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Wendy Lauritzen
October 28, 2013

Interview conducted by Lu Ann Jones
Transcribed by Teresa Bergen
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ANPR Oral History Project

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Transcript edited and corrected by Lauritzen April 2014.

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[START OF TRACK 1]

Lu Ann Jones: I usually just start, this is a .wav file, 013, this is Lu Ann Jones. It's October 28, 2013. It's September 23, 2013. We're in Saint Louis, Missouri for the Ranger Rendezvous of the Association of National Park Rangers. So, I'm going to let you introduce yourself. And give me your full name and we'll get going.

Wendy Lauritzen: Okay. My name is Wendy Sue Lauritzen. And I'm currently the superintendent of Tall Grass Prairie National Preserve.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, I'm really fascinated to trace your story of how you got there. And I was thinking, I grew up on a farm, too, in North Carolina. And I was thinking, could you kind of take me to that place? Since where you are now, park service is always place-based, it's about the place. Kind of take me to where you grew up and the setting that was kind of the foundation there.

Wendy Lauritzen: Well, when I was in grade school, I grew up on a family farm. But I grew up with my cousins. My mom moved in with my cousins when I was two months old. So, I lived in quite a dual household in that I had two moms. (laughs) My cousin Betty and my mom mom. But we raised Yorkshire hogs. Had a Christmas tree farm and also a commercial catfish pond. Plus, basic farming.

Wendy Lauritzen: My cousin Eldon was an oil driller or oil pumper. And so, I used to walk the pipelines with him, checking for leaks and gauging tank batteries, that sort of thing.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I was always kind of an outside kid. I was born in 1957 so by the time I started becoming more cognizant of things, it was more the women's liberation type of time in history. I went to a two-room schoolhouse.

Lu Ann Jones: I was fascinated by that.

Wendy Lauritzen: And four years out of six, I was the only student in my grade. Which I, that set a tone that you just went and did things. Because the teacher was always occupied with other classes as well. So, with that, in fifth grade we got a new teacher. Because we had two teachers that had stayed most of my time in Oak Grove. But in fifth grade, we got a new teacher. And of course, she looked at it, her workload of classroom lessons and all that. So, she told the teachers well she wasn't going to teach a student in a class when she had three other grade levels, also. They talked to my folks about whether or not they wanted me to skip a grade and stay or whether I had to go to town school.

Wendy Lauritzen: And so, I went from being the only student in my grade to going to a classroom that they had two fifth grade classes. And each one of them was like 30 kids a piece. So, I was in complete culture shock.

- Wendy Lauritzen: But just prior to going to town school I went to— [phone ringing] You can ignore that. I read *Born Free, Living Free* all about Elsa the lion and the cheetah and all that. And I was fascinated with Joy Adamson and going to Africa, all of that.
- Wendy Lauritzen: So, I wanted to go to Africa. I mean I was so, that is what I want to do. I want to work with wildlife. Being a farm kid, my other career choice was being a vet. So, I wanted to be a vet working with wildlife in Africa.
- Wendy Lauritzen: And when I went to town school, one of the other new students in that grade was a gal by the name of Kim Godfrey. And Kim, her dad had grown up in the hometown [Arkansas City, Kansas] that I was at. His mom had gotten ill, so he came back home to take care of her. And Kim, same age as I was, had already lived in 22 different countries.
- Lu Ann Jones: So, what did, how did she—I was fascinated with that.
- Wendy Lauritzen: Her dad was an offshore oil driller. And so, he had moved around. And the last country that they were in was— [phone ringing] Pardon me. So anyway, the last, last town, last country they had lived in was Kenya. And her little brother spoke fluent Swahili. And I was so fascinated by that. And it was just like yes, I mean it just expanded the world of possibilities of what I could do. I mean, somebody who was from my hometown had already lived in 22 different countries. So, it was like yes, I could do that, too. So, I was absolutely, I was going to be a vet and work with wildlife. [phone ringing] Power this off.
- Wendy Lauritzen: So anyway, I went to town school. Got that experience. In high school I was still on that veterinarian route. And joined Future Farmers of America. So, it was the first-time girls were allowed in Future Farmers of America. So, did welding. You know, I was doing all the boy stuff. There was a group that was forming in our high school that was from the Explorers group, which is a Boy Scout group, not a Girl Scout group. So, I was always a Boy Scout, not a Girl Scout.
- Wendy Lauritzen: And found out that to be a vet, they only take the top 4 percent of a graduating class at any time. That's it. So, you can make all As and one B, but at the top 4 percent is all As, you don't get your degree. And like I can't afford six years of school on a maybe.
- Wendy Lauritzen: So, I thought I'll switch over to, I'll get into wildlife. So, I was still on that trajectory. Was thinking about what I'd do. Didn't know anything about park service. But my cousin Betty had saw a little piece in the paper that talked about the Student Conservation Association. She clipped it out and said, "Why don't you apply for this?"
- Wendy Lauritzen: And so I, right out of high school I applied. And got picked up at Rocky Mountain National Park for three weeks trail crew. And absolutely fell in love with it. This is what I want to do.
- Wendy Lauritzen: The interesting thing on the Rocky Mountain hire was when it came down to the applicants of who to pick or not to pick, the crew boss that we had, a

guy name of Len Price, he was from Kansas. And he told me, he said, "Well, I've never seen a kid from Kansas apply before." And so that was the deciding factor of why I got the job.

Wendy Lauritzen: Well, the next year when I applied to the Student Conservation Association, I applied for, I think it was Yellowstone or Olympic or something on that order. And nothing happened. And it turns out I didn't get selected at those parks at all. But they had a park at Badlands, which they didn't get their paperwork in time. So, they just sent them leftover applicants. And I was among them.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I got this call from this guy. He said, "Long story made short, I'm looking to hire an interpreter for the park through the Student Conservation Association. Are you interested in getting that job?" "Yeah." He said, "Do you know what an interpreter is?" Like, "No." He said, "Well, it's where you give walks and talks." (laughter) I figure all right, I'll do that. I had no clue about that.

Wendy Lauritzen: And he was from Kansas. He had never seen a person from Kansas apply before in park service among all his seasonal certs. So, when it came to the eenie, meenie, minie, mo, let's give the Kansas kid a try. So, when people ask me how do you get into the Park Service, I tell them first you must move to Kansas. (laughter)

Lu Ann Jones: Well, did your family have any reservations? I guess when I had read your bio, I didn't realize that you had gone to that first SCA job right out of high school.

Wendy Lauritzen: Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: So, did your family have any reservations about your going like that?

Wendy Lauritzen: Betty, no. I mean, that was my cousin that gave me the piece and the article. She was very encouraging. Eldon was adamantly against it, and my mom was neutral. But Betty won out. And so, since it was like this was what I wanted to do. On the one hand, I think they thought it would talk me out of it. Because quite frankly, right out of high school, my graduating gift from high school was a place-setting for 12. They expected me to get married, have a slew of kids and be right there. I mean, everybody in the family, in some respects including me, that was kind of what was expected.

Wendy Lauritzen: But the one thing Eldon did insist upon was, "Well, if you're going to do this, you're going to have a good set of boots." Because the job called for good, sturdy boots. Well, I had good cowboy boots. I wasn't thinking of buying anything new. "No, no. You've got to get some new hiking boots." I didn't know what hiking boots were. So, we did go out and get new hiking boots.

Wendy Lauritzen: Yeah, they had some reservations. But then the next year, at least the next year it was a two-month job. But they saw us doing that, and so they liked it. They had a real hard time understanding what this seasonal lifestyle

was. But since I was doing it right out of high school and during the summer between colleges, that worked out fine. Because I had actual steady work going on while I was in college. So, I think that was a little bit easier on them, because it wasn't, after I finished college, I started this. For most of my friends, that was the case. Most of the people I worked with were about seven years older than I was. So, there was some reservation.

Wendy Lauritzen: Then I became the excuse of the whole family. "Well, after you graduate from college, well this will happen." Well, that didn't. "Well, after you get a permanent job with park service." So, it sort of delayed things that way. (Lu Ann Jones laughs)

Wendy Lauritzen: But then it became, "Well, where are you applying to next?" I'd tell them. "Why do you want to go there? We don't want to go visit you there." (laughter) But they had a hard time understanding the seasonal lifestyle of it. But they just sort of okay, went along with it. But I broke them in for four years by getting into the sessions.

Wendy Lauritzen: And Valerie Naylor, who's a superintendent up at Theodore Roosevelt, she'll be here this week, she asked me last year, she'd said something about they had done a study to see how many people who were former SCA staff, or hires, how many went on and became superintendents. And Valerie and I are the only two that they ever came across that became superintendents.

Lu Ann Jones: Really.

Wendy Lauritzen: And that shocked me. And that we're both women shocked me, too. But yeah. So, it definitely had an influence.

Wendy Lauritzen: The other thing is, we had a guy from my hometown by the name of Jack Stark. And by the time I was in high school, Jack was the superintendent at Grand Tetons National Park. So, it was always well if Jack can do it, then I can, too. So, it was never a doubt in my mind that I could do this.

Wendy Lauritzen: And in fact, Tallgrass Prairie, where I am now, it was in the papers at the time of being expanded to a five million acre park. And of course, my family's totally anti-government, anyway. And so, I'm sitting there going well I'd like to be a superintendent of Tallgrass Prairie. So that was a high school goal, to become superintendent of Tallgrass Prairie.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I've actually met my career goal. I tried being the first superintendent, but that didn't work out.

Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) Well I was going to get back to, in college, if I understand correctly, you majored in rangeland management.

Wendy Lauritzen: Uh huh.

- Lu Ann Jones: So how was that major? I mean, did people, I assume that many of the people who did that were going to go on to commercial operations. They were going to be ranchers.
- Wendy Lauritzen: Yeah. Yeah. Mine was a practical, in that I started out as a wildlife major at K State. At K State, first of all, I went into total shock because the size of the campus at K State was larger than my hometown.
- Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) Yeah. I was thinking—
- Wendy Lauritzen: That was not a good fit. But the K State wildlife program was very much the ag extension officer type. And I'm going no, that's not what I want. I want public lands. I mean, I'd already gotten just enough taste of what was possible. I went no, that's what I want is this bigger (expanse) type of experience. And again, that whole rehabbing wildlife to be returned to the wild. The whole born free, living free stuff.
- Wendy Lauritzen: So, went from K State back to my hometown for junior college while I was still working summers. Well when I got hired at Badlands, one of the guys I worked with at Badlands was a wildlife major. And he would talk about how Utah State was such a great school. And we talked about the wildlife program. That looks good. I looked at the out of state tuition costs. And their out of state tuition and the cost of living equaled instate tuition and cost of living at K State.
- Lu Ann Jones: Wow.
- Wendy Lauritzen: So, I'm going, okay. So, I applied. Got in. And one of the requirements, it didn't matter how many years of college you had, you know, I had a couple of years at junior college, anybody in natural resources had to take this one class called Natural Resources Careers. And basically, they introduced you to all the different career types out there. And so, they had a speaker a week on silviculture, water resources, every natural resource discipline. And range management was one of those.
- Wendy Lauritzen: And so, I'd learned enough from park service already that career-wise, those who were getting careers in wildlife management, most of them were needing a minimum of a master's, if not a PhD, to get hired, because the competition was so stiff. If you didn't have that, probably wouldn't get it. And I couldn't afford graduate school. So, I'm going well that, okay, so what if I don't get on with park service? What then?
- Wendy Lauritzen: Well, I went on probability. Probability is that I would marry a rancher. So, I thought range management, okay. And I thought wildlife versus history versus all these other career choices in park service, or degree choices. It was like, that doesn't seem to make a difference as to whether you get in with park service or not.
- Wendy Lauritzen: So, range management was my backup plan to what if I don't get in with park service. And as it turned out later, it was really important in that I became the second range manager in the park service when I went to Great Basin. I applied for the first one, but I didn't get selected for that.

That one was at Point Reyes. It was two months before I got the job at Great Basin. But it was a really good degree to have. And it has played a role in many of the positions I've gotten. So.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow. I mean, that's very interesting. Well I am just fascinated where your career seems interesting. Just from reading the resume and what you've provided. Both serendipity and, good serendipity and good planning, it seems. So, I am just fascinated with kind of how you took each position that you had, made the best of that position but also looked ahead to the next position. Because again, from looking at your list of jobs, to me, at least, it says she's got her eye on what's happening now, but also where she wants to be at the next step. [both talking] Great Smoky, going with the law enforcement or whatever.

Wendy Lauritzen: Yeah. I go with the flow, but at the same time there is a target. And the target may be, it's out there. While I was at Badlands, while I was there, this was at a time when there was great change going on in park service. And one of them was, there was no professional, seasonal law enforcement training. There was one. The first year I was working at Badlands, law enforcement training was, "Okay, these are the ones that we hire for a law enforcement job. You show up. We're going to teach you a week on 36 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations). Take you out on the firing range. You shoot. And now you go out and enforce law."

Wendy Lauritzen: Others picked off the cert, "Oh, we're going to put you behind the fee desk." Or "We'll put you, you'll be an interpreter." It was very random.

Lu Ann Jones: Remind me what year this was.

Wendy Lauritzen: This, I got hired, I worked at Badlands '76 SCA, '77, '78. '77, I was interpretation and '78 I went into law enforcement. Law enforcement was also that everybody in park service could do law enforcement. So, if you had somebody picking flowers or anything, you know, killing wildlife, whatever, a maintenance employee had as much authority to enforce the law as a law enforcement officer. It was just a matter of very minor training as to who the law enforcement people were. But everybody had the authority to enforce it.

Wendy Lauritzen: And so anyway, I was giving a lot of interpretive programs and walks. And I'd have people picking flowers. "Don't do that." And they wouldn't, and it just would infuriate me. I just wanted to grab the flowers. Quit picking the flowers!

Wendy Lauritzen: And there was one day I was going out. We went out with a group. And I was talking about erosion in the Badlands and that sort of stuff, and talking about how off-road, people driving off-road could cause the erosion to accelerate. That sort of stuff. And then we hear motorcycles off in the distance. And our whole group goes back to where our cars were parked. And sitting next to that is 19 motorcyclists. More like the Hell's Angels type, right? But some of them were off cutting donuts and what

not. So, I felt like I was pretty much compelled to, well, I have to say something to them.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I went over to talk to these 19 people. It was two gals and the rest, would have been 17 guys. And I was just shaking like – (laughter) I mean, I was just [makes shaky sound] and my voice was quavering. But I gave them the whole spiel of, you know, you shouldn't be doing this, how it affects this. And one guy's coming up, "Hey, take my picture with the ranger!" And I'm just shaking like a leaf. And they're really kind of harassing me.

Wendy Lauritzen: And then finally one of them said, "Ah, come on, let her give her spiel so we can get out of here." So, it was like, thank God. (laughter)

Wendy Lauritzen: So, give the spiel, then go back. Well as I'm going back, half of the group that I'd given the tour to, they had left. The other half were sitting in their cars. The cars were pointed away from the motorcycles. They had locked all their doors, but they were watching the rear view to see if anything happened to me. (laughter)

Wendy Lauritzen: So anyway, motorcycles go off. I'm heading back to the office. And next thing I know, there was patrol cars just whizzing by. Because the rest of the group had gone back to the visitors' center saying that this motorcycle gang was harassing me.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, when I get back to the office, the chief ranger takes me aside, says, "Well, I think we need to talk to you about maybe you're not, whether you should go into law enforcement." (laughter)

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I decided to go into law enforcement. And enrolled in the fourth class of seasonal training that ever occurred. It was at Santa Rosa, California. So, I went into law enforcement. It was a good fit. Because I wasn't just a good straight interpreter. I needed to say, "No, you can't do this," sort of thing. (laughs) It definitely was more to my liking of things. So that's how I got into law enforcement. It was that period of transition that the park service was going through.

Wendy Lauritzen: And then the guy who was the district ranger at Badlands, he transferred to Great Smokies. Well at the time of this transition, only people who'd been through law enforcement training could be hired for seasonal law enforcement jobs. Well, by the time the rule went into effect, there'd only been like six classes at all. So, there was great demand for us.

Wendy Lauritzen: And Chuck said, "Hey, why don't you apply for a job out here at Great Smokies?" And I did, and I got the job, and went on from there. So that's how, yes, it's serendipitous. But at the same time, very, I adjust to what's my personality like. I realize things change. But it was this will work, it's still a park service career and all that, while I was at Smokies.

Wendy Lauritzen: Then I got involved with ANPR because we'd been doing a lot of overtime, but the park couldn't pay overtime. So even though you worked lots of overtime cases and stuff, you just didn't get paid for it.

Wendy Lauritzen: And one day my boss said, “Hey, there’s a group of us going over to this area. And there’s just a whole bunch of rangers getting together. So, fill out a leave slip and make it for the whole week, because it’s a week-long thing. Fill out a leave slip and I’ll sign it. And if we get back and nothing happens, I’ll tear it up. (laughs) But if we get hurt, you’re covered.”

Wendy Lauritzen: I’m like, “Okay.”

Wendy Lauritzen: So, 22 of us left the Smokies and went to, it was a Ranger Rendezvous at the apple orchard.

Lu Ann Jones: Enchanted. (That was where?)

Wendy Lauritzen: Enchanted. Near Shenandoah. So anyway, I had no idea where I was going. I was easily kidnaped, you know, just get in and go. But it was very much that there were all these people in park service. And different grade levels. But at the time, most of us were lower graded. There were seasonals, but there were people who were permanent. And it was just a really good time. And it was like, well that was kind of fun. I was so oblivious.

Wendy Lauritzen: In the meantime, I’d gone from, I was working at Smokies, but I was getting my degree in range management. I got to thinking, maybe I need to find out whether this range management degree is a good fit or not. So, I went and worked for BLM to test that out as my backup plan. How good is my backup plan?

Wendy Lauritzen: Then after I worked for BLM, I went back to Smokies a couple years later. Worked seasonally there. And while I was there, a guy was, I mean, I’d been applying for permanent jobs all over the place. But one of the guys said, “The register in Philadelphia’s open.”

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I got on the register and I was on the list. I knew that eventually I would get picked up there. So, in the meantime, I applied for a job at Valley Forge, just because it was close to Philadelphia. It got picked up for two months of dispatch while the permanent job came through in Philadelphia. Went there. Knew I was not a city kid. Talk about a fish out of water. I had to be taught how to drive. Fortunately, I was living in Valley Forge, because there was a person who lived past Valley Forge that drove through. She picked me up, drove me to Philly for a month so I could figure out how to get to work. (laughter) And because I hadn’t found an apartment yet, they allowed me to still live in the government housing in Valley Forge while I found a place.

Wendy Lauritzen: And then one of the guys I was working at Valley Forge with, he got a permanent job with Department of Defense, so his apartment was coming open. So, I moved into his place. It was a great setup. Sixty dollars a month for a suburb of Philadelphia. It was a rich suburb, too. I lived in this little 14 by 14 upstairs apartment. And so, commuted into Philadelphia. But yeah, I had to be taught how to ride the subway. Fortunately, there was somebody who said, “Go to the subway station. I’ll meet you there.

Get off the train.” Tell you how to get on. I had to be taught everything about the city. I was way out of my element. Yeah. (laughter)

Wendy Lauritzen: But getting back to the rendezvous. So, I’d gone to the first rendezvous. Well then after I’d been out, even when I was with BLM, it kept me in touch with rangers, even though I was working at another agency. So that was good. And then I got back to the rendezvous at Fontana Dam.

Wendy Lauritzen: And somewhere along the line, Mike Finley, he had become, I forget what year this was, he had become superintendent at Yellowstone. And I heard Mike talking about, “Well, if I’d known all the stuff that the superintendent needs to know, I would have learned more about this.” And he said, “You need to know about human resources, and you need to know about maintenance. Because that’s where the money is and that’s where the problems are. So, know administration, know budget and know maintenance.” And so anyway, he said, “But the truth is, you need to know all the divisions’ work.”

Wendy Lauritzen: And so that conversation that, he wasn’t directing it to me, I just overheard it, it was like, yeah, doing natural resources, doing law enforcement, doing interpretation. Knowing administration, knowing how budget works, knowing human resources, and hiring authorities. Digging into all that stuff. So, I got into everybody’s business in points along my career.

Wendy Lauritzen: And so ANPR is what’s given me my career because of what I’ve learned to read between the lines. Because of the conversations you have at events like this. If I were to look at what park service has provided training for me, that would not have done it. It’s only because I knew what to pursue because I’d been coming to these things. Like, “I’m going to go get this.” And if somebody told me no, then I’d find a way to do it with or without them. ANPR has kind of taught me, you can do it inside or outside of the boundaries here. But don’t let it stop you. Keep going.

Wendy Lauritzen: Too many times now I see people who get stuck because, “Well, park service didn’t give me this training.” And since they didn’t give it to me, I’m letting them stop my entire career? No. (laughs) So I would say ANPR has been extremely—

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Wendy Lauritzen: And it’s been a fascinating career. The whole international rangers, that exposure has been through ANPR. And going to the first conference in Poland. And then I went to Tanzania, so I finally got to Africa. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) I wanted to go to South Africa, but I was in the middle of building a visitor’s center, so I couldn’t manage that trip.

Lu Ann Jones: Well I am, I’m really fascinated one with the role of, the questions, I think, we ask of many people. It’s just the role of mentors in their lives. And it seems like you’ve already pointed to people who kind of take you by the collar and say, “It seems like you have an aptitude for this.” So, could you

talk some about just that role of mentoring in your career? Or do you see yourself as a mentor to other people? Or just that role of, well, sometimes intentional, sometimes more casual, kind of helping people direct their careers?

Wendy Lauritzen: Mentoring-wise, friendship-wise, Bill Wade, who was instrumental with ANPR initially. That had a lot of influence because it was this organization and seeing him involved with this organization. But the ability to look at I can do this, or I can find ways around something, that's what I observed. Still do it legal but find a way to get it done sort of thing. So, it wasn't important. Sometimes you just sort of pick and choose. So, I didn't stick with this person told me this thing it was like here are some other viewpoints.

Wendy Lauritzen: And then also realizing when they're talking about, "Well, this is what I would do," well, are you doing it because you've got kids in school? I mean, what's some of the reasons behind it? And if I don't have those reasons, then that's good advice for you but not necessarily good advice for me. And so, deciphering some of that.

Wendy Lauritzen: But that is where, to me, ANPR as an organization has done more in that mentoring than specific individuals. Because it's just advice.

Wendy Lauritzen: One night at a rendezvous, I'd gone to bed early. And it was an area, there was a balcony outside. And so, there was a couple of folks, they just happened to stop outside my door at the motel. And they were chatting about history. And it was fascinating because I could tell by the voices, I knew who these two individuals were. But one guy was talking about, his jealousy was basically over this other person who had beaten him out of a job sort of thing. And just hearing those types of conversations sometimes, it was like okay, there are things to look at. There are also things to let go of. So, there is that whole serendipity aspect of it.

Wendy Lauritzen: Sometimes I have sought out specific people because I want to learn something. So, for that particular skill, I may pick that out. So, it's been valuable. But for me it's been more serendipitous than it has been, "This is my mentor." Because there have been times that I also realize that they were a good mentor for maybe a couple of years for these reasons. And there's a time to let go. And sometimes you hang onto your mentors too long. So, it is letting go sometimes of I've grown past that, or their life has gone off on a different course. For a specific reason. That's fine. But that's not right for me. And realizing when those breaks are.

Lu Ann Jones: Well when you began to move into areas where, I mean, was there a time when you were beginning to move to new positions that you really weren't taking on, to kind of use a cliché, going outside your comfort zone? Like you were going into an area where you thought well, on the one hand, I wouldn't say this is a natural fit for me, but this is something that I want to do. Not because you have to, but this is something I want to learn now, it's time for me to learn this. I guess I am just kind of curious of how kind of

you take a job and this is what I learn from here. And when do you kind of figure out, okay, because I can see, there's almost like these three or three-and-a-half year increments. And then at some point, there's another step.

Wendy Lauritzen: Yeah. Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: So, kind of some of the specifics about that would be interesting.

Wendy Lauritzen: Well initially it was pretty quick turnover. But like for instance, there was always a reason why I did take a job. The one regret I have is I turned down a seasonal job for horse patrol at Crater Lake. I'd already accepted a job for, well actually I was being offered the job with BLM, returning to an area that I'd been before. Or taking this Crater Lake job.

Wendy Lauritzen: And there was this guy I liked. So, I called him up said, "I've got this other job offer. Or I can come back here" sort of thing. And it was like, oh, so it lasted all of three days. Like, uh uh. (laughs) So I don't follow guys anymore. So that was one of those like no, I should have taken the Crater Lake job. Never will know what that would have led to.

Wendy Lauritzen: When I was at Valley Forge, I took that job not because I wanted that job. I took that job because I knew I was on the short list for Philadelphia. So, I took it for that reason, just thinking it was a matter of time.

Wendy Lauritzen: When I went to Philadelphia, I'm so out of my element. But I told myself well I worked a seasonal for seven years. So, I can last for a year in this job. And then I can always go back to seasonal life.

Wendy Lauritzen: And I worked six months in interpretation. My first day on the job in interpretation, my boss made a comment, "Well, Wendy came to us from law enforcement. So, I don't know why she came to us in interpretation." I'd already done interpretation prior to going to law enforcement. But she had this bias against law enforcement. And I could never get past that. And at my mid-season evaluation she said, "Well, they've got these law enforcement jobs open. Are you going to apply?" And I thought, yeah, I am. (laughter)

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I applied for law enforcement there. And I worked for a guy by the name of Roger Johnson. Wonderful guy. Grew up in Philadelphia. Had been in the Marines but was very much a Philly guy.

Wendy Lauritzen: When I went over to do my interview, I was doing costumed interpretation that day. So, I had all the 1800s or, yeah, 1800s garb on. And did my interview. Guy by the name of Pete C., who was the lead ranger, he kept trying to look down my blouse. (laughter) And Roger's just, Roger's looking at me going how's she going to handle this. And I could tell Pete was trying to look down my blouse. And I just sort of went with the flow.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, after a while Roger's going yeah, she can handle law enforcement here. So, I did that. But I told him up front, I said, "You know, I'm looking to actually possibly go back seasonally working for BLM or at another park."

- Wendy Lauritzen: He said, "As long as you leave before we send you to FLETC, no hard feelings." And so, I ended up applying for a job at Fish & Wildlife Service. And left four days before I was supposed to have gone to law enforcement, permanent law enforcement school.
- Wendy Lauritzen: So, I went to Fish and Wildlife Service. So that was a little bit, well, this is a risk, leaving the agency I've been trying so hard to get into. But I also knew, I needed to get out of Philadelphia. And Fish and Wildlife Service was a very good agency to work for. I've always been able to switch from being a park service person to now I'm working for BLM, and here's my purpose as BLM. I see people who will switch from one agency to another, but they don't let the ethic of that agency go. They bring that to their new one, and conflicts can create. But I was able to switch for their purposes.
- Wendy Lauritzen: It turned out to be a good choice in that while park service we very much wrote our citations and we acted and all that, Fish and Wildlife Service, oh, no. While we did law enforcement, and we did active law enforcement, we were not allowed to write citations in the field. We had to let the special agents in charge review any cases of citations before they were actually allowed to go. Which irritated the heck out of me. But it also taught me that you don't have to make a decision right then and there. So as a law enforcement officer, it was like, oh, yeah. Let me think. Just gather the information. What's this person's name, address, all this stuff that you need to fill up the citation, you can mail them the citation. But that way you get a chance to go through your law enforcement regulations. Well did they meet all the elements of this crime? No, they didn't. But it does fit this charge over here versus that one. So, we had a higher rate of the charges standing as a result. So that was good that way.
- Wendy Lauritzen: But also, from Fish and Wildlife Service I really, I liked the agency. I was looking at, Fish & Wildlife Service moved up grade-wise much faster than park service. But I missed the adrenaline rush of the type of law enforcement. The search and rescue. The going out on fire all the time, the Fish and Wildlife office I worked at, they had a prescribed burn, but they didn't really send people out on fires. But it was just the whole law enforcement approach was different. The adrenaline rush of search and rescues, all that sort of thing. And so, I wanted to get back into park service.
- Wendy Lauritzen: And what I was seeing was, those that had moved up in other agencies, they could not compete at the same grade level. So, if you went to a nine in Fish and Wildlife Service, their nine was doing what some of the fives in park service were doing. So, when it came to trying to transfer back, if you moved up too quickly, you couldn't get back over.
- Wendy Lauritzen: And so, I decided to try to get back into park service. So that one I applied for a job at Big Thicket. And this was one of those that I did not do my research on the park. I thought Big Thicket was a small version of Big

Bend. Totally different. Different sides of the state and what not. It was swamp land. It was forest land; I mean forested areas and all that. So different than [unclear]. I got hired.

Wendy Lauritzen: In the process of being hired, I'd just had my mouth, jaw surgery. So, my mouth was wired shut. And the guy who was hiring me had a hearing aid. That was an interview, I'll tell you what! (laughter)

Lu Ann Jones: It sounds like a comedy routine.

Wendy Lauritzen: It pretty much was. Because he'd ask me a question, I'd, [speaking garbled] "Yeah, what would you like to know?" (laughter) So I got the job. But I mean, there was a lot of stuff that he couldn't understand me. And I was trying to answer. It was a comedy, yes.

Wendy Lauritzen: And then got down there. Harold Timmins was, he was the sweetest guy in the world. District ranger. He had three daughters. He treated me like his daughter. There was four of us hired all at the same time. Four guys and me. And it was one of those biases that Harold just did not realize he had. Because he had always tried to protect me. So, when it came to some of the training for firefighting and what not, we were doing training for sawyer work. So, Harold didn't want me to get hurt. So, he said, "Well, just have her buck the brush and you guys will learn how to cut the trees." Well, bucking the brush is a whole lot more work than cutting the trees down.

Wendy Lauritzen: But anyway, the three guys who were my age stood up for me and said, "No, she needs to learn it just like us." So, I got the training just like they did.

Wendy Lauritzen: Well, then we had the fires of 1988 with Yellowstone on fire and all that stuff. Well, the guys kept getting shipped off on fires. But I was being held back at the park because Harold just couldn't see me doing [firefighting]. So, I would be doing law enforcement while the guys were off fighting fire.

Wendy Lauritzen: So Big Thicket was not my cup of tea. I worked there one year, three months and six days, if that gives you an idea. (laughter) But in the process of everybody being out on fire, well, shoot. And everybody in the country was out on fire that year. I mean, they were all being shipped out.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I thought well, you know, my competition is all out on fire. I'll just start applying for jobs. So, I had, I think I had 15 job applications out. And finally, we had this other fire. And the guy said, "Harold, you need to send Wendy."

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I got to go out on this, I think it was the fourth fire for that season that the crew had gotten sent out. We got out on fire; we work a week on one fire. We demob there. Went to a new fire that was so new that they were still installing the base camp. I mean, the guy from the phone company was there putting a phone on a post. Saw him do that. And then right after he'd done that, the phone rings. He answers it. Writes notes down. Then

- he hangs up. Starts walking around and starts talking to all the groups out there.
- Wendy Lauritzen: Finally comes over and says, “Is there a Wendy Lauritzen here?” It’s like, “Yeah.” “Well, here’s this number. You need to call.”
- Wendy Lauritzen: So, I’m sitting there going, it was an odd number. So, it’s got to be a job application, right? So, I thought well, I don’t know which job it is. I’ve got 15 applications. Well, when they answer the phone, I’ll know by the way they answer the phone which job it is.
- Wendy Lauritzen: So anyway, they answered it. And I don’t know whether they said “National Park Service” or whether they didn’t said the name of the park. But anyway, I didn’t catch it. I was too embarrassed to ask. So, I just said, “Well, could I speak to so and so?” All I had was a name and a number, right?
- Wendy Lauritzen: So, they said sure. So, they transferred me. And I said, “This is Wendy Lauritzen. I got a message to call you.” He said, “Well, I’ve got a job here. Do you want it?” I said, “Yes, I do.” (laughter) I figured at least he’d interview me. And I said, “Yes, I do. Can you tell me where this is at?” (laughter)
- Wendy Lauritzen: So anyway, he told me it was at Black Canyon of the Gunnison, one of my favorite parks of all time that I’ve ever worked at. So, he told me where it was at. And he said, “I know that we can’t set the date until after you get back off of fire. So, we’ll settle that after you get back. But you are hired.” Okay.
- Wendy Lauritzen: So anyway, I got to go back to tell the guys who’d been out on all these fires, “I got out of here.” (laughter) Because they were all out on fires and I was able to get ahead of the curve.
- Wendy Lauritzen: So sometimes I watch what the curves are in jobs. What is the trends, and trying to get ahead that way, too. Getting ahead of the curve instead of waiting until the last minute. And that would be one of the mistakes that I see people do, is that they wait until they really, really want out of a place—
- Lu Ann Jones: Yes.
- Wendy Lauritzen: —before applying. And then the waiting becomes quite disastrous for them. Whereas I always apply while I’m still liking a job. And that way if I don’t get it, it doesn’t matter if I don’t get it. So that’s always been good. But yeah, I’ve had serendipitous things in my life.
- Lu Ann Jones: So, at that next job, what do you feel like you learned there that kind of added to your sense of, vision of what the park service was and your own sense of competence?
- Wendy Lauritzen: Well that one, I was hired in resources management. My range management came in. They had grazing there. That was actually one of the first ones where my degree made a difference. The first week on the

job, I get there, my boss, who is the chief ranger, says, “Well, the superintendent’s trying to fire me.” The chief ranger. So that told me there was a ton going on. Like, okay. And I wasn’t digging into it or anything like that.

Wendy Lauritzen: Over the course of the year, or actually, was it two years? Anyway, over the course of time there, it became obvious there was a problem with the chief ranger. He ended up being not fired, he resigned. But you could tell it was one of those types of choices. Basically, because he also told you that stuff. But that was one of those I was given a lot of responsibilities because he was screwing up on things. So, it gave me an idea of choices there.

Wendy Lauritzen: It was to the point there where we had him, he didn’t tell his wife – first of all, he had been dating this gal for 12 years. As he was getting into trouble, he finally got engaged to her. And then they bought a house. Then they got married. It was like the level of denial that you saw of this isn’t happening to me, he would dig himself in deeper. “Well surely they can’t fire me because I’m getting married” and all that sort of stuff.

Wendy Lauritzen: But his wife lived [in the town] during the week, but her job was two hours away, so she lived in another town. He never told her that he’d gotten fired. And we had gotten some indication that there was a lot of people who didn’t know that he was no longer working in THE park. So much so that one of the BLM offices there, one of the people that we worked with, was giving me a (jokingly) hard time. He said, “When are you guys going to do your open house this year?”

Wendy Lauritzen: I said, “Oh, we’re not doing it. We’re remodeling that building. So, we won’t be doing it.” He said, “Oh, I’m going to have to give” this guy “a hard time over—” I said, “Well you do know that he doesn’t work there anymore.” He said, “Really?! I didn’t know that. When did that happen?” I said, “Oh, about three, four months ago.” He says, “That’s odd. Because I was just over at his house eating dinner three nights ago and asked him how everything was going. He said, just fine.”

Lu Ann Jones: Wow.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, we ended up, and he was giving programs at the school and all sorts of stuff. So, we had notified the sheriff. We had to notify the school board. We had to notify lots of officials that while it was legal for him to do these things, he was no longer employed by the park service. But yeah, he didn’t tell his wife for two years.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow.

Wendy Lauritzen: That he was no longer working for the park service. He just kept up that pretense for two years. That was very influential on my career of just seeing human resource dynamics of processes and that sort of thing. But also, I mean, at that point, because I was his acting once his position was gone, I asked one of the coworkers, his friends, should I be worried about

taking his position. And we were getting ready to go, he was doing some really strange things. And three days before he was to leave, we were going out on the qualifying range to shoot. So, I said, "Should I be worried that he might shoot me?" And she said, "Uh huh." (laughter)

Wendy Lauritzen: So anyway, I go out on this shooting range. And of course, other people who knew that, I mean, the vacancy announcement was right out there. And other people would give him a hard time. They just weren't sure what all the connecting dots because he'd resigned sort of thing. And so anyway, I just made sure that every other ranger was between him and me. (laughter) I mean, why would you go qualify and shoot if you're not even going to be in park service anymore. But you had to treat it as if everything was fine. But he, yeah, he went off the deep end.

Wendy Lauritzen: In the meantime, I had applied for a job at Great Basin National Park. And while, in applying for that, it was for a range conservationist. I'd already applied for the Point Reyes. That one didn't happen. I'd already received my letter from Great Basin saying, well—

Wendy Lauritzen: You qualified for the position but were not referred to the hiring official. I was disappointed as I thought with my experience and degree, I would be a shoe in. Must have guessed wrong. So, I went on being happy at black canyon. A couple of months later I get a strange call inquiring if I was still available for consideration. They could not explain to me what had happened but just wanted to see if I was still available. I told them that I was.

Wendy Lauritzen: I ended up getting the job. Even the person who hired me wasn't sure what had happened or why I didn't get on the cert the first time. A couple of years later I found out the story. The EO officer, who had a history in ranching and cattle, was reviewing the certs that had been drawn up for the position. When she saw my application, that I didn't make the cert but saw the qualifications of who did, she had made a few inquiries. Turns out the hiring panel didn't have any subject matter experts sitting on the panel. When she spoke to one of the panel members, the person defended their decision by saying something to the effect of, "well let's take a look at her transcripts. Here it says she took a class in agrostology – what does studying the stars have to do with grazing management?" As told to me the EO officer responded by saying she believed she saw the problem and walked away. After that she contacted the hiring official, who had not yet worked the cert, explained that she could not tell him what had happened but that she believed that a serious mistake had been made in creating the cert. Would he be willing to send back the cert he had and have the applications re-paneled. When he got the new cert, he couldn't believe that I had not made the first one. So, an EO officer made a big difference in my getting that job. Not so much for the EO side as it was that she had a ranching background.

Wendy Lauritzen: After a year in the job, and it was clear that with the ranchers support that grazing would be coming to an end – the ranchers had already approached me and their congressmen about getting bought out, so I started applying for jobs. The question was whether being a range con was going to help or hurt – the move from the 9 to 11 is a tough hurdle. I also wanted to move to a position that would help prepare me for a superintendency someday. I applied for the management assistant position in the northwest Alaska areas, which is three parks – Cape Krusenstern National Monument, Noatak National Preserve and Kobuk Valley National Park.

Wendy Lauritzen: There were some real difficulties that relate to workplace violence issues while I was up there. I was up there for three and a half years. I learned a lot about personnel and human resources while there. Threats were being made against the superintendent. That's where I started learning more about group dynamics but realized personnel offices tend to treat everything as an individual matter.

[END OF TRACK 2]

[START OF TRACK 3]

Lu Ann Jones: Okay. We're recording. I don't know when that stopped, but something wasn't beeping there. I hope we got that.

Wendy Lauritzen: Okay. Okay. So it was, this was the move into the 11. I'm going well gee, it's north of the Arctic Circle. One, I don't like mosquitoes and I knew Alaska was known for its mosquitoes. I thought well at least north of the Arctic Circle, the mosquito season would be shorter. So, there was that. And I'm going, you know, I bet you there's a lot of people who would not apply for north of the Arctic Circle. That means the competition's less. So, I'm looking at where are my odds better trying to break into something that's a tough level to break into.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I went ahead and applied for this position, this management assistant. And I got selected. Turns out they'd actually announced the job three times. I didn't see it announced the first two times. So, I got hired the third time, during the third announcement.

Wendy Lauritzen: And one of the people who had applied the two previous times, and also applied the third time, was a current employee up there. First day on the job she took me to lunch and said, "Well, you're in the job I should have had." And that was the, it was a rough time. (laughs) Yeah. And evidently, she did that to a couple of people even after I left. So, she had a history of doing that sort of stuff.

Wendy Lauritzen: But I applied, and there was only three of us applied on that third time. And so yes, my odds were pretty good. Because I apply to places people won't go. But it's an adventure, you know? I get to see the world that I wouldn't have seen any other way. So that's part of it. I'd much rather go someplace and be paid while I'm there to have this adventure than save up all my money to go and have the adventure but on a shorter period of time.

- Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. So well how do you deal with a situation like that? I mean, I think that's a situation that not everybody finds themselves in, but it's not totally unusual to find yourself where you walk in and you realize that there's some, well, there's always some kind of local politics. How do you kind of rise above it or just say okay, this is something I deal with, but I'm not going to let this derail me.
- Wendy Lauritzen: Uh. That one, it was a tough assignment. Some of it was, I realize, that there were daylight/darkness issues. And I'm one of those that the darkness, I was fine in. The daylight, when I couldn't get rested, I was tired all the time. Then there are the people who are energized by the daylight, but they were really cranky in the wintertime because of lack of sunlight. We also butted heads a lot. But there was a lot of stuff that went on up there. It wasn't just me. Sometimes you can rise above it. Sometimes you can't. I've been through enough—
- Wendy Lauritzen: I need to tell you about my first boss at Badlands.
- Lu Ann Jones: Okay.
- Wendy Lauritzen: Because this gets interesting. And it took me 10 years to even realize the impact it had. A month before I actually went to work for the guy, evidently, he'd gone on vacation with his wife, it was his second wife, down to Mexico. And when he came back from his vacation, he had a new wife. So that was all the buzz at the park by the time I got there.
- Wendy Lauritzen: Well, it was a little bit more of a buzz than that in that when he had left to go to Mexico, when he came back, he said, "Yep, we got a quickie divorce down there. And this is my new wife." Somebody he'd been evidently having an affair with. And he was a born-again Mormon at that point. So, what became obvious was that he was very manic depressive. So, he'd be in these extremes, he was compulsive of go this way. So, he was into extremes.
- Wendy Lauritzen: But his second wife's parents had called the FBI because they had not heard from their daughter since the day that they left for vacation. And it had been a month and they still hadn't heard anything from her. And so, the FBI had come to investigate him.
- Wendy Lauritzen: And during the course of the summer while working for him – and I enjoyed working for the guy, but he definitely had these compulsive behaviors.
- Wendy Lauritzen: He was really into stars, then all of a sudden, he lost interest. I mean, it was one of those things, very compulsive behavior. But over the course of the summer, there were three days that we could not walk through the government housing. We had to go way outside and around to walk to work to the visitors' center, because he had holed himself up in his house. And they were afraid that he might shoot somebody out the window. (laughs) And then he went on to work somewhere else. He retired about five years ago. (laughs) But they never did find his second wife.

- Lu Ann Jones: Oh my gosh!
- Wendy Lauritzen: And I don't know where the FBI case was. But his first wife, and this is a story he specifically told me, his first wife, he was living, I think it was down in Texas. And she had gone home to visit her relatives. And he had been applying for jobs. And he got a job at, this is when I think he'd gotten the job at Badlands. So, he took the job. He just failed to mention it to his wife. So, she came home from the in-laws and walked in. There's a whole new family in her house. (laughter) Needless to say, they got a divorce. (laughter) You know, so he was definitely in those extremes.
- Wendy Lauritzen: So, I started out with that type of background. Then I had, like I said, the guy that, getting fired and he was all over the place and didn't tell his wife for two years.
- Wendy Lauritzen: While I was at Great Basin, we had a maintenance employee that, he did his work quite well. He was a seasonal. He was a little bit odd. And he knew that he was a little bit odd because he'd say, "Well, I go out and stand out here and look up at the stars at night and I wear these aluminum foil hats and stuff, because I'm waiting for them to come back and get me again." But he knew that that sounded odd, but that's what he did.
- Wendy Lauritzen: Well then, he got into a stalking situation with another seasonal to the point that, and I didn't know anything about it all summer long, but this is my, this was the gal's second summer she was working there. And one night she said, "Can you walk me back to my house?" It was a group party.
- Wendy Lauritzen: So, like, "Sure, I'll walk you back." She said, "Yeah, I'm just afraid to walk here at night." Because he had been stalking her all summer.
- Lu Ann Jones: Oh, my.
- Wendy Lauritzen: And I got along fine with this guy. But he came by her house, because his apartment was right next to hers, and he was just, the look of hate on his face, it was a glare. And he just said, "You know, I could turn into Carrie anytime now." And he starts lighting matches and throwing them in the dry grass around her trailer.
- Wendy Lauritzen: It was like, so I got out of there, I said, "Call law enforcement." And this had been a human resource thing that they were treating it as a performance issue. It was like no, this isn't performance. This is conduct. But it had been such a slow rise in the level of violence. Since I didn't know anything about it up to that point, it was real clear. No. They're well past a point. But all those who had been involved had been that turning up the heat on a frog thing that they never realized it was coming to a boil. And but yeah, it was like, whoa.
- Wendy Lauritzen: And then I ran into the person up in Alaska. So, I've had some very odd career things.

- Wendy Lauritzen: When I was in law enforcement school at FLETC, when I was down there, I was stalked when I was down there by a classmate. And I knew exactly who it was. And it was just this over the top reaction to little stuff. I was changing my behavior a lot. Finally, he'd been leaving me notes and stuff, I was losing sleep, the whole bit, and took it to the class, or the counselor for our class. Gave it to him. And he looked at it, took it over, made a copy of it. Asked me if I wanted to file EEO.
- Wendy Lauritzen: I said, "No. I think it's the stress of the situation here. But I just want it to stop."
- Wendy Lauritzen: He said, "Well first of all, you don't go anywhere on campus by yourself. Period. Not at all. At any time. For the rest of the semester." He notified campus security that if there was a disturbance in our dorm to be prepared to draw firearms and shoot. I mean, just, that's from the one note, he saw.
- Wendy Lauritzen: So, I've been through some rather difficult situations. And I talk to other people, "We've never had those type of—" They seem to follow me. I'm not sure what it is. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) Either I don't put up with it and I put a stop to it, or sometimes I feel like people are just oblivious to some of the stuff going on around them. But yeah. It's been there with just about all of them.
- Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) Well at what point were you thinking, I'm now ready to make that move to a superintendent.
- Wendy Lauritzen: Well I wanted it when I was up in Kotzebue to move on to a superintendent. But I ended up leaving there because I needed to get out of the situation. I was up there three and a half years. But I could tell the daylight darkness, I needed to readjust my brain a bit. So took a chief of interp job instead. But after that it was like no, I need to get ahead of that.
- Wendy Lauritzen: And this was one of those that my boss at the time, I knew that he didn't really mean it, but I tried to get into this management, mid-level manager training. I said, "Would you be supportive of it?"
- Wendy Lauritzen: "Yeah, I'd be supportive." And I could tell he wasn't really supportive, but he was playing along with it. Like, fine.
- Wendy Lauritzen: So, I applied for it. I was a couple of days late applying for it. So, I called the gal that was managing, and I said, "You know, is this okay?"
- Wendy Lauritzen: She said, "No, I've got to turn you down."
- Wendy Lauritzen: I'm like, okay, all right. But I'd already submitted. And I think that's one reason why my boss said, "Yeah, I'll support you, no problem," because he figured I don't have to spend money on it. We're good. But I'd gotten his permission to apply. He even signed off on it. I mean, so I had all the documentation there.
- Wendy Lauritzen: And about a month later, the gal calls up. She says, "Well, I can't really tell you what's gone on. But are you still interested?" I said, "Yes, I'd be very interested."

Wendy Lauritzen: And so anyway, I got selected. Well then, my boss was stuck, because he'd already agreed to this. So, I got in because I'd pushed for something that he wouldn't have.

Lu Ann Jones: Is that the one that the USDA—

Wendy Lauritzen: Well, the federal executive board. And then with Mary Bomar. And then Mary Bomar, she, because I did the detail there, well the first day on the job there, Oklahoma City, that I was supposed to be working for her, she had to leave for a week. So, I ended up setting up her office, because they were moving. They had a lot of stuff going on at Oklahoma City. The FEB [Federal Executive Board] also had some ties with Oklahoma City [National Memorial]. So anyway, it was all very intermingled, my two different assignments there. And all in all, that's where Mary got to know me.

Wendy Lauritzen: When I applied for Washita, I was actually the third person on her list to hire. But the other two people had turned the position down. So anyway, she fought for me to be selected. I blew my interview bad, so she had to do some talking. "No, she'll do a good job." You know, so she went to fight for me.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, she hires me. And then she said, "Oh, Wendy, I need you to report a couple of weeks earlier. Or at least that we meet to have your performance put in place and all these things, because I've just been selected to go to the regional office," or go to Philadelphia, Independence.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, on my starting date for being the superintendent was her exit date as my boss. (laughter) So she hired me and was gone. So it was, there's always been these little crossover paths.

Wendy Lauritzen: But I had followed Mike Finley's advice, although the advice wasn't to me. I did resource management. I knew the management side of things, the administrative side of things. I'd done law enforcement. So, I felt like I'd covered my bases of everything I needed to know. So, when it came to it's time to move up, I felt like I was ready. And I really do feel like that I had that broad base for being ready for superintendent.

Lu Ann Jones: What is that management training that you went through? I'm curious about that and what that did for you.

Wendy Lauritzen: Well, it did a lot of things, in that, one that brought me up to a lot of the book training that they had us do was what management, you know, what is management. So, you can learn more that next step of getting into management. It was through the USDA, mid-level manager's training. Because it was USDA, it was all sorts of different agencies involved with it. Comparatively with park service, it's like the new superintendent's training now, or the mid-level, but the difference was, USDA is not just park service. And that was really important.

Wendy Lauritzen: The group that I was in, we got along great. They randomly selected your teams. And so, it, but there was eight of us in our group. And out of the

eight, we had three sets of people with the same birthday. I mean, the same day. Statistically, that's just unheard of. The first time we took the Meyers-Briggs personality test, all that stuff, but also looking at the group dynamics, our group always had a mix that ran all the extremes. Our positions of who that was varied. But we always were balanced. And we had a really good team.

Wendy Lauritzen: Other teams that were very much alike by chance, some of them, they wouldn't even talk to each other by the end of the training. So, one of it was realizing what that mix of experience, how valuable it is that diversity of viewpoint and capabilities versus always aiming to hire the same type as you are. It's more comfortable if you hire the same type as you are. But realizing that conflict is natural. That whole storming and norming business. So, it just opened up what is management, what are some of those responsibilities. Different experiences of how you manage meetings, how you put programs together. But it's teamwork. But also realizing different teams have different results. And ours, we got along fine. Others, you could just see them dissolving. It's like wow, I'm glad we, ours coalesced really, really well.

Wendy Lauritzen: The one thing that we had the toughest time about was our name. They wanted us to give ourselves a name. One of the guys in our group was from Hawaii. He was the first wage-grade person who'd ever been into this program. He was a nuclear crane operator with the Department of Defense. Anyway, he brought macadamia nuts over. And so, we thought oh, let's just call ourselves the Macadamia Nuts while we settle on the more appropriate name. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) We couldn't. Because it was like, no, we are the Macadamia Nuts. And so, it was one of those that we just fell into that name, and it was like no, we really do identify with this. Because everything else that seemed to be the more professional name, no. But we worked out all these differences. And just the broad scope of it.

Wendy Lauritzen: But it was doing interviews with people. One of the interviews I did was a person who was definitely an up and comer in park service. And I was going this is a great interview, you know, learning skills. About four months later he got into some really hot water for doing some really stupid stuff. And I'm sitting there going how can you be so brilliant and so stupid at the same time sort of thing. And so, it's looking at the humanness of people.

Lu Ann Jones: That's really interesting. I mean, just that kind of exposure systematically to that kind of training and everything. I was going to also ask you, and I don't know exactly where this is, but you were also part of the development of fundamentals, or had something—

Wendy Lauritzen: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: I think that's a very interesting part of park service.

Wendy Lauritzen: I'm trying to think how, I knew that it was one of those skills that I was after, but I don't know how to do this. But some people that I admired were doing the Albright Training Center, being an instructor and all this sort of stuff. Maybe I should get some of that as part of my background and what not.

Wendy Lauritzen: And so, on that evolution of looking at that, well there was this opportunity for this thing at the time, it was called universal, universal excellence.

Lu Ann Jones: The competent—

Wendy Lauritzen: What's fundamentals at one time was universal competencies. So, I applied for it. And again, it was one of those things that nobody knew what it was. So, I talked to my boss, "Can I apply for this?"

Wendy Lauritzen: And it was the, "Yeah, you can apply." But they didn't think I would get it. So, I would pursue something, and they'd go, oh, she won't get selected. Then I would. Again, that was working through something.

Wendy Lauritzen: And there are so many times in going through how you set up curriculum and all that sort of, it was so far above my head. It's like thank goodness there's a group of folks doing this stuff, because I'm trying to get my head around it. That's when I realized I probably would not be a good instructor, because my mind does not want to go there. Yeah, it was an eye opener of probably not a path for me to follow in my career. Because if I did, while I could probably pull it off, I probably would not be happy doing that job.

Lu Ann Jones: Well you said, to kind of go back to the superintendent level, that in that interview you felt like you blew a question, or you blew an interview. So, could you tell me about that? Or what kind of questions are asked when you're hiring a superintendent?

Wendy Lauritzen: Well with the, every time I blow an interview or feel like I blow an interview, it's usually a job that I really want versus oh, I really like the job, I think I'd be good at it, but if I don't get it [makes dismissive noise]. Those I seem to sail through. But the ones I really want, I clam, it's the nervousness of, the clamming up. I won't know on some of these until I get offered or not offered. But the ones that throw me, particularly if you have difficulties at a park, is well what would your employees say about you? Well if you know that you're having difficulties, do you answer the question, "Oh, I know we've got difficulties" or do you say, "Oh, everything's fine." Everything's fine sells better. But if they call your employees, will that be the way it pans out? You don't want to mislead that, either. So, it's always some of those sort of things.

Wendy Lauritzen: And I would much rather be turned down because I told them the truth than, "Oh, she sold me a lie." I'll take my hits for telling the truth. And I know that things aren't always rosy. Usually you don't have enough time in the interview to get into the causes or the factors that play into it. So, I

don't know what the interviewers may approach it with. They may say, "Oh, well I get along with all my employees, so I wonder what she's doing." Or is it, "Oh, well, they've got this guy who wears this metal aluminum foil on top of their head. Maybe there's some other issues there. Yeah." (laughter) Okay. So, you don't quite get into that. But it's usually because I am nervous about a job because I want it so bad.

Wendy Lauritzen: And the other part is until superintendencies, I was never, ever interviewed for a job. It was just like with the job at Black Canyon. "Hi, do you want this job?" "Yes, I do. Where is it?" I mean, that was the extent of the interview was that. So never had the training coming up through the ranks of what an interview, how to go about answering it.

Wendy Lauritzen: And the question for an interview I had last week, "Well, do you have any questions for us?"

Wendy Lauritzen: I'm sitting there going, "No, I don't." Now I realize that can be very bad. Now if I get the job, then I answered it fine. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) But I could tell it kind of put them off. I'm sitting there going, but for me it was is there anything I'd ask that would cause me not to take the job? No. Then why bother to ask it? Because if it's a matter of "Well, do you have bad employees there?" "Well, yes, we do." Well, am I still going to take the job? Yes, I would. Okay. It comes with the territory. You're going to either accept the job as a whole or as not. So, the question seems rather irrelevant. If I had kids, if the starting date would be a factor, I mean, things that would make a difference of whether I would accept a job or not, yeah. But if there's nothing that would keep me from accepting the job, then where's the point in asking a question? I won't know. (laughter) One of these days, I'm going to have to ask people that. Okay, tell me the truth about this answer, what should I do with it, because I don't know. (laughter)

Lu Ann Jones: Well you said that the Tallgrass Prairie job, you reached your, the dream you had set out for.

Wendy Lauritzen: Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: So, what are you dreaming for now?

Wendy Lauritzen: I see it as the next step in that when I took the Tallgrass job, I truly expected to retire there. So, I was on pay 13. I'm good. I had bosses that used to retire at GS-9 level. So 13, that's looking good. I turned 55 with 33 years in, turned 55 last year. So, I thought oh, I can retire anytime. Not ready to. But just the thought that I could was, this is good.

Wendy Lauritzen: A month after I turned 55, I found out that CSRS employees, if they stay 41 years, get 80 percent of their high three. I'm going oh, that's a big difference. I'm going well, 41 years, that means I've got, at the time it would have been eight years left. Well if it's eight years, then I've got another move in me. Like okay, where do I go? I don't have any particular area, but I just want to, I want to go to a larger park, because I've worked

small parks. Most of my career has been smaller parks. So, I would like to go to a larger area. I would like to work with a larger staff. But it's also the challenges of being able to expand. How we do outreach. How we get the public to support us. And having worked very small parks that there is no depth, so if you lose a person in the division, that's all your knowledge base in that division. It would be nice to have a little bit of depth there.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I'm looking at high three for one. That's part of it. Because otherwise, if I wasn't looking at the promotion, why bother? I'm happy where I'm at. Can pay off the house and all that. So, I'm looking at the experience that I can get. And I'm looking at it that I've got enough time that it's worth the government's time to also promote me now. Because I can put in six to seven years. At this point, seven years, before I retire. Then it's time for the next person to come in. So that's, I see it as I have that one last move in me.

Wendy Lauritzen: And, but location-wise, I don't have kids. All my dogs have died off. My neighbor's cat adopted me last year, so I've had her a year. The real question is do I take the cat with me, or do I leave her behind? But it's more that I'm looking at new experiences.

Wendy Lauritzen: I would like to be in a park that's not in development stage. Because both my superintendencies have been in parks with little to no infrastructure. So, I've been building the visitors centers. That was the challenge. I showed up to Washita. "Here, you're building a visitors center." Okay. I don't know how to do this. But I pulled it off.

Wendy Lauritzen: Actually, the reason why I got Tallgrass was I had applied for a job at Wind Cave. And the fact is, the person who got hired for the job used to be a boss of mine at Great Basin. But my application to Wind Cave, the fact I built a visitors center, I was from Kansas, my degree was in range management where we've got cattle grazing and tall grass, they're sitting there going, "I think this is the person for Tallgrass."

Wendy Lauritzen: My boss had gone through the Omaha office. And they asked, "Do you think this person would be interested in applying for Tallgrass?"

Wendy Lauritzen: My boss called me. He says, "I think you should apply."

Wendy Lauritzen: I'm going, "Man, I'm just buried right now." And I'd always wanted to go to Tallgrass. There was no doubt about that. But I was so swamped. But the way he was encouraging I was like okay, maybe I should. And so, I put in for it and got it.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, it was one of those that I had a good shot at because they had seen my application on a different job going yeah, she's got the mix of the background of what we need. And there was no doubt that my instructions were, when I was first hired, your job is to build a visitors center. And so, there aren't that many superintendents who've built visitors centers. And then you throw in the fact that I've built two, that's pretty amazing. But I'm a little tired of building things. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) So I want to go

somewhere that their infrastructure's already there. Because my life has gotten consumed from those sorts of projects. And I would like to have a different approach to things versus I'm in the middle of all this construction and that stuff. And the fact is, I missed out on going to South Africa to the international rangers' conference because I was stuck in Washita dealing with a critical time on our visitors center. I'm going [groans] my goal is to go to—(laughter)

[END OF TRACK 3]

[END OF TRACK 4]

Wendy Lauritzen: I'm tired of construction. I don't want to start from ground zero. And—

Lu Ann Jones: Well is part of your job now, too, because a lot of the land is actually owned by the Nature Conservancy, if I understand that, is a lot of community outreach?

Wendy Lauritzen: There is. I mean, that's where—

Lu Ann Jones: Being in this partnership.

Wendy Lauritzen: Well, Nature Conservancy, they have two people whose their offices are in our building. So, we work with them quite closely. That partnership works quite well in that their mission, their purpose as an organization is very compatible to park services.

Wendy Lauritzen: We had a third "partner" and that's with parentheses around it, in that they never formalized their partnership. It was a very political group. It had a lot of political pull, which is fine. We got our building built. But there are also some money issues. So, I got them to, basically I got them to, basically I dried up their illegal source of our funds to them. As a result, they went belly up and they disappeared. Which was a good thing. Because from what I've learned from what they told me directly, about \$100,000 of what should have been park money went to them. And then there was another \$100,000 that I know people were giving them donations thinking it was for us. That went to them. So, it was like, good thing they're gone.

Wendy Lauritzen: But no, working with Nature Conservancy has been good. But I've seen the good partnerships and the bad. Oklahoma City, working on the periphery of what was going on with those dynamics, and they were de-authorized, that was a bad partnership situation. Working with this third-party group, that was a bad partnership operation. Nature Conservancy is a good partnership. I mean, it's like any situation. It can have its pluses and minuses. But it's a good one.

Wendy Lauritzen: At Washita, where we built our visitors center was on forest service land. And it was sort of an arranged marriage that we shall build there, but we were building an office that would also include forest service. So arranged marriage with no possibility of divorce. (laughter) We had our gives and takes, but it worked. Yeah, partnerships, the outreach is definitely

important. Working in the community is definitely important. And that's where the construction starts consuming so much of your time. And with small staffs, it sucks in more of your time than you would expect as a superintendent.

Wendy Lauritzen: And so, then I'd get sucked into those projects. That's why I'm trying to reach out and try something else. I currently have a staff that technology is not something that they buy into. Had a biologist who was experimenting, he wanted to do Facebook so bad, and my folks would not go there. So finally, the biologist built our Facebook page. He sucked me into being administrator. And then after he had been there for 12 seasons, after he built us this page, his wife and him move to Colorado. So anyway, I became the administrator. I had other people to be administrators as well. They've posted, in the three years we've been up five times. And so, I've been sucked into Facebook because I was going to go there. I thought well if I lead it, maybe they'll find out it's not so bad. They just won't go there. That's where, part of my applications at this time, it's like I can't lead them there. They're not going to go there. And I need some creative thought and something new. And this is the most – as an entirety of a staff, so resistant to change. On the one hand, they hate me because I've created a lot of changes since I've been at Tall Grass. But they hate the idea of me leaving as much because they hate the idea of change. (Lu Ann Jones laughs)

Wendy Lauritzen: We went into meltdown last year because we were having to move out of our GSA lease space, which was our headquarters. Move into our new headquarters and visitors center. Move out of the historic buildings into the visitors' center headquarters. Plus, we had a new GSA maintenance facility and moving stuff out of the historic buildings into maintenance. And that move discombobulated my staff to a degree that literally just, I couldn't even get them to pack. I thought fine. I'll bring somebody else in.

Wendy Lauritzen: But then they got offended. "No, we can pack." "I know you *can*. This isn't whether you can. "But we don't have time to." "Fine. Then I'll get somebody else to come in. "No, we don't want that!"

Wendy Lauritzen: "I have to move. We have a deadline. We have to literally do this." (laughter) And I mean, I'm just sitting there going, I don't know what to do. But I've never seen a staff, I mean, I've always known a few. But it was a mixture of staff where you'd have some that, "I don't want to change," but others that are like, okay. I've got a whole staff like, "No! We're right here." And I don't get it. I really don't.

Wendy Lauritzen: And sequester and budget cuts and all that, it's difficult right now. Even though I've had them do the budget exercises and all that sort of stuff, saying, "Look. This is what our projection is." Well, that's not fair how the budget, I'm sorry, it's not fair. I've got to make cuts here. And it means we've got to look at how we're going to be filling positions. I've

gotten rid of all the seasonals. We're down to, I've got to fire someone by next year.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I've told them, I've said, "Look, I'm applying for jobs. So, here's an idea. I've got two people that could apply for my job. So, let's do exercises if you're applying for it but you don't fill yours. Because that way we could cover budget-wise, right?"

Wendy Lauritzen: And the response is, "Well, I don't want your job." (Lu Ann Jones laughs)

Wendy Lauritzen: "Okay, so if I were to leave and you fill my job, one of you've got to be fired, right?" "Oh. Well I don't want to do that, either." (laughter)

Wendy Lauritzen: Okay. I'm missing something. I've given them a year's notice to prepare. So, but it's like "No, we don't want to apply for your job. And then it's been, "Well, it's not that we don't want to apply for your job, but we don't think we'd qualify." But you don't want to learn what it is that I should be doing, or that you would be doing as a superintendent. "No, because that's not my job." And so that's where it's like, I've had enough. I literally have never seen a staff that – the idea of switching anything is just like, no! They don't want anybody to help them because we can do that. I know you can. Do you have time? No, we don't have time. Then why can't I bring someone else? Because it's mine. You know, it's that whole, it's my territory, do not step in here, but we don't have time to do it ourselves. So, if I get help, that's not good. Because that's saying that we can't do our job. So that's part of it.

Lu Ann Jones: A catch-22, yeah, yeah.

Wendy Lauritzen: It's a catch-22. And that's where I, it's one of those, I'm going to take care of myself and look for that next job. And I'm only looking for promotions. Because otherwise, if it's not a promotion, I might as well stay where I'm at. And not incur any further costs and all that. So, I'm just looking at promotions. But where I'm looking for, I mean, I've got a job application into Guam. I've got one in Alaska. That was the one I had an interview on that I really, really want. I've got one at Cumberland Island, Padre Island, El Moro, El Malpais. So, the type of country, outside of, it's not in a city. That's about the only thing in common. Terrain-wise, it's all over the place. I've applied for things up north. Some of them they have filled, and I didn't get. Some they have decided not to fill. The Flagstaff job, the person who got it, this is the third time she has beaten me out of a job that I've applied for. (laughter) So it's like good, she's out of the way. Now I can go on to the rest of them. But anytime I'm up against her, she'll get it. That gets irritating. (laughter)

Lu Ann Jones: Well just a couple of kind of final questions.

Wendy Lauritzen: Okay.

Lu Ann Jones: So, I was wondering about, a couple of times you talked about, we're about the same age. And sort of coming along at a time where women

were beginning to do things that they hadn't done before. Or in particular ways.

Wendy Lauritzen: Right.

Lu Ann Jones: And you mentioned during the interview at Independence where the guy's trying to look down the (laughs) colonial dress that you're wearing. So, are there other, are there ways that you feel like being a woman in the park service, has that made a difference? Or if so, how so? If not, why not?

Wendy Lauritzen: When I was at Smokies, I used to wear makeup. I was young. I wore makeup, all that. And I had a hard time with visitors. And I found on days that I didn't wear makeup, that the authority wasn't questioned. But if I was wearing makeup, yeah. Visitors would give me a hard time. So, I quit wearing makeup. Which I don't, I mean, how discouraging is that? (laughter) All you have to do is not wear makeup, and they're like [makes disinterested noise].

Wendy Lauritzen: I have been confused as being male several times. When I was at SCA, working trail at Rocky Mountain, John Denver was in, you know, popular. So, you had the unisex haircut. I had the rounded glasses like John Denver had. So, I kind of had that John Denverish look to me.

Wendy Lauritzen: So anyway, I was working trail. And our trail crew was about half female, half male. And most of the girls were still down trail of me. I was higher up on the trail. And then the guys were further on up the way. And this hiker comes through. And he sat down. He's huffing and puffing. "Thank God, all I've been seeing is female workers." He says, "Thank God I finally came across a guy."

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I just lowered my voice. [in lower voice] "Well, yeah." It is real interesting. When guys think you're a guy, the way they talk to you is totally different. I was going, well this is enlightening.

Wendy Lauritzen: And when I was in Philadelphia, the law enforcement guys, there was a point where there was a couple of arrests that we made. And all of a sudden, I was accepted as one of the guys. The tone of the conversation became quite different. And rather than just object to what was being said, I thought I just kind of want to learn the thinking from it. But it was enlightening. And they weren't being disrespectful. They truly were thinking of me as one of the guys. And like this is kind of hard to take sometimes.

Lu Ann Jones: Can you give me an example, or a hint of what—

Wendy Lauritzen: It dealt with vaginas a lot. I mean everything was vaginas. It was the way a tree was, a scar on a tree. "Well, what does that look like to you?" I mean, it was just like, are you kidding me? I suppose I could see that. I mean, it was just – but it was just that it was constantly there. And I'm going, and you're really talking to me about this? But there was this point that you could see that I had crossed into their world. They were, on the one hand, it felt great to be treated as an equal. But there was a side of the

conversation that, oooh. I'd just as soon not know all this stuff. But it's there, and I recognize that it's there.

Wendy Lauritzen: I also allowed them to have that space. It doesn't necessarily mean I want to be in that world all that time.

Wendy Lauritzen: But, yeah, to be mistaken as male. Even in high school, my nickname was Pete. (laughs) And you know, being in FFA when women weren't in. And just that whole dynamic of always being kind of a little bit on the upstart of it. But in the male side of the world.

Wendy Lauritzen: But the real shocker was when I went to work at Washita. And one of the NRCS office, the guys in the office, older gentleman, he says, "What are you, one of them women libbers?" And this was 2003. Are you serious? But he was. I mean, I was just so unacceptable, because I was one of them women libbers. And I'm going okay, yeah.

Wendy Lauritzen: I'll go back to, the guys when they stood up for me, "She needs to have the sawyer training. She needs to be able to go out on the fire." Even though I never resented Harold for, I knew what he was trying to, he was trying to protect me. He wasn't doing it out of malice. And he was so blind to it. He was just treating me like one of his daughters. I wasn't one of his daughters. I was a law enforcement officer. So, to have the three guys that I was hired with at the same time come to my defense and say, "No, she needs this." That was nice. That was really nice.

Wendy Lauritzen: For the most part, I really haven't felt like there was a lot of issues. And maybe I was just far enough behind the curve that other women like Ginny Rousseau and stuff, they had broken the ice in many ways. So, we were just that next wave that allowed for acceptance.

Wendy Lauritzen: But you know, the makeup, and I still don't wear makeup much. It irritates my skin and all that. But to realize that just that can make a difference. And there was one gal I worked with that she always wore makeup. And the guys would hit up on her right and left. But they never respected her as a law enforcement officer. And it wasn't because of her skills. And I think it was because she came across as very feminine. And that was the difference. And the women that were treated more like law enforcement officers, they were the ones that didn't wore makeup. And I don't even know whether it was conscious or subconscious, but I noticed that there was a difference in how the guys treated the gals doing law enforcement as to whether or not they wore makeup.

Lu Ann Jones: That's a very interesting observation. Well what kind of – well actually, I have a couple more questions. What kind of advice if younger rangers now talk to you now about trying to build a career in the park service, what kind of advice do you give them these days?

Wendy Lauritzen: I, well first of all, I ask them what it is that they're wanting. I've gone without in that, because I've worked small parks, that also eliminated a lot of dating as a potential. Because that's where you meet folks. So, if you're

dealing with family issues – I don't presume that what they want are the same things that I want. So, I try to figure out what their goals are.

Wendy Lauritzen: One of the gals who's here, I just met her. She had somebody who advised her to call me and ask for some career advice. And I was trying to ask her what it was that she was wanting. And at the same time, I was trying to look at the picture of how hard is it to get into the agency, what's happening with downsizing and all that. So, it was one that she could assess her risks for herself. But to ask enough questions that she knew that she was assessing risks. And while I advised her one way, she took another. I take no offense in that because she was assessing it for her needs. But I feel like she had an informed decision.

Wendy Lauritzen: Part of the reason why she was calling me was because she felt like there were some key times in previous experiences that she was advised badly. So, such as she'd been in Peace Corps, but nobody told her about the time limit, you only have two years after getting out of Peace Corps to be able to have that to get you status. She didn't know that. So, year three she applies, and too late. No good so she missed out on an opportunity just to get in permanent. So, I was trying to figure out, I know what her concern was, and she looked into it more and came up with no, this isn't going to work. And she went in a different direction. I hope it's the right decision for her. But at least it was an informed decision.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I do get into career advice. But I don't expect people to take the same path I did. I ask them, you know, are you wanting to stay and live in one area? Or are you wanting to move about? Because I have a hard time personally advising somebody to get into park service if you don't want to move around. Because your chances of advancing are slim to none. So, it is one of those of what do you want. But if you're wanting to, I want to move up in park service, but I want to stay right here and you're in a small park, not going to happen. Or so unlikely to happen. That's why I don't understand some people's decision of why they make them or why you would try so hard to get into this agency when your objectives have nothing to do with this agency. I mean, is it just that it's a job? I don't quite get it.

Wendy Lauritzen: But I do find that people tell, "Call Wendy. She'll give you the options."

Wendy Lauritzen: One of the friends I made while I was at Washita, I had a professor call me up, say, "I would like you to come and talk about ranger careers." I said, "I know what you're asking is that you want me to talk about ranger careers. But what you want is how do you apply for government jobs. That's what your students really want to know. What you're asking is one thing, but what you want is this. So, I'll make you a deal. I'll teach the class that you're asking me to give. Then I want to have three days so I can teach how to apply for government jobs."

Wendy Lauritzen: So, went and he agreed to it. Went back and taught the three days of how to apply for government jobs. The whole KSA business. This is before any

of the electronic stuff going on. KSAs, how that works. The student hiring authorities. So, I went through the different authorities. And he's going, wow. So, this professor's going, I've been fighting this and all I have to do is, these are students. So, he jumped into that. And yeah, so he still sends students. "Give her a call." You know? As to what's going on.

Wendy Lauritzen: Or he'll say, "What's with this Pathways program versus SCEP" So he's trying to figure it out. But sometimes I know what they're asking, but that's not the question they should be asking. And try to redirect it. And I do that with careers as well.

Wendy Lauritzen: And realizing that men and women have different objectives as well. And the paths are a little bit different when it comes to career and family. There was one point in my career, and several women of the same age, this was when I was in my thirties. That if you're in your thirties, hadn't been married, no kids, any of that, that if you hadn't been married by the time, you're thirties, they presumed you were gay. Therefore, no one would ask you out because they presumed you were gay. (laughs)

Lu Ann Jones: Interesting.

Wendy Lauritzen: I mean, I remember a rendezvous and there were a half dozen of us going, "How do you get a date? Everybody thinks we're gay. But the reason why they think we're gay is because we're not dating." But nobody would ask us out. Can you please help us here? Because we don't get it. (laughter)

Wendy Lauritzen: And then in my forties, it went the opposite direction. You had all these guys who were divorced, and they had kids. And it was like, "Oh, she's never been married. She doesn't have any of that baggage. She doesn't come with kids." So, we're attractive in the forties, but not in the thirties. (laughter) Guys, I don't want your baggage, okay? Please.

Lu Ann Jones: Interesting. And this might be hard, even though, because you've been doing this a long time. But I was wondering if there's like one situation that was a real challenge over the course of your career that you felt like you handled particularly well. Or maybe you didn't handle it so well, but you learned a lot from it. Kind of a lessons learned kind of situation. Is there anything that you can think that would be along those lines?

Wendy Lauritzen: Part of it is more a pattern of what I've encountered. And I realize that having talked to other folks that my experience is not everybody's experiences. But the amount of workplace violence the park service puts up with. Part of it is coming to terms with what workplace violence is. Having gone through the stalking. But I have known a lot of females in park service who've been assaulted. And they can't get, and since we investigate, we're our own law enforcement folks, we don't investigate ourselves very well. Because we're family. So, we're a very dysfunctional family at times.

Wendy Lauritzen: But having done law enforcement for as many years as I did, the hardest thing is dealing with, when I was up in Alaska, it got very heated. And it

was extreme with threats and what all was going on. And that's when I learned that we just don't deal with what workplace violence is very well. It took me 10 years to recognize that my boss at Badlands, with the FBI investigating his wife's disappearance and all that, well, gee, maybe he was a little dangerous. We filter some of that stuff out. And I don't have much patience for putting up with that sort of stuff.

Wendy Lauritzen: I did have a situation prior to going to my current position. I'd got an indication that there was a particular person on staff that tends to get unhinged a little bit. And within three months of my being on the job, I mean, they were getting unhinged because I was hired. And so, I was the change, okay? New person coming in, doesn't know me, all that sort of stuff. Within three months, she'd made statements to staff that she was planning on hiring a hit man on me.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, when I found out about it, one, I'd been through enough that okay, I can't investigate this myself, because I'll be biased. So, I need to bring in an impartial investigator. If it's true, I need to deal with it. If it's not true, then the person who made the statement that this person made the statement needs to know that I will act on these sorts of statements. And if you're lying, heaven help you on that sort of stuff, too. But basically, it boiled down to I will investigate. I'll do it impartially and all that sort of stuff.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I did react. It did set a tone. Well, how can you do that? I've seen that occur many a time. How could you do that?

Wendy Lauritzen: I had one employee that was threatening suicide on me. That they were also, while they were threatening suicide, were trying to get me to back them on a car loan. I mean, it was almost an extortion sort of thing. I've seen the manipulation. And so, I've learned not to be manipulated in that regard. So, it comes across as cold sometimes. And I'm okay with that. That's the hard thing is that it's okay to, even if, I had a human resources person said, "Your job is not to be liked. Your job is to do your job." And that's a hard conversation sometimes. Because I do see people who manage strictly on their emotions. So, I try to eliminate some of that stuff. At the same time, it gets very hard.

Wendy Lauritzen: I've had honest conversations with person who threatened. She said, "Well, I never said that." I've had enough times that she said, "Well, I never said something" I know absolutely she did, it just wasn't that circumstance.

Wendy Lauritzen: In this case it became a, even in the investigation I asked the person, he said, "Well, I don't know what to tell you here." Because she was also making suicide threats at the time. I said, "All I need to know, is this imminent or not?" He said, "Well, it's not imminent."

Wendy Lauritzen: Okay. That helped me a lot. But he was trying to feel her out, is it true it was said? It was becoming a he said/she said situation as to what all had

gone on or who said what. So, he was supposed to write up a report. He never did write up the report that I ever saw. So, I couldn't deal with it on the human resources side of dealing with the individual. So, I had to sort of come to terms of this is how we're going to work with each other.

Wendy Lauritzen: I still believe, I believe to this day that she said it. I think she did it more as, she used to cry a lot to get her way. The fact is, it was one of the things I'd heard about was that "Oh, yeah. Every time I talked to her she'd just start crying." She did that on me several times, but that didn't work at all. Well, she didn't cry anymore. She did threaten suicide on me or implied it with me. She did it with some other folks. It was that manipulation. I've seen that. I've almost seen the pattern every time is people will go down certain paths of trying to manipulate you. And the more they've done it, they're comfortable with that. And if you don't react to that, then that really gets them even more so violent stuff. But yeah. I would say it's; we've got an underlying level of violence in the agency that we do not deal with.

Lu Ann Jones: That's fascinating. Well do you think that metaphor of family, it can mask as much as it reveals?

Wendy Lauritzen: Yeah. Absolutely. Because I've seen other agencies. USDA, when I was in that training program, we had a lot of people from the Department of Labor. And we got to talking about the hiring process, the firing process, all that. And of course, with the park service, they said, "Yeah, park service. You have this really long time it takes you to fire." But our average time to fire somebody is five years. That's five years of hell, of stuff that you can really prove. I mean, it's just, she said, "That doesn't occur with other agencies." Park service has a reputation among other agencies of we don't deal—

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Wendy Lauritzen: —with our human resource issues very efficiently. But part of it is because one, we really hold it against anybody who's ever been fired from park service. If you got fired from park service, you're really, really bad. Versus, no. Bad job fit in this circumstance. But this is the circumstance you're in. You're out. It doesn't mean that you couldn't get hired someplace else that's a better job fit. But we hold it against each other. But because we're family, oh, we've got to take care of you this way, take care of you that way. Well at the time, maybe you're drinking at a time you shouldn't be drinking. We'll forgive that.

Wendy Lauritzen: I think we've gotten a little bit better at dealing with some of that stuff. But we still sweep a lot of things under the rug.

Wendy Lauritzen: The one thing that I have really learned is that if I'm starting to deal with a person, even though I know what I should do, I bring on human resources at the same time I start dealing with it. Even if it's just writing a little letter

or a memo or whatever. Because by bringing human resources on at the same time, but the time I've had it up to here, they've had it up to here.

Wendy Lauritzen: The mistake that I made in one case was that I had gone through the steps. I'd had the training; I'd gone through the steps. I had a stack of paperwork up to my knee that documented all the problems. But by the time I brought in human resources, they're going, "Oh, have you tried this? Well this is what you need to—" So I had to start from scratch all over again, because they weren't convinced, I'd gone through the steps. So what I learned was, it doesn't matter if I know what I'm doing or not, always, always, always, always bring them in at the very beginning so they can get just as tired of the crap as you are by the time you need to deal with it. (laughter)
Otherwise, you will start from scratch.

Wendy Lauritzen: I had one situation – I've had some nutty cases – had a situation where, had an employee that again, some very compulsive behaviors. And she was talking about how she'd been in this really bad relationship and all that. So, you're getting the idea of spousal abuse or boyfriend/girlfriend abuse, whatever. So anyway, she's telling me these stories. I go, "Man, that's terrible."

Wendy Lauritzen: So, as I'm trying to deal with her on some issues, little things start going off in my head. Going, you know, she was at this park and some former employees, they went and worked at this park. And I'd heard stories years before about this situation. I said, I wonder if this is the same person.

Wendy Lauritzen: So, I called them up and said, "Can you tell me, is so and so this situation?" They said, "Yeah, that is."

Wendy Lauritzen: I said, "So can you tell me, was the spousal abuse one where she was abused? Or was she abusing him?" They said, "We could never figure it out. We couldn't tell whether he was hitting her or whether it was she was attacking him, and he was holding her off, the bruises on her wrist or that sort of stuff. But what we can tell you is he transferred to another park. And she ended up being put on suicide watch at her park." A year after her boyfriend had left, she had started putting up wanted posters in the park she was working at on this guy. Wanted for spousal, so yeah, she was doing some really crazy stuff there.

Wendy Lauritzen: She was living with a gal who was actually an up and comer in park service. And this gal, the gal I was working with, she was doing some really strange behavior. So, the roommate wanted to move out, but was scared. So, she ended up waiting while this gal was off work and packed up all of her stuff. And had that all moved out. Waited for my employee to come home. Gave her three months' worth of rent saying, "I'm moving out. Here you go." And then my gal proceeded to go in her room and destroyed every piece of furniture in her place.

Lu Ann Jones: Oh my God.

- Wendy Lauritzen: I mean, that's just nuts. And then she put out these wanted posters on her ex-boyfriend. And then had proceeded and gone to the other park and broke out all the windows in his government housing. With a baseball bat. Yeah, we've got some issues there. Okay.
- Wendy Lauritzen: So anyway, I'm working with human resources. And like I said, had a huge stack here of paper. But human resources was going, "Oh, no. Have you done this, this?" It's like no, okay. So, redoing some of my stuff.
- Wendy Lauritzen: And then I found out after the fact that both the associate director and two people in the associate director's office, they were working at the park and at the regional office where the other park was at. And they had had all the suicide watch, they had to bill her for a bill of collection on destroying the housing. They knew she was nuts. And she had left that park and fled to the park I was at. And so here I was driven nuts for a year. Am I doing the right thing? But, yeah, I was dealing with a nut case. Absolute nut case.
- Wendy Lauritzen: I get really tired of nut cases. Is it me? I mean, there is a point I'm going, is it me I've had all these experiences? Because if there's a common denominator, it's me. You know, am I causing something? But no, that happened, so it's not me. I'm just coming across some really strange cases sort of thing.
- Wendy Lauritzen: But yeah, we do not deal with internal. Doing law enforcement? Dealing with those Hell's Angels on the bikes and all that stuff? So much easier to deal with than the internal.
- Lu Ann Jones: Interesting.
- Wendy Lauritzen: Because we want to treat them like family. And not only that, we want to treat them like everybody is sane. And they're not. Not everybody is sane. We have some problems. But we want to treat it as if those aren't problems. Come on, guys. But no. We do not deal with internal very well.
- Wendy Lauritzen: My personal belief is that while I absolutely understand why it's the law and why it should be protected, the issue of privacy on the employee is important. But when we deal with problem employees, the reason why we don't do it well is we are keeping things quiet. So, the employees who are doing the right thing, they look at the boss and go, well they're not doing anything about this problem over here. They don't know how much you are doing because you're keeping it quiet. You're keeping it separate. So, the good employees think you're not doing anything. Management's not doing anything. Supervisors aren't don't anything about this. So, they get discouraged, they learn that bad behavior is acceptable. So, we actually almost create this vortex of bad behavior and that it's okay.
- Wendy Lauritzen: The mid-level managers' training, they were talking about different best business practice and all that, it was quite enlightening that when they were talking about cult-like cultures within organizations and companies, the park service was the cult. Forest service? No. Fish and wildlife service? No. Park service is considered a cult.

Lu Ann Jones: Now what is like—

Wendy Lauritzen: We have our mission. And we have this internal family.

Lu Ann Jones: The bleeding gray and green?

Wendy Lauritzen: Yeah. And it's tough to get in. We don't like outsiders. I mean, we're better at it than what we've been, that accepting outsiders. But we really don't like outsiders. We like our green bloods. We like our multigenerational green bloods. The newbies. So even the stuff that the regional director was talking about today, this, that people will be coming and going. We don't accept that stuff well. I mean, to me that was very revolutionary, what he was talking about. That's the reality of what we're going to be needing to deal with. But our culture is no. We like it that we've got three, four generations of green blood that you just grow up in park service. You are park service in and out. And we will never kick you out sort of thing. But yeah, other agencies see us as cult-like. That was an eye opener.

Lu Ann Jones: Fascinating.

Wendy Lauritzen: Yeah. I really need to use the restroom.

Lu Ann Jones: Okay. Yeah. We'll stop here, then.

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