the questions at the desk, is just reciting information that they have been told without actually having firsthand knowledge. (At Denali when I was a backcountry ranger, we patrolled with the SCAs who primarily worked the BC desk.) The people that are dealing with the public need to have firsthand knowledge of the park resources.

Clair Roberts: So anyway, I met my wife at Lake Clark. A big reason why we ended up together was because of the Superintendent, Andy Hutchison. He invited Liz, my future wife, to go on a trip with me to the Ruth Glacier at Denali, without even talking to me first. A friend from Denali and I had been planning to go skiing at the Ruth Amphitheater for years. We wanted a fourth person, but nobody from Lake Clark wanted to go with me. When I went to Anchorage to prepare for the Ruth trip, Liz says, "Andy said I should go on the trip with you because you couldn't get anybody to go with you."

Clair Roberts: We knew each other, but we weren't close friends. She lived in Anchorage and I lived out at Port Alsworth. After some pointed questions and discussion, we rounded up gear for Liz and she ended up going with us. We spent five days together in a tent on the Ruth Glacier, skied around and down the Gorge. Liz decided that she might be able to get along with me. She was divorced raising two kids by herself, from an early marriage. Because I was a confirmed bachelor, it took me four years to commit, but we got married on the anniversary of our Ruth Glacier trip.

Clair Roberts: That doesn't seem to have much to do with my career, but in reality, it did. I'm sorry I get off on rabbit trails and can't remember many things. So, you have to keep me on point.

Alison Steiner: It looks like after you were in Lake Clark, you ended up moving to the Grand Canyon.

Clair Roberts: Yes.

Alison Steiner: I'm wondering how you ended up making that decision.

Clair Roberts: Okay. The park politics at Lake Clark became such that Liz and I decided we wanted to leave. We were married, but they would not support our dual careers together. I'll just leave it at that, okay, but we started applying for dual career jobs.

Clair Roberts: Well, another one of my supervisors, the second chief ranger at Lake Clark, was Larry Van Slyke. I didn't work for Larry very long, but he became a very good friend of mine because he a Ranger's Ranger and also a pilot. I had my pilot's license and an airplane because I had wanted to become a bush pilot like the other LACL park rangers.

- Clair Roberts: Anyway, Larry was in a Utah park when he called me up and said, “There’s a job coming open at Grand Canyon that you might be interested in, and I encourage you to apply.” It was the Tuweep Ranger job. Okay?
- Clair Roberts: I applied and I’m sure Larry helped me get the job. The Tuweep Ranger job was and still is, extremely special. John Riffey was the ranger out there for 38 years and he became a legend out there. He was a pilot before the days of OAS and all the certifications and OSHA regs, etc. He flew around out there with his little Piper Cub and patrolled with his airplane.
- Clair Roberts: ANPR’s beloved Rick Gale was the North Rim manager when John Riffey passed away and there was all this red tape and BS about John being buried inside Grand Canyon NP. Rick Gale made the decision with a blunt quote I won’t repeat, “Dig the \_\_\_\_\_ hole.” So, John got buried there just beyond the Ranger Station. His headstone has a representation of Pogo, his airplane on it.
- Clair Roberts: I got the job as the Tuweep Ranger and ended up working there five years. Tuweep is on the North Rim but it’s not up on the Kaibab Plateau. It’s down there closer to Saint George, UT and right above Lava Falls Rapids. I don’t remember how many acres were in my patrol area there, but it was tens of thousands of acres on the Arizona Strip.
- Clair Roberts: I was the only employee out there. Isolated sixty miles down this dirt road that was not a very good road. Again, someone felt that I was competent enough to serve out there as a “lone ranger” and do whatever was needed to take care of the place. Tuweep is a very special place and the assignment was as close to an Edward Abbey job as there is in the NPS.
- Clair Roberts: Of course, I had my airplane out there, so I could fly back and forth to town and get mail and groceries and not have to drive the nasty road so much. But I wasn’t certified to fly for the government, and neither was my airplane. This is just one more untold story there. I got in big trouble and so did my supervisors because Clair Roberts was flying his airplane without being certified by OAS. When Leon Alsworth wrecked his personal plane in Anchorage, while on official travel status, all hell broke loose, and the rules changed drastically. They came down very hard on me even though I never flew my airplane without calling out of service. That wasn’t good enough.
- Clair Roberts: To drive from Tuweep to the South Rim for training or a meeting, it took six or seven hours. I could fly over there in 45 minutes. So that’s what I did a few times. They said, you’re flying that airplane, even though you’re out of service, as part of your job. I also did what John Riffey did; I reported on a fire that was out there on the Arizona Strip and reported the location of a disabled motorist on the AZ Strip. My plane was a classic tail dragger Cessna 170B, with an upgraded engine, but without modern avionics. It was not a high-end airplane and was not OAS certified.

- Clair Roberts: An OAS rep who is a current ANPR member, came to Tuweep and said to me, “Clair, you can’t do this. I’m drawing a line in the sand and if you step over that, you will never, ever fly for the NPS and you may lose your job.” Then he gave me a letter of reprimand. He said, “Totally. You cannot use your airplane in any aspect of your job.” That included the mail; I could not pick up the government mail if I flew to town.
- Clair Roberts: The real deal at Tuweep was being a “lone ranger”. I spoke to my supervisor by radio about once a week and met with him rarely. On emergency situations my nearest backup/help was about an hour away – the park helicopter! For one such incident I went down the Lava Falls route one night to rescue people that had become dehydrated/incapacitated and may have died.
- Clair Roberts: There were literally thousands of archeological sites on the Arizona Strip and in my district in the park. Protecting archy [archeology] sites was always on going. I patrolled and documented many of these, some very remote and others were right next to the roads. I also searched for and found new archy sites. Shaman’s Gallery was in my area and if you ever get a chance to go there, go. It’s the type site for polychrome rock art. When the NPS first inventoried this site, they documented 12 different colors and estimated it was over 1,500 years old. It is very impressive. Liz and I were the first two NPS employees to visit and document another very remote and rare polychrome site named the Hades site. It is similar, but more bizarre than Shamans because it has a painted, white ghost and other anthropomorphic figures! Simply amazing.
- Clair Roberts: I was involved in the first successful prosecution of an ARPA case at the Grand Canyon. I transported an injured suspect back to town and then made an illegal search. I found no artifacts, but it was a MAJOR screw up. Other members of the “looters” were convicted because the other rangers did it right.
- Clair Roberts: We had two fatalities over the Toroweap cliffs while I was there. One of them was most likely a homicide. Because they were foreigners, a young couple from Denmark I think, it took years to resolve, but the guy was eventually charged. The other one I’m pretty sure was an accident. There are NO guardrails at Toroweap Overlook and it’s three thousand feet straight down to the Colorado River. It’s not like Desert View or any of these other places where you walk up to the edge and look out to see where the river is. At Toroweap you walk or crawl up to the edge. Many, many people crawled up to the edge on their bellies and peeked over. No guardrails and three thousand feet down to the river. It’s really impressive!
- Clair Roberts: Another thing is if you look down river at Toroweap Overlook, you see the beginning of all the ancient lava flows in the western part of the Canyon. A misconception says one of the lava dams created Lava Falls Rapid, but it did not. Lava Falls is the biggest rapid on the Colorado River. One can stand or sit up there at the Overlook and look right down and see

Lava Falls. One can also hear the roar of the rapids and the people yelling as they go by. I've watched the rafts for hours to see if they take the correct line or whether they flip, which is not unusual. It's great. During my five years at the park, I never got to go on any NPS float trips through the Grand Canyon. My supervisor said he couldn't cover for me being away from Tuweep for two weeks. Fortunately, I have floated the canyon two times, both on private trips.

Clair Roberts: There are no loose rocks at the Overlook as they have all been thrown over by folks who want to see if they can hit the river. The Bundy family is widespread on the AZ Strip and every July Fourth they hold a Bundy Reunion on Mt. Trumbull, a few miles from Tuweep. Hundreds of family and friends come from all over the US and some of them hold the same anti-government views as their infamous relative, Cliven Bundy. One night they came to Toroweap Overlook and used hydraulic jacks, blocks, pry bars and wedges to push a several-ton sandstone block, the size of a small car, over the edge. I did not witness it and could not prove it, but I'm sure the Bundys did it. It was very upsetting to me.

Clair Roberts: Another unusual assignment was to "remove" trespass, feral cows from the Park. The Esplanade had been used for ranching prior to its inclusion in Grand Canyon NP, many years ago. Despite roundup/removal efforts a few had survived for years on the Esplanade, in my district. Three of us rangers went out with our personal rifles and shot every cow we could find! Later, I alone, had to go back with a metal detector to check carcasses for bullets. Resource management was concerned about lead poisoning to the recently introduced California condors.

Clair Roberts: I also did interpretive programs about Tuweep at the multi-agency visitor center in Saint George, UT. Liz and I organized and hosted a John Riffey Tall Tales Rendezvous at Tuweep. He was a practical joker and had names for all the local sites, features, vehicles and machinery, plants and everything. People came from all over the US and we recorded their stories, both with audio and video. It was placed in the park archives and copies were given to the participants.

Clair Roberts: In keeping with the Riffey tradition we named our "pet" rattlesnake, Waldo, as in where's Waldo. It was often at the lunch counter, at the edge of our ground level bird bath and I observed it strike several critters, including a bird out of midair! It returned year after year and NEVER struck at Liz or me. I was not so lucky with a small centruroides scorpion which stung me on the bare foot at our front door. They have neuro toxins and I had a serious reaction and was helicoptered out.

Clair Roberts: We also named my patrol truck, the POSSE; for piece of sorry shit extraordinaire, because it was always in need of repair. Tuweep was very hard on vehicles and I often fixed flat tires for visitors. Many would have one or more flats driving to Tuweep and my record for repairs was over a dozen in one day! I tried to maintain the park road to the overlook with the

tractor and a drag, but it was extremely rough. I also dragged the runway on a regular basis as I was the primary user of it.

Clair Roberts: Maintenance chores took up a huge percentage of my time at Tuweep. This included the OL and the campground near the rim, plus the solar system, generators and the water catchment and cisterns. There was no well nor spring at the Ranger Station/residence, built in the 30's by the CCCs, so we were extremely conservative of water. Liz and I used about 10 % of the daily average for the US population.

Clair Roberts: Another untold story concerned Rick Gale. He was at NIFC, the interagency fire center at Boise when we were at Tuweep. There was no job for Liz at Tuweep. Liz had been on the incident management team, at Glacier Bay NP where a crazy guy went in there and holed up in a standoff with the NPS. During the incident review, Rick Gale got to know her and to make a long and complex story short, Rick Gale, bless his heart, created a job for my wife at NIFC, while I was at Tuweep.

Clair Roberts: This is really funny. Liz somehow, part time telecommuted from Tuweep, which didn't have a phone or a computer connection when I started there. (laughs) But we made it happen and Liz did travel to Boise for extended periods. Later, I had a computer, but I had to drive to town or go to Pipe Spring NM to connect with the NPS or the internet.

Clair Roberts: Another highlight of Tuweep was President Clinton's visit. When he created the Escalante Grand Staircase National Monument by presidential proclamation the Utahans were very upset and said it was illegal and unprecedented. They didn't know about ANILCA. About a year or so later, President Clinton decided to create four additional national monuments out West. One was on the Arizona Strip and butts up against Grand Canyon NP at Tuweep; Parashant National Monument. It was mostly BLM land that runs from the Grand Canyon over to Lake Mead NRA, on the AZ Strip.

Clair Roberts: Anyway, Clinton flew in to Tuweep airstrip to designate these new monuments. Tuweep airstrip is right outside the boundary of Grand Canyon NP and it would be encompassed in the Parashant. Because of the backlash and all of the negativity from the Grand Staircase, they were really worried about him doing this out there.

Clair Roberts: But the whole contingent came out with the Secret Service; the precursor trip had four Huey helicopters. To make a long story short, I was supposed to welcome the President to Tuweep, but at the last minute they changed their mind and said, "No, not the NPS, this is a BLM deal", even though we did all of the ICS management of the event.

Clair Roberts: So, the manager of the BLM on the Arizona Strip welcomed the President. I didn't even get to meet him because they stuck me on roadblock duty. Someone was afraid the locals from Utah were going to come down there and crash the party and cause problems.



- Clair Roberts: But we now have a presidential table in our house, in our belongings. They borrowed our nice antique table for the President to sign the proclamations on. We have pictures of Clinton signing four presidential proclamations on our table. I didn't get to meet him, but Liz did get to meet President Clinton and had a group photo with him.
- Clair Roberts: Tuweep was a really special assignment for me. Do you have any more questions about Tuweep or the Grand Canyon?
- Clair Roberts: Then we went to Sitka National Historical Park. I was happy to get back to Alaska, even though I had never lived in southeast before. We were fortunate to get dual career jobs there. Liz got the AO job there and I got the Chief Ranger job there. Sitka is a different National Historical Park with totem poles instead of cannons, even though there was a decisive battle there between the Tlingits and Russians. I'd never worked in an historic park. Anyway, it was kind of like a city park or an urban park on a much smaller scale, but with city problems. Like the drunks and the bicycle problems and the dogs off leash. Usually nothing too serious although one guy did commit suicide in the park. I was assaulted by a young hothead over a stupid bicycle incident and was injured. He was convicted and served jail time.
- Clair Roberts: This was also the first time that I was in a middle management position. I was the only permanent law enforcement ranger at the park, but we dealt real closely and had a good relationship with the city police, which was my dispatch. We got along really well, especially when I stopped an armed robber that came into the park.
- Clair Roberts: The little field work I did was regular foot patrols of the trails in the park. I loved doing that and talking to the visitors. With a small park staff, I had many collateral duties including the safety officer, the special use permit coordinator and on busy days with cruise ships, interpretation.
- Clair Roberts: The Tlingit history was fascinating and a huge part of the park's management. We were fortunate to participate in two totem pole raisings and a memorial, traditional potlach. The regalia and museum artifacts that came from around the world were simply unbelievable. The Russian history was also important because Sitka is where the actual transfer of Alaska from Russia to America took place.
- Clair Roberts: I want to document one thing, not just to criticize the superintendent. LENA, the law enforcement needs assessment, was a service-wide program to assess law enforcement needs in the national parks. It may have been part of ranger careers or afterwards, as the park service had been moving to a different law enforcement philosophy in most parks.
- Clair Roberts: When LACL sent me to FLETC to get a permanent law enforcement commission, I graduated number one in my class, and I took those responsibilities seriously. I try to act professionally and "reasonably". Anyway, the law enforcement needs assessment for Alaska determined

that Sitka National Historical Park needed at least one more permanent law enforcement ranger. We certainly did. The request for a base funding increase made it to the number one priority in the Alaska Region, but it did not get funded because of 911 and Homeland Security priorities. When I got to Sitka that same request again made it to number one in the region and it did get funded! Congress and/or WASO usually has to increase base funding for parks. I was overjoyed because Sitka would get another permanent law enforcement ranger.

Clair Roberts: Well, the superintendent decided he wouldn't let me hire another permanent law enforcement ranger. (laughs) Despite that this base increase was earmarked for that position, it never happened. I was very upset and whined to my compatriot chief rangers in Alaska at our joint training. I said, "This is a bad precedent for us and law enforcement". Anyway, I almost got over it. (laughs)

Clair Roberts: We really enjoyed our time at Sitka. Sitka is atypical of Alaska. The people that live there are not so independent or redneck. The lifestyle is low-key. Being on an island with only 15 miles of road, the people are not in a hurry and are so friendly. We enjoyed living there even with 100 inches of rain there a year. Before we moved from Tuweep to Sitka, in the last six months at Tuweep we had zero rain. So, I was happy to get to the rain. We liked Sitka because it was different. We had a motorboat and became salmon snobs!

Clair Roberts: Plus, we were doing good because both Liz and I were on the management team for the park, as the Chief Ranger and the Administrative Officer. We were really involved, even though my duties were not the best of my career. The budget hassles were stressful. NPS folks often talk about high-use periods. Like fee collectors, interpreters, maintenance and managers. At Sitka most of the visitation during the off season was really low. Most of it was by local residents who came to the park as a city park.

Clair Roberts: But during the summer, when the cruise ships came in, sometimes we would have four cruise ships a day at Sitka. We would have an onslaught of thousands of park visitors come in that day and just overrun the park. That was a challenge. (laughs) Not just for me, but for every employee in the park. Can you imagine two or three cruise ships with three thousand people in them parked outside the park entrance and they just come ashore and make a beeline for the visitor center and totem poles? It was amazing!

Clair Roberts: One year here at Ranger Randy we met a woman involved with the Healthy Parks Initiative. I forgot her name. Liz and I were the park reps for that program as Sitka NHP was one of the test parks for this Healthy Parks program. We developed a program for Sitka, but I don't know what has happened there.

Clair Roberts: We were enjoying our time at Sitka, but Liz' mother in Mariposa was getting old and having medical problems. Liz and siblings have been providing 24/7 healthcare for her mother. Liz decided she had to get closer

to her mom, so she took a job back at Yosemite. I had less than a year to go before mandatory retirement at 57 and I really wanted to retire in Alaska, where most of my career had been. But I didn't want to live the last year away from my wife either.

Clair Roberts: So, I called up my old friend and supervisor Mike Tollefson, who was the Superintendent at Yosemite at the time. I asked, "Mike, Liz has taken a job down there. Can you give me a job for nine months until I'm forced to retire?"

Clair Roberts: Mike said, "Oh sure. Of course."

Clair Roberts: And I said, "The only thing is, I don't want to work in the valley." I don't like the masses. I don't deal well with large groups of people."

Clair Roberts: Mike said, "Okay. We'll talk to Steve Shackleton." Steve was the chief ranger there at the time and I had worked with Steve in the Alaska Region before. Actually, Steve sent me on a detail to Yellowstone in 1988 during the big fires.

Clair Roberts: So, I ended up working my last nine months at Wawona, in Yosemite NP. I went full circle; my last job with the NPS was with Mike Tollefson, as a GS-9 LE road patrolman at Yosemite. It was different and I embarrassed myself on a vehicle stop in the Valley. Not my preferred way to go out, but I'm thankful that I got to work at Yosemite, at least for a little time. Because I worked at Yellowstone, Grand Canyon and Yosemite; three of the big five, all as a permanent employee.

Clair Roberts: It's been great. I'm so thankful that I survived and didn't have to shoot anybody, and I have a pension. My career has been quite varied and fantastic, with only a few assignments that were less than pleasant and a couple of supervisors that weren't great people. I will forever be grateful to the National Park Service and the park family I love. Liz is still working so I've been following her around to new parks. Imagine that role reversal. Since retiring I've been building houses and working on my classic cars. We enjoy coming to Ranger Rendezvous. My thanks to ANPR for doing these oral histories and thank you Alison for doing mine.

Alison Steiner: Thank you.

[END OF TRACK 2]

[END OF INTERVIEW]