

National Park Service (NPS) History Collection

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



Don Daniel
October 29, 2016

Interview conducted by Lilli Tichinin
Transcribed by Teresa Bergen
Digitized by Casey Oehler

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

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

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

ANPR Oral History Project

Don Daniel

29 October 2016

Interview conducted by
Lilli Tichinin

Transcribed by
Teresa Bergen

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

Audiofile: DANIEL Don 29 Oct 2016

[START OF TAPE 1]

- Lilli Tichinin: Okay. So, this is Lillie Tichinin, at an Association of National Park Rangers Ranger Rendezvous on October 29. And I am here interviewing Don Daniel for the ANPR Oral History Project. And Don, if you could just introduce yourself. And just start with where you were born and when.
- Don Daniel: Okay. My name is Don Daniel. I'm in my late sixties, I'm almost seventy. I was born and raised in Indiana with a sister and two brothers. My father came back from the war and got a job at the post office. Grew up in scouting, playing football in high school, baseball in high school. Involved in the church. Playing on leagues, basketball leagues and softball leagues in the church. Graduated from high school in 1965. So last year, 2015, was my high school 50-year reunion. And I tried going to college for a year, working after school, and working 40 hours a week and going to college wasn't working for me. I was about to get drafted.
- Don Daniel: So, a little over 50 years ago, earlier this month, I joined the Marines. It was an accelerated program to get Marines to Vietnam. So, most of us became infantrymen. I was a machine gunner. I went to Vietnam. Served in 1967, in combat. My unit was pretty active. Vietnam was not peaking yet. So, we got several awards, including a presidential citation from Lyndon Johnson for attempted, Vietnamese tried to take a town from us, Chu Lai, for 28 days. And then I got wounded.
- Don Daniel: So, came back to the States. Recuperated. Had about a year left in the Marine Corps. Spent that in California. Basically, the unit in California was all Vietnam veterans and 17-year-olds that couldn't go to combat. We trained to do things to support other police agencies. And then as soon as I could get out, in 1968, I got out of the Marine Corps.
- Don Daniel: Came home, worked a year. Decided there was no career, a job with no education. Went back to college. The first semesters was party, party, party. And I was on academic probation the first semester. Second semester, I was on academic secret probation. But because I was a veteran, they weren't going to kick me out. The light came on and said, you've got to do better, or you're not going to make it.
- Don Daniel: So, I pursued a degree in communications, actually radio and television. Graduated in 1973. But I don't remember how I got the job, but 1973 was my first park service job. So that's pretty much getting me up to the park service.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Well, that's a perfect segue. I'm wondering, growing up, did you go to many parks? Did you have much experience visiting parks as a kid?
- Don Daniel: Not really. You know, my father, he was raising four kids, my father and mother. She was a stay-at-home mom. He worked for the federal government, the post office, so we didn't have a lot of money. But we did go to Mammoth Cave several

times. We did things like we went out on boats on Lost Lake. And they said, "Keep your kids close." But remember, nobody was wearing life jackets. And it was a bottomless lake. But my dad was paddling one of the boats, and struck bottom several times. So had the boat tipped over, we probably could have all stood up. That was pretty much it, because that was the closest. We didn't have a lot of money to travel and go to vacations.

Don Daniel: I do remember when I was fairly young, we came out to Arizona to visit my uncle, and stopped at White Sands and got a quart jar of the white sand, which stayed in my folks' cellar for many, many, many, many years. Other than that, senior in high school, my church group had an associated church group in Billings, Montana. So, we did the bus trip out. Saw all the Mount Rushmore and we saw Yellowstone. Other than that, that was pretty much it.

Lilli Tichinin: So, what was it that initially drew you to the park service? What was the interest that sparked that?

Don Daniel: Well, I don't know if you've ever been to Indiana. But Indiana, where my parents are from, and Kentucky, is pretty much rolling hills, no big trees, no mountains.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Don Daniel: No streams to fish. No outdoorsy stuff, so actually what drew, the park service hired, is I hired on to Yellowstone in '73 and there were eight seasonals. Seven of us were Vietnam veterans. So, at that time, the veterans' preference was really prominent. So that's really the only qualification I had to get into the park service was being a veteran.

Don Daniel: So, at Yellowstone, I loaded up my Volkswagen, drove across country during a gas crisis time, got to Yellowstone. And we weren't called law enforcement rangers then. We were just park rangers. The training, for us, was one week. That was four days in the classroom, half a day shooting – and the weapons were old, they were old military weapons – and a half a day of learning to drive. So, no real experience. Because they figured we were veterans, that we knew guns. And just a little bit of driving, probably liability-wise. And we went to work.

Don Daniel: Now, in those days, the ranger did everything. You fought fires. You did rescues. You did a little interpretation, you know, and you did road patrol. Yet there were pretty explicit instructions from the superintendent of our park that you did not put your gun on until you needed it. So, your gun was, that was really the only defensive, we didn't have all the other defensive equipment. But your gun was either in a briefcase or a pack on your front seat.

Don Daniel: And I think back after all those years of park service law enforcement, and other law enforcement, and then coming back to it now, it's like, oh my God, what were we thinking? But we were not into, we didn't, in those days we had GSA cars that were always American cars, no foreign cars. No police pursuit packages. Just

plain mint green cars. I was in the mint green car era. When all the government vehicles were mint green.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Don Daniel: So, we did all this. And with very minimal personal protection equipment. So did that in 1973. Went home to Indiana. And I later married her in '75, but the gal I'd been dating in college, and she'd come out to visit. I said, "This Yellowstone gig is the best gig in the world." Two seasonals that I worked with, one was a principal, one was a teacher, had been there 18 and 22 consecutive summers. So, I said, "What am I going to do? What job can I do so that I can be a park ranger every summer?"

Don Daniel: And she goes, "Well, duh. I'm a schoolteacher. Be a schoolteacher." So, I'd still got GI Bill money. Go back to college and get your teaching certificate.

Don Daniel: So, I did, that first semester, second semester, I took the classes. Second semester, I did student teaching. And on one of our field trips, we went to a little town in Indianan called Huntingburg, Indiana. Basketball country. To tour the new, modern, progressive high school, three-walled classrooms. Modular scheduling over a six-day period. Really bizarre. The principal each gave us an envelope with an application and said, "We'd love to have you apply." It's like okay, but now I've got to get back to Yellowstone. But I filled it out.

Don Daniel: So, in my degree in communications—

Lilli Tichinin: That was Indiana State?

Don Daniel: Indiana State. Mid-summer of 1974, I get a phone call from the principal of that high school. Says, "We'd like for you to come back for an interview for a position." And I go, what is the position? And it was a public information, audiovisual director position to teach some advanced classes, and everybody taught freshman English. And I said, "Well, how many people am I competing against?"

Don Daniel: He goes, "We're really not looking at anybody else but you." So, I'm thinking oh my God, I can get a teaching job, I can come back to Yellowstone forever.

Don Daniel: So, I take off. I fly back. I interview with the principal 30 minutes. And I go downtown. The superintendent of the schools, was even less, signed a contract. And I was making a couple thousand dollars more a year than my wife.

Lilli Tichinin: Teaching.

Don Daniel: And it was like, this is awesome! So, I go back to Yellowstone and everything's fine. And then I started getting correspondence from the school and the school says, "School starts after Labor Day. But all new teachers" – new teachers – "have to report a week early."

- Don Daniel: So, I go to Jerry.¹ and I go, “Hey, I want to be like so and so. I want to be here 18 summers, 22 summers. But I’ve got to go back a week early.”
- Lilli Tichinin: Just this one time.
- Don Daniel: This one time. And he goes, “I’m okay with that.” Fills out my evaluation. Gets a district ranger, and he goes, “Nope. If he doesn’t stay till Labor Day, he doesn’t get rehired.”
- Don Daniel: Well, as much as I wanted to be a part of that, nine months of money versus three months of money dictated that I take the teaching job. So, I did. All that year, I worried, I applied, whatever.
- Don Daniel: So, prior to the 1975 season, Ernie from the Grand Canyon and Jerry had tried out for the US ski team when they were 18-year-olds. And Ernie from the Grand Canyon called Jerry and said, “I don’t understand this.” He goes, “Don Daniel has an outstanding evaluation, but he has a no rehire.” So, Jerry tells him this story about Ness. And they kind of visit over the phone a few minutes. And then Ernie says, “I’ve got to go. I want to call this guy and get him hired.”
- Don Daniel: So, I get a phone call. And it’s like, “We want to hire you at Grand Canyon.” So, it’s like, oh, okay. My wife says – well, she wasn’t my wife, girlfriend – she goes, “I thought we were getting married this summer.” (laughter) So we got married kind of quickly. And went to the Grand Canyon.
- Don Daniel: Got to the Grand Canyon and Ernie, first day, I met him. He said to us, this is 1975, “The number one thing to remember in this job is no matter what it takes, that you go home safe every night.” That’s been my whole law enforcement career, 30 plus years.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Don Daniel: Jerry said, “Remember who you are and what you stand for.” So those two things were guidelines for my career.
- Don Daniel: So, I worked for Ernie. Went back to teaching. My teaching job was only a two-year tenure. The guy who I replaced did a sabbatical. So came back to the Grand Canyon the next year and had what they called a long-term seasonal appointment. It was nine, it was ten months. Trying, trying, trying to get a permanent job as a 10-point veteran. I couldn’t.
- Don Daniel: So, came back the next year, it was 1977, and said, okay. And my wife got a great job with the concessioner. She actually moved up really fast and became the assistant comptroller. But I said, “Look, I can’t do this part-time stuff the rest of my life. I need to get settled.”

¹ Daniel asked that last names of people mentioned during the interview be deleted to maintain their privacy.

Don Daniel: So, we had decided pretty much at the end of that year – '76, we worked into the first part of the year. I was on a team at Grand Canyon, and I don't know of any better way to describe it than the burro eradication team. We actually, the resource management people did studies to determine the most economical way and the cheapest way to eradicate the burros at Grand Canyon. And they decided that shooting them was going to be the most economical way.

Don Daniel: So, we got military weapons, silencers. We went to the range. We were all ready to basically be flown into the canyon every day and begin eradicating the wild burros. And some guy from Texas, I can't remember his name, got a court injunction against this. Prevented us. And hired cowboys. They went into the canyon and herded all these wild burros into pens at the trails. Trucked them to Texas. And for a small fee, for a small donation of 300 dollars, you could own a piece of the park service, the Grand Canyon.

Don Daniel: Now, I don't know if you know, but there's a story. It's a fictional story of a burro of the Grand Canyon. And it's called *Brighty of the Grand Canyon*.

Lilli Tichinin: Oh, yes. Yeah. That does ring a bell.

Don Daniel: You go in the gift shop, there are little Brighty statues.

Lilli Tichinin: Yes, that's right.

Don Daniel: There are little books for the kids and all that. So, anyway, my season ends. We're not going to be doing this. Death Valley calls Grand Canyon and says, "The permanent that manages our burro program has just got another job. We're weeks away from starting our burro giveaway." California, and the state, and Death Valley at that time was a national monument—

Lilli Tichinin: Oh. Right.

Don Daniel: —together gave away burros. So, they said, "Do you have anybody that's on furlough, or that can come over here and do this?" So, they came to me. And I was out of work. And she took a leave of absence for three months. And we went to Death Valley and managed a burro program.

Don Daniel: So, a week or two before the program actually started, I caught some people stealing a young burro from the park. He was too little to put in the pens. (laughter) Our yard was fenced. So she came home with me and lived in our yard. (Lilli Tichinin laughs) I came up with a name for her. Because you had Brighty of the Grand Canyon, she was Dully. The opposite of bright. So, we had Dully of Death Valley.

Lilli Tichinin: (laughs) Yeah. I love it.

Don Daniel: And she was one of the first giveaways that went to a nuclear scientist, and she was a schoolteacher from San Francisco. They bought a brand-new horse trailer

and came to Death Valley to pick up their burro that they were going to teach to carry their pack loads to hike wherever they hike. So, we gave her away.

Don Daniel: But anyway, so then that was in '77. We went back to the Grand Canyon to do one more season.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Don Daniel: If we couldn't get a permanent job, we weren't sure what we were going to do. So, in the fall of that year, the Grand Canyon had only had one deputy sheriff. And in those days, the jurisdiction was very strong. The sheriff had a primary jurisdiction. The sheriff's department did all the death investigations. All of the felony investigations. Led all of the, basically was the coordinator of all of the searches in the park, because of the jurisdiction. Coconino County is the second largest county in the United States. It encompasses half of Arizona, including the Grand Canyon. And the sheriff is very political. But he decided that he would hire a second deputy for the Grand Canyon.

Don Daniel: So, I went down and interviewed. And he says to me, "What I'm really looking for is someone who can work with the park service. Because the other deputy, the other deputy wasn't working with the park service. Everything that went wrong was always the park service." So he goes, "I need somebody that can work with the park service."

Don Daniel: And I said, "Well, I've been working with them the last three years, they haven't fired me."

Don Daniel: So, out of 80 applicants, including probably a dozen or more deputies that were on the department, he hired me. I was back in Indiana for Christmas. He called me on the phone and said, "Okay, the job is yours."

Don Daniel: I came back and literally went to Phoenix and picked up sheriff's uniforms, which were khaki and brown, and a cowboy hat instead of a Stetson. Picked up a vehicle and went to the Grand Canyon. And lived in my house and went to work.

Lilli Tichinin: Wow.

Don Daniel: And for the first couple of weeks, it was fun to go into the different coffee shops with the waitresses that had been pouring coffee and serving us meals. And there would be a green and gray ranger here, and now you've got a khaki and brown deputy.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Don Daniel: And they're going, "Didn't you used to be one of these?" You know, so, but anyway, so I still considered myself, even though I was a Coconino County deputy, I was still a, I was still in the ranger family. So, you know, all the guys that I had been working with, now I was working with again.

- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: So, because it was a small ranger force, we had to depend on each other. You know, one highway patrolman, two deputies, a handful of rangers, in a South Rim community that had a thousand college kids working there, six bars, probably an average of a fatality a month. In the four years, four and a half years I was a deputy, I personally investigated 25 to 30 airplane crashes.
- Don Daniel: And then during that time period, the Albright Training Center at Grand Canyon had two fatalities in two years that I ended up investigating. One had a group of trainees on a hike in the canyon. Stayed overnight. Got up during the night, fell to his death.
- Don Daniel: The next year was an accidental hunting accident that resulted in the death of the training center's superintendent.
- Don Daniel: So, as soon as it's a death, it becomes the sheriff's. So, I get a call and I have to go up to the hospital. And Nelson, who was a ranger with me, his wife's the nurse. There's about, I don't know, a whole bunch of park service people there. And you can tell that this is, when I drove up, it was like what the – you know. So, I investigated that death, too. So even though it's a big community, it's a small community among us.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: We worked hard together. We played hard together. And you know, there's some of the people I worked with, not so much Yellowstone, but Grand Canyon. Where Yellowstone is a lot of little communities, Grand Canyon South Rim is one community. So, some of those people were my longest, dearest friends, still today.
- Don Daniel: So, over that four and a half years as a deputy, I probably spent, even though I was doing law enforcement for the Forest Service and the community outside the park, probably 90 plus percent of my time was in the park.
- Don Daniel: On top of that, another ranger friend of mine and I started our master's degree at NAU in Flagstaff. So, for two and a half years, we drove 180 round trip once a week for night school to get our master's degrees. So, I got that in 1980. The workload as a deputy was really overwhelming. I mean, a 50 or 60-hour week was good. But most of the time it was more than that.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Don Daniel: And you had no personal time unless you left the canyon. Because I mean, you could come home at five o'clock. The phone could ring at 5:05 and you could be out all night.
- Lilli Tichinin: Out again.

- Don Daniel: All night. Overnight. It was a big joke at parties that my wife said that she always kept a picture of me in her purse, so that if a man walked in the house she could look to see if it was me or if she should be concerned. (Lilli Tichinin laughs) And every year on my birthday, we always had an ice cream and cake party. Two years in a row, I missed my own party. I would come home from whatever I was on and there'd be like empty bowls, empty cups. You know, whoever was there at my party had a good time. But you know, the nature of the job and the hugeness of Coconino County, you just never knew where you were going to be.
- Don Daniel: And the park's jail was being condemned. The sheriff's department couldn't use it anyway. So, for me, if I would arrest someone anytime in the afternoon or evening, it was 120 miles down and back to book them into Williams. And then the next day you had to go back and get them, take them to Flagstaff. That was another 90. Get your complaint from the attorney. Come back to Williams, get the judge to sign it, come home.
- Lilli Tichinin: Wow.
- Don Daniel: So, for every arrest, it was 300 miles of driving. And it got so bad, well, in the four and a half years I was there, the other deputy and I hardly ever worked together. But it got so bad, even the judge in Williams allowed us to cite and release locals for DUI. Because otherwise, all of our time would be on the road.
- Lilli Tichinin: Would be used up driving. Yeah.
- Don Daniel: So, it was just a workload that was overwhelming. It was not, and no potential for starting a family, because you might not even be there for the birth of your kid.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: So, I got my degree in '80. So, we started looking for jobs. And found a job in Nevada. Moved to Nevada in 1982. It was hard to leave. But we knew that we had to move on.
- Lilli Tichinin: It wasn't, it wasn't sustainable for—
- Don Daniel: Right. And I won't say I regretted it. I don't know if I was too proud or too ignorant. But I basically fairly remember, I did have an opportunity to hire on as a GS3 dispatcher. It would have given me the permanent status. But I wasn't as knowledgeable as I probably should have been. And it was below me after having been a Marine in Vietnam and having been a ranger in two of the biggest national parks. And being a deputy, with the power that I had over the park service. I mean really, not me, but the sheriff's department, to now hire on as a GS3 ranger. Or GS3 dispatcher.
- Lilli Tichinin: Dispatcher. Yeah.

- Don Daniel: So, I didn't take that opportunity. And I don't know that it was a bad opportunity. But I moved to Reno. Worked in a job as a gaming agent. Which was interesting and exciting when there was something going on. But most of the time, it was boring.
- Don Daniel: So, I also at that time decided maybe I wanted to, there were only 17 agents in the state of Nevada. And one of them was in the army guard. And we talked. And you know, it was like, "You were in the army. I was in the Marines." But I didn't want to go back as a Marine reservist.
- Don Daniel: So, I went to the air guard and said, "Tell me what you can offer me."
- Don Daniel: They said, "Well, you can try it for one year as prior service guide."
- Don Daniel: Sent me to security police. The security police superintendent went, "With your experience, you're my training." So, I became a training officer. Later I did active recruiting. Later I did first sergeant for headquarters. And eventually, 24 years later, when I've got 30 years of military and I've got top rank, they said, "It's time for you to retire and let someone else move up." And I retired as the superintendent of their security forces.
- Lilli Tichinin: Wow.
- Don Daniel: So, it's a nice retirement, along with my police retirement. So now, when I was a seasonal in the park service, I was making six hundred a month. Now, you know, I get that much, more than that, for a two-day guard drill weekend. And now, I'm collecting three retirement checks, plus my seasonal work.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: But, you know, I'm not doing it for the money.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: So, I retired in 2006, both from the military and the police department. I did the typical retirement thing for a few years, which is nothing. Or whatever you want to do. And then I started thinking about the park service again. Michael Siler was at Yosemite. I said, "What kind of job can I do there?"
- Don Daniel: And he says, "Well, you're really into horses." I myself and three officers started the horse unit at Reno police from bottom up. I rode in Yellowstone. I rode in Grand Canyon.
- Don Daniel: So, I got in a phone conversation with Billie Patrick. She was an [icon?] of Yosemite. She'd been there twenty-some years running the horse program. And she said, "Well, where did you get your formal horse training." And I mentioned the school in Sacramento. She goes, "Well, I taught there the last twenty years." But I had gone to it a few years prior.

- Lilli Tichinin: Oh, wow.
- Don Daniel: And this was for a volunteer job. And so, when I told her where I went, she starts rattling off some of the Reno police officers that had been to the school. And I said, “Of course I know, I know Dave, I know PJ.”
- Don Daniel: And then on the phone she goes, “When can you come to work?”
- Don Daniel: So, I spent the summer of two thousand, I think it was ten, riding patrol in the valley for the park service. But I was a volunteer.
- Don Daniel: And then that winter, I called and did the same thing at Petrified Forest. It’s like oh, I’m getting the bug. I’m getting the bug. I’m seeing these other people doing what I wanted to do.
- Don Daniel: So, I went back to Yellowstone the next year as a general ranger. And I wore the same uniform. Drove the ambulance. Did all the things, except law enforcement. A few times I tried to push it, and a few times people knew that I wasn’t. It was kind of like, “Who the hell are you? You can’t tell me.”
- Don Daniel: So, the guy that hired me at Yellowstone that year goes, “Hell, with all your experience, why don’t you go get your commission and go back as a seasonal?”
- Don Daniel: So, I make a phone call to Mark at NAU [Northern Arizona University] in Flagstaff. And you know, he doesn’t know me from beans. He doesn’t know that he knows me. But he says, “Well, I’m full.”
- Don Daniel: And I go, “Okay.”
- Don Daniel: But he says, “Well, tell me a little about your history.” So, I tell him where I’m working. And he says, “Well, if you were at the Grand Canyon, you probably know my ex-wife, Lynn.”
- Don Daniel: And I said—
- [END OF TRACK 1]
- [START OF TRACK 2]
- Don Daniel: “Not only do I know her, I was there when her dad was accidentally killed in a hunting accident.”
- Don Daniel: And I thought he hung up on me, it was just quiet. And he says, “You’re the deputy sheriff I’ve heard about. But I didn’t know you.” Then he says, “Since you’re a veteran, I can make room for you in this academy.”
- Don Daniel: So, I moved to Flagstaff. Start the academy. Second day of the academy, somebody’s coming in to speak to us about – what was the topic? Basically

morale, or something like that. And it's Butch Farabee, who was the assistant fire chief at the Grand Canyon. So, he comes in the classroom and Ginny is sitting in the back. And he asks her, "Who is that? I think I know him." So, she tells him. And he stands back there. And when it's time for him to speak, he comes down the steps, walks to the podium, but keeps going, and comes over to where I'm sitting. So, I stand up and I shake his hand. And this is the second day of 30 of us in a classroom—

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: —and nobody knows anybody, except they're all young, and I'm the old guy.

Lilli Tichinin: Right. (laughs) Yeah.

Don Daniel: And he turns to the whole class, and says, "You folks can learn a lot from him." It's like, no pressure here.

Lilli Tichinin: (laughs) Wow.

Don Daniel: So, as we went through the academy, the smarter, younger kids would come and pick me for a partner. Because in the scenarios, it's always nice to have someone who's been there, done that, and knows what they're doing.

Don Daniel: And we started applying for jobs. Well, that summer, I applied to 17 different parks and got calls from 16. So, they were like going, "How come you're getting all the calls and we're not?"

Don Daniel: I go, "Put yourself ahead 25 or 30 years, and you'll be where I am. Put me back 25 or 30 years, and I would be where you are now."

Don Daniel: So, you know, a lot of offers. A lot of offers. And I took the job in Yellowstone. I went back to Yellowstone, but I went back to a different district. And I was a back country law enforcement ranger. So, you're paying me to ride a horse and go in the back country. And it's like—(laughter) This can't get any better.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: The guy I worked for, I think he was intimidated by me. He was probably 15 or 20 years younger than me, and I think he was intimidated by me, because we bumped heads all the time. And the problem was, younger seasonals don't bump heads with permanents because they're trying to keep their head above the water. I'm older and mature and quote unquote "don't need this job." And I will tell you what I think, and I'll say what I think. And if I think you're wrong, I'll tell you. Not what most seasonals will do.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: So, at the end of the season, I pretty much decided that I didn't want to go back and work for him. So, I applied to Lassen, because it's two hours from Reno. I got to Lassen in 2014 and there were three, four seasonals in law enforcement. Three of them were brand new. Brand new. Right out of the academy. No experience. And my boss, Ron, says to me, "I don't have time to train you. I don't think I can teach you anything. I'm going to have my hands full with them. Can you go to work?"

Don Daniel: And I go, "Sure." So qualify, boom, I go to work.

Don Daniel: Same thing happened in Joshua Tree. I get to Joshua Tree, I'm the only seasonal. But I'm twice as old as most of the permanents. One night, two permanent rangers, probably in their late twenties, early thirties, went on a disturbance call in the campground, and I was fairly close. So, I, being a police thing, I cruised over there. And I get there. And I get out of the car and I'm walking up. And two of the guys – it was a bunch of guys and young kids. Not illegally, but young and drinking and rowdy. And as I'm walking up, one of them looks over at me, looks back at them, and says, "Oh, shit. Your boss is here."

Lilli Tichinin: (laughs) Yeah.

Don Daniel: So, all the rest of the winter, it was a joke between myself and the two permanents, like, "Do you know who you're working for?" Because they made that assumption that because I was older and gray and whatever, that I was the boss and whatever.

Don Daniel: So, then I went to Yosemite in the spring. Same thing. I've got some new seasonals. I don't have enough permanents for everyone to ride with. You tag along with me for a day, and then can you go to work? It's like, sure, I just came from work, I can go to work.

Don Daniel: So that's how it's been for me since I get back into law enforcement is they look at the resume. They look at the background. And they go, I mean, this guy is in a uniform and put him to work.

Lilli Tichinin: Right. Ready to go.

Don Daniel: So, ready to go. And that's a big asset. You know, I even had my own district at Lassen the last two summers when I was the only ranger there. And the closest other guys were an hour away. But he says, "I feel comfortable that you won't get in over your head." I mean, it can always happen, but—

Don Daniel: So now you've gone from like we're going to treat you like us or even, I mean, I had permanents tell me, "I'm going to call on you a lot, because you've got more experience than I do." To being a green seasonal in Yellowstone with four days of classroom and half a day of driving and half a day of shooting.

Lilli Tichinin: Right. (laughs)

- Don Daniel: But you know, over that, and when they find out you worked for a major police department where I was a training officer there.
- Lilli Tichinin: And that was Reno police? Yeah.
- Don Daniel: Reno. You know, they don't know. I mean, they wouldn't have any idea what kind of activity Reno has, but they just make that assumption. You know, if I'd worked for the Huntingburg Police Department where I taught school that would have probably had two officers—
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: In the city of Reno, you've got 50 or 60 on a shift. So, they assume that you, you know, you've been in the deep water more than once. But it's interesting, because everywhere I worked, the other seasonals, I always call them the junior seasonals, they come to me for advice. I never really thought about the word "mentoring." But that's what I'm doing. I had permanents, even at Joshua Tree, that would come to me and go, "What do you think?"
- Don Daniel: For a long time in the park service, seasonals didn't get any kind of responsible assignments. You know, you couldn't do a death investigation as a seasonal. You couldn't do any kind of a felony investigation. You couldn't do a DUI. For a couple of reasons. One, as a seasonal, you weren't experienced enough. And two, you weren't going to be here for it to go to court.
- Lilli Tichinin: To see it through. Right.
- Don Daniel: But that is changing, and it really has changed for me. You know, there's been no park I've worked that doesn't just give me the free hand to go and do and see.
- Don Daniel: And in Yellowstone, in 2013, we had a really freaky accident where a family was on a horseback ride with a concessioner. A ten-year-old girl was thrown from the horse down into a canyon. Should have probably been dead. But made it. Survived it. The horse went in with her. Down several hundred feet. He, because of the size of the horse versus the girl, she kind of slid down and bumped and bruised and broke a few things. But the horse tumbled to his death and had to be destroyed.
- Don Daniel: So, the initial investigation was given to the sub district ranger, who called me that night. I was on the scene that day, but I didn't do any primary investigation. He called me that night and he says, "I know you've got a lot of investigative skills, and I know you know a lot about horses and horse investigations." He says, "I want you to take the lead on this investigation."
- Lilli Tichinin: Wow.
- Don Daniel: Well, that's just not heard of.

Lilli Tichinin: Right. As a seasonal. Yeah.

Don Daniel: As a seasonal. So, the next day I took the lead. Confiscated all the tack. Had an autopsy done on the horse. Did the whole investigation. The girl was – it took two helicopters to get her out. One to sling her out, and one to Medevac her to, not Missoula, but somewhere up there.

Lilli Tichinin: Somewhere, yeah, close.

Don Daniel: And the investigation went on for a long time because the park service felt that there eventually would be a lawsuit. So, it ended up being a pretty thick, involved report. And he pretty much just signed off on it.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. On your report and investigation.

Don Daniel: On my investigation. But you know, he knew that I had been a deputy at the canyon, had done investigations. You know, death investigations. But as a general rule, I don't think seasonals even today get that kind of responsibility. But then again, without breaking my arm and patting myself on the back, you don't get many seasonals with 30 years of law enforcement.

Lilli Tichinin: Right, right.

Don Daniel: So, all the parks I've worked have been just overjoyed to get me.

Lilli Tichinin: To have you, yeah.

Don Daniel: So, this summer, I was in Yosemite. Because there was going to be a horse job. That kind of fell through, the horse part. Didn't have enough horses. And then we only had one for three of us. Couldn't do overnights. And I was going to be living up in the high country by, not Tuolumne, but close. And there were cabins. I said, "Well, I'm married. And we have a little dog. And I know you can't have spouses, and you can't have dogs in the cabin. Can I bring my own RV?" Because over there, there's three RV sites.

Don Daniel: My boss goes, "Sure. Go ahead."

Don Daniel: So, I brought it up. But they were doing maintenance stuff. And hadn't actually moved in. And the cabin rental was seventy dollars a pay period. So, 140 – no, might have been eighty. A hundred and fifty, a hundred and sixty dollars a month. The RV site was three hundred. And I said, "Are you crazy? All I'm paying for is electricity."

Don Daniel: So, I argued it with housing. Didn't work. Got my sub-district ranger involved. He was understanding, but he couldn't do anything. District ranger, understanding, couldn't do anything. Went to the chief ranger, understanding, couldn't do anything. I said, "Look, I'll pay, just assign me to the cabin. I'll pay that rent. But I'll live in the trailer right over there." Well, they couldn't do that.

- Don Daniel: And in late July they said, “Okay. What are you going to do?” And I said, “Well, I’m not paying three hundred dollars a month for rent.” They said, “Well, that’s your choice.” And I said, “Well, what are you going to do?” They said – “I guess this is my two weeks’ notice.” And their jaw just dropped. They said – it was like, seasonals don’t quit in the middle of the season.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: I’m not your typical seasonal.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right. Exactly.
- Don Daniel: I don’t need the income. And I can get another job. I’m a 10-point vet. I score, actually score above 100. And the highest score I’ve ever gotten on those tests has been a 96. But then I get 10 points more for being a 10-point vet. So out of a possible 100, I’ve got 106.
- Lilli Tichinin: Hundred and six, yeah.
- Don Daniel: The only person that’s ever told me was a supervisor in one park who said, “You were the top of the list.”
- Don Daniel: So, I just told Yosemite, “It’s not the money. I can more than afford the money. I’m just not going to do this. I’m not going to let you railroad me. So, two weeks’ notice.”
- Don Daniel: They said, “Well, what are you going to do for the summer?” I go, “Drive my sports car. Drive my boat.”
- Lilli Tichinin: Whatever I want.
- Don Daniel: Go do whatever I want. So, one of my good friends from Lassen says, “I don’t know if you heard, but we had a bad incident at Lassen. And in your district, the district where,” I can’t think of the name of it now. Southeast corner, where the Drakesbad Resort is, and the lake, they had to hire a general ranger because they didn’t have any qualified law enforcements when they got to their cert list. And he went on a disturbance in the campground, and the guy took a McLeod after him and the vehicle, smashing windows, trying to basically hit him. He got on his radio, called for help 60 minutes away. And got the hell out of there. So he says, “I bet you could come back to work here.” So, he talked to the operation supervisor who said, “Do you want to come back?”
- Don Daniel: And I go, “I’ll come finish the summer here.” Personnel, they generated one piece of paper, sent it to Yosemite. And I left Yosemite on a Thursday and was working at Lassen on Sunday. So, they gave me a free hand at Lassen. If I want to go out on my own kayak on the lake and check fishermen, I can do it. If I want to hike the trails, I do it. Just as long as they know, they just give me the hand to go and

do what it is I want to do. And that works well for me. You know, Mary will tell you that she probably hasn't known many people as alpha male as me. (laughter)

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Don Daniel: You know? But I think in my high school days, and even prior to the military, I wasn't, I was pretty timid and in the back. But my career, and my, what I've done and what I've seen, where I've been, has moved me to the head of the line. So now, at this point, I've never confirmed this, but my boss at Lassen told me last year that I was, it was his understanding that I was the oldest seasonal law enforcement in the park service. So, the PEB standards only go to age 69. So next year, if I go back to Lassen, I'll be seventy. So, I jokingly told him at the end of the season, "If you don't have any standards for me to compete by, then I'm not taking the test."

Lilli Tichinin: (laughs) Right.

Don Daniel: But ironically, what's really funny is, you're familiar with the PEB test, right?

Lilli Tichinin: A bit. Just a bit, yeah.

Don Daniel: You know the agility one, where you're prone and you run through the cones?

Lilli Tichinin: Mm hmm.

Don Daniel: Well, it's not based on your time. It's based on a chart where your time converts to a percentage. And every 10 years, it becomes a different chart, allowing more time. So, my boss at Lassen knows that I do well on that. So, he has me go first. Well, it might take me 14 seconds to do it. But the last few years, I've scored 92, 93 percent, you know. Whereas the young guys will have a 12 or a 13-minute timeframe for the mile and a half. I have almost 21 minutes. So, I do the agility. He says, "Fourteen minutes." And while these young kids are saying, "Hell, I could walk it." then he goes, "Ninety-two percent. Who's next?" And these guys are all going, "Holy shit. I can't do it." You know, you've got to be a speedster to get—

Lilli Tichinin: To get 92 at their—yeah.

Don Daniel: —90 percent. Because the minimum requirement is only 25 percent. So, all these young guys, it's like, all right. So, it's interesting. I really believe they look up to me. I believe they, I know they learn from me. Because several of them have said, "Can I come ride with you?" And I go, "Sure." And I kind of teach them my ways, you know. So, I'm mentoring, whether I call it mentoring or not.

Lilli Tichinin: Absolutely. Yeah.

- Don Daniel: And you know, I'm no longer the old guy. I'm more the seasoned guy. So, they don't think of me as old and can't do the job. They think of me as experienced, and can maybe learn something from me.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Well, I'm curious, I think that's really interesting that you're realizing even if you're not calling it mentoring, that is what's happening.
- Don Daniel: It is.
- Lilli Tichinin: Because they are very informally even as it starts, you know, that they, even just looking up to you and asking your advice about things. So that's, you know, very interesting to hear. And I'm wondering, what have been some of the, have there been challenges to being a non-traditional seasonal employee? I mean, you mentioned sometimes butting heads occasionally. But it sounds like there's been a lot of positives. But what are some of the challenges?
- Don Daniel: There have been some challenges. One summer in Yellowstone as a back country ranger, I paired up with a gal whose husband worked in the next district. And she was tall and lanky. And she could walk circles around me. And there were times when we'd go to do back country trail work where you couldn't take a horse, there was so much down stuff. Well, so we'd work our way in, cut our way in to a certain point, and then walk out. And now you've cut trees all day. And now, you know, you're dragging your butt, carrying a chainsaw. And she's striding out, you know. And it's like, "So long." And you know, at first it was like, I've got to keep up with her. Then afterwards it was like hey, this is the best I can do. You've got to live with it. So, yeah. I can't deny that I'm probably a step slower. But mentally I feel like I'm still as sharp as ever.
- Don Daniel: What's really amazing is people think I'm a lot younger than I am. A lot of people – especially in uniform. You know—
- Lilli Tichinin: I believe it. Yeah.
- Don Daniel: I say, "I'm going to be 70 next year." And they go, "You're kidding!"
- Lilli Tichinin: (laughs) They don't believe you.
- Don Daniel: And I'd say, "Well, how old," it got to a point where I'm like, "So how old do you think I am?" And I've had people guess as low as like fifty.
- Lilli Tichinin: Oh, yeah. Yeah.
- Don Daniel: So that's good. But no, not challenging. You know, I think it's gone up all the way. This past summer in Yosemite, a bunch of us, like three or four rangers went on a problem in the campground with a huge Hispanic family. You know, the rules are basically six people, three tents, two cars per site. And I understand. They bring their family, and their family doesn't consist of that few.

- Lilli Tichinin: That setup.
- Don Daniel: So, you've got a lot of tents, a lot of cars and a lot of people. So, we're getting ready to go on this. And the assistant chief ranger, I can't remember his name. He says, "Well, I'll just go along." And we were sitting, waiting for everybody else, and he showed up. And it's like, oh my god. And he says, "I'm just going to go along." He says, "I speak Spanish good. If you need me to help, just let me know."
- Don Daniel: So, I had another seasonal riding with me that day. She had been a seasonal one year before in a little park that didn't have much law enforcement activity. And I said, "This will be a great experience for you to handle this."
- Don Daniel: And she goes, "I don't really feel comfortable with crowds."
- Don Daniel: I said, "Okay, I'll handle it. But let me handle it. Don't try to be good guy/bad guy. Let me handle it and you just kind of listen and learn."
- Don Daniel: So, we get there. And I go, "tell me who's like the head dog. Who's the leader." And this guy comes forward. No English. So now here I am, a seasonal, with the assistant chief ranger being my interpreter. I mean, he's way up the food chain. And he's interpreting for me. So, I'm talking to this guy, but he then repeats it in Spanish. And then he talks to me through him. And we totally resolved it. You know, it was basically really easy to resolve. All the little kids had their own tent. And I said, "Put four or five or six of these kids in one tent. Eliminate five tents."
- Lilli Tichinin: And you're fine!
- Don Daniel: You're on your way. Take, you've got seven cars here on two sites. Take a couple cars down in the overflow parking and park. And then remember, keep your fires down. Keep your noise down. You know, and it was nothing that I would not ask anybody to do. So, yeah, it was challenging. But I think I probably could have handled it, even without his interpretation. I'm not sure how, but I could. You know? I don't really see, I really don't think I have a lot of challenges in doing this job. But I'm still a little old-fashioned, too. You know, the park service, they're coming up with all these newfangled holsters. And I'm going, I can't do that. I can't do the push down, pull forward, turn right. I'm a thumb-snap holster guy. So, I'm still wearing the old holster, because that's what I've been doing for 30 years. And they're okay with that.
- Don Daniel: You know, it's like we got the new Tasers. It's like (groans) what's wrong with the old Taser? It had a thumb-brake release. That's what I – but we get by. I mean, I get by.
- Lilli Tichinin: That was another thing I was curious about. You know, not just in terms of equipment. It sounds like there have been, of course big changes in equipment and stuff like that in the last 30 years. But also, you know, I'm curious, coming

back, what other types of changes or shifts have you noticed in the park service from when you left? In the culture, in the management or—

Don Daniel: The park service has always been behind in law enforcement compared to big city law enforcement. They've been behind 10 or 15 years. They are catching up. You know, in my early days at Grand Canyon, the superintendent bought off on us wearing guns. But he didn't want shotguns visible. So, we went through shotguns mounted with a cover over the shotgun so it looked like part of the dash, to underneath our legs, which was uncomfortable as hell in driving, to release racks inside the trunk lid, that you pushed the button, the trunk lid popped up. But as soon as you went into the trunk, the lid fell on you. (Lilli Tichinin laughs) So you know, it was like, come on! But now it's like, I knew that we would be going to cameras. Joshua Tree this year, early this year, they got them, but they hadn't seen the policy. So, we weren't wearing them.

Lilli Tichinin: Interesting.

Don Daniel: Yosemite, boom. I get there, body camera. Lassen, which is, Yosemite is big park, Lassen is right here. I get to Lassen, body cameras. No problem, I have no problem with that. Because I've always felt that when I go home at night, I can sleep because I haven't done anything that I should not, that would not keep me from sleeping.

Lilli Tichinin: Exactly.

Don Daniel: The problem I have with body cameras is I can't remember to turn it on or to turn it off. I remember, I'll get halfway through a contact, and I go, oh, shit, I have to turn it on.

Lilli Tichinin: Turn it on.

Don Daniel: Or I'll turn it on when I first get out of the car, and then I'll be driving down the road, you know, talking to myself. Or one time I actually even was right by the entrance station, and she goes, "What did you stop them for?" And I was telling her. And I went, oh, shit. I hadn't turned it off. So, it's a new thing. It's not going to go away. I don't have an option to say no, I don't want to do it. But I understand, I accept it. So, I'm not so, even though I've been retired from the police department ten years, I'm not far out of.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: Now say, for instance, in the 30 years between early seasonal and next, had I been something else, I'd have been totally out of place.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: When I went to the academy, it was a piece of cake for me. It was a piece of cake. And I still believe, and I've had discussions with the guy from Flagstaff, that there

is an invaluable asset out there for seasonal law enforcement rangers, and that's retired cops. You know, guys that get in police departments when they're in their early twenties. Do their twenty years. They're in their mid-forties. They're in good physical condition. And they come to parks to visit. And they all go, "Hey, I'm a—" And you go, "So am I." And they go, "Wow, this is a great job." But retired cops won't go to a four-month academy. The majority. So, I've been talking to him saying, look, take the four-month agenda and look at it from being a cop. And go through it and mark off what you don't need to teach them. So, you don't need to teach them probable cause, search and seizure. You don't need to teach them handcuffing. You don't need to teach them searching. You don't need to teach them how to shoot. You don't need to teach them how to drive. What do you need to teach them? NPS policy, 36CFR violations. You could do that in a two-week class. Then you could have a, you could have another me coming to work as a new seasonal that you don't have.

Lilli Tichinin: Right. Right.

Don Daniel: So, I think there's a whole source of police officers a lot younger than me that are retiring that are not going to sit at home and drink beer and watch the TV reruns that could come out and do this and be a great asset to the park service. And they're not looking for a permanent job.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: See, that's a big advantage I have. I'm not looking for a permanent job. If they change the criteria tomorrow, I'm not looking for a permanent job. I only want to do this seasonally. I only went to Joshua Tree because I had never worked a winter park. And I was thinking about all the summer things I used to do that I missed. Whitewater rafting trips. Horseback trips in the back country. You know, my motorboat's twenty-some years old and doesn't have 300 hours yet. All those things. So, I thought, well, we decided, we'll try a winter park. And then we'll make a decision. Do we want to work winters or summers? You know, but not both.

Don Daniel: So, going back to Lassen, it's so nice and close to home and convenient. We're going to give up on the winter park, not the summer park. So, we're not going back to Joshua Tree this winter because we also are getting shorter in life. You know, it's like I told her, I don't want to work till the day I die.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: So, we're, and next year may be my last summer as a summer seasonal. Maybe. She knows how much I love doing it. Reno is close enough for her to come and visit or stay a few days, or come for a week and then not come the next week. Not like if I'm in Yellowstone from Reno. And that's another—

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

[END OF TRACK 2]

[START OF TRACK 3]

Don Daniel: —thing the park service needs to get onboard with. And that's not all seasonals are twenty-some year olds who will jump and do whatever you tell them to do, will live wherever you tell them to live, because they're trying so hard to become permanents. There are some of us who are married, who have a real life, and who won't live in a house with two or three other people.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: So, there are very few of us, it's a small percentage, you know, but there are teachers. I worked with a guy at Yellowstone. His father-in-law had been there 40 years. His wife works as a back country office ranger. He works as law enforcement. He's a school principal somewhere, you know? But there's a big trailer up there. It's old. It's covered. But he comes back every summer, him and his wife and his three kids. So, his mother-in-law, his father-in-law, who'd been there forty-some years and is still working on the fire department—

Lilli Tichinin: Wow.

Don Daniel: —volunteering. Mother-in-law watches the kids during the day. They have staggered days off. He watches them a day, wife watches them a day, mother-in-law watches them a couple of days. They make that arrangement for him. But as a general rule, one of the things that I really would like to see is in job descriptions. The best you can get is, "Park housing is mandatory. Park housing is not required. Housing is available in the nearby city." But they could say, "Housing available for married rangers."

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: You know? So, we have, Mary and I have turned down a few jobs where there was no housing. The job I really want is the river ranger on the Snake River in the Tetons. I'm a big whitewater rafter since the '70s. More than qualified. And I apply every year, but the housing never gets better. We even considered this summer paying twelve to fifteen hundred dollars a month to rent an apartment in Jackson, which would pretty much be your salary—

Lilli Tichinin: Right. (laughs)

Don Daniel: —to go do that job.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Just so you could have the chance to do that job.

Don Daniel: But there are, the cabins at Yosemite, the apartment I lived in in Yellowstone, could be married housing.

- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: The park service also says permanents can have pets, but seasonals can't.
- Lilli Tichinin: Seasonals can't.
- Don Daniel: Except a few parks will say put down a 50 dollar or hundred-dollar cleaning deposit and bring your – you know, you can't bring my horses.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: But I can bring the dog. And it would be no different than me renting in the city. If I rent in the city—
- Lilli Tichinin: You'd put down an extra, yeah.
- Don Daniel: —you put down a cleaning deposit. And if your dog trashes the place, you'd lose all that money. See, what I'm saying is, to me, the park service is not, so far it does not try to be accommodating to the seasonal. And that's because, I believe, there's a big list of people who are willing to take less and not ask for or not want, because all they're, at the end of their tunnel is permanent job, they're not going to do anything to make—
- Lilli Tichinin: To rock the boat.
- Don Daniel: I don't know if you'd really call it make waves, but rock the boat.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Yeah.
- Don Daniel: But you know, the park service probably loses a lot of good people who are married who won't go somewhere without their dog or whatever. In Yellowstone, it was no pets for seasonals. But yet, more than, probably half of the people I worked with at this one district brought their pet. So, did they make a personal agreement with the person they worked for? How did they bend that rule? You know? So, I don't think the park service is accommodating to seasonals for seasonal jobs because it's just kind of a history thing, you know, stick them in a house.
- Don Daniel: Lassen. The first summer I was there, they put a law enforcement ranger, a trail guy and a volunteer in a three-bedroom house. Well, they all had their own bedroom. That's nice. They shared a kitchen. So-so. But one, not the law enforcement, but one of the other two would go out to the picnic table after dark and smoke dope.
- Don Daniel: So, the law enforcement guy comes to me and says, "What should I do?"
- Lilli Tichinin: Right. (laughs)

- Don Daniel: And I said, okay. Here's what I would do. I would tell him it's illegal in the park, and now you know. This is your first and only warning. If I should catch you doing it again, I'm going to do my job, and you're going to go to jail. You're at least going to get a citation to appear in court. Your boss is going to find out. And you probably won't have a job. But you can't be doing that and living in the same house with me.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: So, it's exactly what he did. And the guy, he wanted his marijuana apparently more than his job. So, he just left his job. Which is, it's okay to recognize that. But he comes to work, he's got to know that.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right. Right.
- Don Daniel: So, it's crazy.
- Lilli Tichinin: Wow. Yeah. Yeah, it's interesting to kind of think about that as an issue. I know that's something that has come up with seasonals. There's a lot of issues that have come up about seasonals. But I think that that, you know, your position and your experience, you can really kind of bring that up in a way that I don't think a lot of people think about. You know, what are some of the ways that seasonals aren't being accommodated?
- Don Daniel: Most young, new seasonals won't tell you or admit to it. But it's true. They aren't going to do anything to make waves and jeopardize their chance of getting a permanent job.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right. Did you feel that way when you were a seasonal 30 years ago? Or was it a little different?
- Don Daniel: (sighs) Well, I was a little older. But, yeah, I mean, the obvious thing you can't do is go out and go to the bars and drink and drive home. You'd get a DUI. You know, but you can't smoke dope. Being in the military all those years, you're subject to random drug testing, just like in the park service.
- Lilli Tichinin: Mm hmm. Right. Of course.
- Don Daniel: So, you know, I can tell you that when I got out of the Marine Corps, and when I was in college in the '70s, we smoked a little marijuana. But I can honestly tell you that since I graduated in 1973 and went into law enforcement, I have not. I've consumed alcohol, because alcohol is legal. I've not smoked dope, because it's illegal.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right. Right.

Don Daniel: It was a joke that 10 years ago when I retired from the military and two weeks later the police department, I go, "Oh, after all these years, I can go smoke dope now." Well, 10 years later, I'm still saying I *could* go do it.

Lilli Tichinin: (laughs) You could. Right. Right. Yeah.

Don Daniel: So, you know, it's funny. But again, the young people, they won't do anything to make waves. And is that fair? Maybe it is. Maybe if I step on the wrong toes, then I'm not going to ever have a chance to get a permanent job. So, it hangs over their head. I know it does.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Certainly.

Don Daniel: It doesn't hang over, nothing hangs over my head. (laughs)

Lilli Tichinin: Now, yeah, now, in your position now as a seasonal, yeah.

Don Daniel: But I'm in a unique, I'm probably a small, a very small percentage. But on the other hand, I'm also in high demand because no one, they know they can't discriminate against me for age. And if I can pass the PEB, and I can pass the qualification, how long can I do this?

Lilli Tichinin: Right. Right.

Don Daniel: Who knows?

Lilli Tichinin: Who knows?

Don Daniel: I don't think it will be a whole lot longer. Because when I was in Vietnam, I was a machine gunner. You didn't stop and put earplugs in before you got into combat. My early days of law enforcement, you didn't put on headphones, ear things, to go to the range. You shot like you worked. So, you don't wear earplugs when you're working on the street. So, over a period of time, hearing tests have – I don't know if you'd call it gone down or up. Hearing is not as good.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: And then part of it could be age, too. My hearing is not as good as. You know. But, so someday, I mean, I may not be able to meet the physical qualification.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Yeah. Who knows?

Don Daniel: Who knows? But it's been, if I'm done today, it was a great ride, you know?

Lilli Tichinin: Right. Right.

Don Daniel: And even all those years that I wasn't in the park service, I said I was visiting people, you know, friends from the park service, I was in the parks, I was riding

along. It never got away from me. For many, many years, at least one of our vacations, always, was to a park.

Lilli Tichinin: Well one thing that I was curious about, you know, it sounds like, from what you were saying before, that your interactions with the park, and your relationship with the park when you were the deputy, when you were the sheriff's deputy, it sounds like that was a pretty positive dynamic. But I'm very curious what that was like to be working so closely with the park, being former park employee but working so closely with the park as non-park. Were there times that that was—

Don Daniel: Well, you know, I guess my answer to that is kind of funny. You know, when you're in your twenties and you're wearing a badge and a gun, there's a lot of testosterone. So now I was a ranger, but now I'm a sheriff. And because of the jurisdiction, concurrent – well, let me think. It wasn't exclusive.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: It was the one where the sheriff, and he was very political. So, in essence, these were the rangers, and I was the deputy. But we were all friends.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: I never, I never forced my authority on them. For instance, in the Coconino County regulations, rules, laws, any loss or theft over a hundred dollars was a felony. So, I had several reports. Somebody steals a Coleman cooler and a Coleman stove and a Coleman lantern out of the campground, it's over a hundred dollars. It's a felony by terminology. The rangers didn't call me all the time, every time something like that happened. They did a report. They gave me a copy of it. And I did a report. So, the stats were probably a little higher. So, but when it came to deaths, when it came to searches, when it came to serious felonies, they knew, there was an understanding. They knew that they had to give it to the sheriff.

Lilli Tichinin: Right. Right.

Don Daniel: Being a sheriff, I was also a volunteer fireman. Because all of the rangers, it was part of the collateral job. Fire, rescue. I came out to cover guys, just like the highway patrolman came out to cover me, I went out to cover him. The rangers went out to cover. You know, we did roadblocks together. We worked together.

Lilli Tichinin: Very closely.

Don Daniel: We just wore a different uniform. There was a time in my sheriff's career in the Grand Canyon that the Tyson gang broke out of prison in Arizona and killed a honeymoon couple. Killed a young Marine and his wife and his nephew, his niece, and a baby. They killed six people. And they were hanging out in northern Nevada, or northern Nevada, northern Arizona.

Lilli Tichinin: Arizona, yeah.

- Don Daniel: So, at that time, I was a sheriff. Lloyd Honer was an antique law enforcement guy. He'd been thirty-some years in the park service already. And I went to him, and I said, "Lloyd. They're sending me halfway to Williams, at that junction, to do roadblock with another deputy or a highway patrolman or something that comes up from Williams when they get sightings that they might think it's the Tyson gang coming up that road." And I said, "I know that you have some M16s." In those days, it was fully automatic military rifles. I said, "I know you have some M16s in your gun locker." I said, "We as sheriff's department don't carry long guns, rifles," even though at that time our sheriff had told us you guys can take your hunting rifles, whatever you've got. So, I went to him and I said, "I know you've got these guns there. What would be the chance of me getting one until this is over."
- Don Daniel: And he got up, did the combination, walked in. Came out carrying an M16, four or five magazines, fully loaded. Handed them to me. Said, "Bring them back when you're done." We didn't do any paperwork, you know, sign it or anything. Phew. Hands it to me. And this was when no cops were carrying long guns.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: The first time I showed up at an intersection down there, highway patrolman showed up, I get out, I put on my helmet. Pulled out this M16, put a magazine in it and chambered a round. This highway patrolman's eyes had to have been around this big around. He goes, "Holy shit! Where did you get that?"
- Don Daniel: And I told him. I said, "Park service just gave it to me." And when the Tyson gang thing was over, I walked back in and gave it back to him.
- Lilli Tichinin: Gave it back. Yeah.
- Don Daniel: You wouldn't do that today, that would not happen today on a dare. Not on a dare. So, some of the good old days were good old days. Not the technology we have today. But today you don't have the camaraderie. And even in my early days of Reno PD, the teams would go out after shift and go to bars and have probably more than we should have. You know? When you're out on patrol in the city of Reno and you pull over a DUI, a possible DUI, and it's a local sheriff, highway patrolman or another officer, you take them home. Park the car and take them home. That doesn't happen today. Today, if you stop a car and it's one of your own, you're stretching your neck way out to take them home. You better be calling the supervisor, getting another agency to come over. They're going to do a field sobriety test. And you are no different. You're no different.
- Lilli Tichinin: Than anyone else that would be stopped.
- Don Daniel: Than anyone else. Those days, those days we would have gone to the edge for each other. Those are times that have changed.

- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Yeah. Certainly. Yeah. Do you feel like there have been similar changes in the park service as well?
- Don Daniel: Oh, I think so. I think so. It depends on the park.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right. Of course.
- Don Daniel: You get a park like Yellowstone, I don't think my district ranger, he wore a gun belt, you know, he had to be commissioned according to the job description. But he was never out there. Smaller parks like Lassen, the chief ranger, there would be times this past summer when I would be the only ranger up north. The chief ranger was the only law enforcement south. And if you needed a backup, then he would jump in his car and drive an hour through the park to get to you. So, in small parks, yeah. As it gets bigger, like anything, less. So.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Well, you had mentioned when we were talking before about kind of the change, the change, the differences between your first seasons at Yellowstone and then when you transitioned to Grand Canyon. And you were saying that it was a very different, even the job was very different, even though it was the same job. Could you tell me—
- Don Daniel: Well, when you think of Yellowstone, again, Yellowstone is eight or ten little parks. I mean, reality, you had this little area. The Grand Canyon, everybody comes to the South Rim.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: So, you throw in a thousand college kids, twenty or thirty thousand visitors a day, six bars, wranglers having a hard day up and down the canyon, drinking in the bars, employees shoved into dorms. You know, there's a lot of problems. So why the Grand Canyon was more law enforcement-oriented than Yellowstone was probably dictated by the condenseness of the Grand Canyon. You know. So, if you turn around and take that to Lassen or Joshua Tree, there are no bars in the park.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: There are no real concession employees, to speak of, in the park. A few. Most of them are locals that go to their job and go home. There are no hotels.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: You know, so there's not that congestion of people.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. I think that's very interesting to think about the different parks.
- Don Daniel: But the Grand Canyon, I mean, I went there, and it was like full leather. It was not just the next car that came off the line the park service had. It was, you know, and

even now, today, in the RM9 manual specifically talks about the different types of vehicles we have, and which ones are not pursuit vehicles. So, if you drive an SUV, if you drive an SUV, it is not by regulation a pursuit vehicle. But you're out there doing law enforcement in an SUV, you activate your lights, and the vehicle doesn't stop – I learned this from Reno Police Department – you don't use the "p" word. You don't say "pursuit." You say, "failing to yield." Because as soon as you say pursuit, management says cancel.

Lilli Tichinin: Right. Because you're not, yeah. (laughs)

Don Daniel: So, everybody does it, including me. We have pursued vehicles in ATVs. Or, ATVs. In SUVs. But, if something bad happens, they'll take that regulation and hang you out to dry. So, it got so bad at the police department, and I totally agree with it. Somebody steals a six-pack of beer, jumps in the car and drives through downtown Reno. With tourists crossing the streets, you know, and pushing baby carriages. Do you pursue them through there? Or do you cancel it? In Reno, it was so black and white that when a supervisor said "cancel," you acknowledged it. And then we as officers took it one step farther and we turned 180 degrees around. Because if you turn off the lights, but you keep following them, when you go to court the person will say, "Well, the car kept after me."

Lilli Tichinin: It kept going, yeah.

Don Daniel: "He kept after me. I believed that he was pursuing me." But if I turn around and go the other way, I'm not. Rangers don't get much of that.

Don Daniel: Let me back up and tell you another thing that no longer happens. When I worked in Yellowstone at first, if I wrote you a ticket for a campfire, rangers would say, "Okay, violation of campfire, 15 dollars." At that time, you had to put cash or check in an envelope in front of the ranger. You had to put a stamp on that envelope, and you had to drop it in a mailbox in front of the ranger. And, and you couldn't give them the stamp. It wasn't a self-addressed envelope. Most people on vacation don't carry stamps.

Lilli Tichinin: Don't carry stamps around with them.

Don Daniel: So, to make it even salt in the wound, I write you a ticket for a fire, you've got to get a check or cash, put it in this envelope, then I've got to direct you to in front of the general store to put money in the stamp machine to get a stamp to put on it, then go drop it in a box. And it was a bail, not a fine. So, because, what led to that was, 99.99 percent of the people that come to Yellowstone are visitors from whatever.

Lilli Tichinin: Far away.

Don Daniel: So, I write you a ticket for a fire violation, you go back to New Jersey. You just say, I'm never going back there. They won't come after me for that. The hell with it. But by posting bail, you can go back and look in those days and probably see

that the conviction rate – because the bail was accepted as the fine if you didn't show up for court, and you're not going to show up for court when you're back home – the conviction rate in Yellowstone for violations was in the high 90s percent. Those people didn't come back and fight it. But it was pretty humiliating for us to write a ticket to somebody, I mean, it was good sometimes, when the person was a total jerk.

Lilli Tichinin: Right, right. (laughs)

Don Daniel: But you get somebody for something, then you've got to force them to go get a stamp to put on the envelope, put the check and the money in the envelope and mail it. Drop it in the mailbox.

Lilli Tichinin: Right. Babysit them all the way to the store and everything. Yeah.

Don Daniel: So, you know, that's changed. Nowadays, you know, you write it and give them 30 days to deal with it. And they call the courts and deal with it. So that was pretty funny. I thought if we're not a gestapo for that, never will be.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Yeah. (laughs)

Don Daniel: It's like, "I know you're not guilty, but put your money in there, put a stamp on it, and drop it. It's just your bail."

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah, exactly. (laughs)

Don Daniel: But if you don't come back, they won't call you and say, "Send us more." They won't send any of it back to you. They'll just take it as your fine. Well, 15 bucks. Are you going to drive from Indiana back to Yellowstone to fight a ticket? What's the percentage of people that do that? Zip.

Lilli Tichinin: None. Yeah. That's interesting.

Don Daniel: So, we were, it was a gestapoish thing.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. But it worked.

Don Daniel: It worked for a while, until somebody said, "You can't do that."

Lilli Tichinin: You can't do that anymore. Yeah. Yeah. Well, I'm curious, what do you think was the thing that most drew you back to the park service in your retirement? As a volunteer. What really made you think that first time that you decided to go back as a volunteer, what was that impulse?

Don Daniel: You know, it might sound really, I don't know that I really ever left. Mentally or physically. You know, my best friends were park service. I visited park service. But I couldn't get a job. And then, of course, they, during that time, too, they came up with the law enforcement specialty section. But you had to be in by 37 in

order to get a retirement. And I'm past that. So, I really, in a reality kind of way, I never really left it. It just wasn't my major means of employment.

Don Daniel: And even working for the PD, here's a really funny story. A guy named Alan, an officer, Reno PD, I knew him. But we weren't buds. And I was like, yeah, you know, everybody that you work with in the blue uniform, you know, are your friends, but you don't hang out with them.

Don Daniel: So, he comes to me one day and he says, "Hey, didn't you used to work for the park service?"

Don Daniel: And I go, "Yeah, why?"

Don Daniel: And he goes, "I've got sort of a problem." He said, "We jumped off of Yosemite with our parachutes and we got caught. And they confiscated our parachutes." Which, you know, dollars. "And we got a ticket." He says, "What should I do?"

Don Daniel: Well, I said, "Well, the first thing you do is go in and see the secretary for the chief of police, and tell her you need to see him. And tell him, that he doesn't hear it from somewhere else."

Lilli Tichinin: Right. Yeah.

Don Daniel: So, he did. And the chief basically said, it was stupid, but you didn't identify yourself as a police officer, you weren't doing it on police time. If I were you, I'd go take my medicine. So that took a whole burden off him. Why he thought, I mean, he didn't know me from Adam. But somewhere in our time, he had heard—

Lilli Tichinin: He knew the connection.

Don Daniel: —some association with me with the park service. And he did. He went to court. He told the judge he was being stupid. And paid his fine and got his parachute back. But it was, then after that, he and I had more of a bond.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: You know? It was kind of a joke like, "Hey, you been to Yosemite lately?" He goes, "No way, man!" But he was young and reckless. But before this, there was nothing. So, I don't think I really ever mentally left. I think it was always there. But there was never really a thought of, because you can't wait to get a job. And then you get a job, and you can't wait till you retire. So, you know, I said my first few years of retirement, I just did retirement things. But you know, it was just an opportunity, even the first couple of times, when I went back as a volunteer, I really had no intention of going farther. But a couple of seasons of volunteer, it's like well, I've got the experience and I can get hired as a general ranger. Then the general ranger wasn't enough. And then, it was law enforcement. You know. I don't know that there's ever been a seasonal special agent. Because there weren't

special agents in the park service in my day. But if there were, I might be looking at that next.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Don Daniel: Because basically, it's just an investigative job. I could be the first seasonal special agent.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah! There you go. That's the next, that's the next thing you're going to do, right? (laughs)

Don Daniel: And it's kind of funny, because there's not many skills that I don't have to be the all-around, I still consider myself the all-around ranger. I'm not specific to anything. In my day, in the early days, we did it all. The rangers did it all, including, every once in a while, we were an interpreter. If it was capturing a bear, if it was fighting a fire, if it was rescuing somebody, that's what we did. And those were cool guys, you know? Nowadays you get kids that come out of college with a degree in law enforcement. That's what they want. You know? Or a fire management. But you just don't get that general, all-around ranger.

Lilli Tichinin: So that's one of the shifts, maybe, that you've seen in coming back is that everything is more specialized?

Don Daniel: And specializing is not bad.

Lilli Tichinin: Right, right.

Don Daniel: You know, it's good in a bigger park. I think it's not as good in a smaller park. At Lassen, I'd go out in my kayak. You know? I've done enough whitewater rafting, including the Grand Canyon at age 50, that I rowed the river for 18 days.

Lilli Tichinin: Wow.

Don Daniel: So, one summer I was looking at a Forest Service job, either back country horse ranger or a river ranger, and the gal from the Forest Service in Jackson, Wyoming, says, "You've got more experience than my whole staff." Just in river running.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: And even when I took the horse job, she said, "Come by. I want to meet you." And she said, "And if you want, on your days off, or if you have time, you can come up here and do this with us."

Lilli Tichinin: River stuff, too.

Don Daniel: So, I went up there one time. Went on a trip with their river rangers. And all they knew was that I was a back country horse ranger down at Pinedale. So, we got on

the river a mile or so. And it's not a long section, but the big water's at the end. So, this guy, 25 year-old kid, gets in there. So after about a mile he says, "You want to try this?" (Lilli Tichinin laughs)

Don Daniel: I said, "Sure, I'll try it." So, I get in the rowing seat and in a matter of a few minutes, you know, I've pretty much skunked him, and he knows that I know something about it. I ended up rowing the rest of the trip. He didn't say, "Oh, no, don't do the big stuff." it was like I think he probably can do it, you know.

Lilli Tichinin: Right. Right. Yeah.

Don Daniel: So, you know, that's a loss that the park service has. And it's kind of a shame. Because you're totally involved when you do it all. It wasn't like somebody falls off the Grand Canyon and you go, okay, I need only climbing rangers to show up. The rangers went, you know. I kind of like the old Texas Rangers saying: "One riot, one Ranger." And having worked a lot on my own, to me it was a relief to go to work for the police department, where I had a team and other teams on the shift. And I could call for detectives and forensics and all that, you know. But I was already used to pretty much doing it on my own, and doing it all.

Lilli Tichinin: Doing all parts.

Don Daniel: I still remember going to the Grand Canyon and they going, "Next week, we're having climbing school." And I went, wait a minute, I thought we didn't—

[END OF TRACK 3]

[START OF TRACK 4]

Don Daniel: —climb here because it's breaking off rock and stuff."

Don Daniel: He goes, "Yeah, but we can't call it body recovery school." Which is the reason we learned to climb.

Lilli Tichinin: Right. For rescues and body recovery. Yeah. Hmm.

Don Daniel: So, you know, those of us, I run into Joe Evans. You know Joe Evans?

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. I've, yes, heard the name, yes.

Don Daniel: Joe Evans, he was a skinny young ranger at the Grand Canyon in the '70s. Butch Farabee was the assistant chief. Rick Gale was the district ranger. It's just funny. We were all on a level scale back then.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: And some of the icons on the park service were just right next to me.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: Just like in Reno, the current sheriff, I recruited him in the air guard. The previous sheriff, when I was in recruiting at the guard, I had a law enforcement commission, so I was a reserve deputy. The previous sheriff was a deputy with me. So, we were working on the same level. So, it's fun, you know? And I don't, I try, I don't think I do it, and I try to be conscious of it. I don't try to be overwhelming. But every once in a while, it gets away from me and I'll get a young ranger. And I'll go, "So this is your second season here? What were you doing in 1973, when I was a ranger?" And of course, they weren't even born.

Lilli Tichinin: (laughs) Yeah. Yeah.

Don Daniel: So, it's like, I've been around the block. Been there, done, my big line was been there, done that and got a t-shirt for it. And I got a lot of t-shirts. But you know, most of them, at first, it's a joke. But then It's like, you know, I think they understand that basically I'm a huge source of—

Lilli Tichinin: A resource for them.

Don Daniel: A resource for whatever, so.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Absolutely.

Don Daniel: And I can tell you from pervious calls from people to talk to me about jobs, you can kind of feel it in their voice. They don't have a lot of questions to ask you. They read the resume. They go holy shit, he's done everything! That's a good feeling.

Lilli Tichinin: And that's actually, you know, one thing I was curious about is kind of how the role of continuing education and continuing training has kind of played a role in your career in the park service. Because I know, one thing I noticed is that even when you were the deputy sheriff, you did some training at Albright. And then you know, the discussion we had about going back to the academy to become a seasonal, a lead ranger again.

Don Daniel: Yeah.

Lilli Tichinin: And so, I'm wondering, you know, kind of what that's been like to kind of have that continuous training in your life.

Don Daniel: I don't think of it as much as training as just a refreshing. Now, an interesting thing, active shooter. Active shooter, nobody knew anything about active shooter until Columbine.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: But immediately after Columbine, all the police departments were on it. And they were sending people to schools to come back and train the whole police department. So, I went through that training probably 20 years ago. Whenever

Columbine, within a year after Columbine. Yet the park service, I commented to my supervisor this year at Yosemite, because he was on the equivalent of their SWAT team in Yosemite. And they had some active shooter training. And I went, "Wait a minute. Your SWAT team is all over Yosemite. It will take you an hour to get together. Defeats the whole purpose of active shooting. The whole purpose."

Don Daniel: So, two summers ago, I talked to my boss at Lassen. On any given day, the most rangers you're going to have working: three.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. For the whole park.

Don Daniel: Throw the chief ranger in? Four. It's spread out. And I said, "We need to do active shooter training here before it happens." So, I said, "I have a lesson plan from Reno PD. I can teach it." In the basic active shooter plan, the first four cops that show up become the active shooter team.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Don Daniel: You go into the situation. It was hard to accept, but once you get the theory down pat, it's easier. Because you're stepping over injured people. Which is, helping people is your job. But in active shooter, it's tunnel vision to the shooter. Forget what's going on here, what's going on. But as a team of four. And I said, "We'll never get a team of four here at Lassen together. But there's no lesson plan for three or two or one." So, in teaching the class, I said, "Okay, here's three." We drew a triangle. "Here's two." We drew a diamond. And you never do it as one. So that was not just me, that was all of us coming up with modified plan of what to do as an active shooter. How we would form the team, make the movements. It's scary as hell to think about doing that as a team of two, where you're basically back to back, covering 180 degrees. But we did. We put it together. I had permanents sitting in my class, and I had seasonals. But it was never, oh, you're only a seasonal, what the hell do you know? It was intense involvement. We learned from it. We talked about it later. And even one guy even said, "If we ever have this, I hope that it's you and me if it's just two of us. I hope that it's you and me."

Lilli Tichinin: Right. Yeah.

Don Daniel: So, the park service is, again, they're not 10 or 15 years behind law enforcement, but they aren't really caught up. They're catching up, and they're getting there. Nowadays we have well-equipped vehicles. We have a long gun and a shotgun. We have Tasers. We have the cameras. We have body armor. So, we're getting there. But we're still a long way from police reality. And nobody ever thought, you know, nobody ever really thought of this. I mean, I remember in my early days, people saying, "Why are rangers carrying guns?"

Don Daniel: And you would say, "Well, it's to protect you." It was like, you know, they were under this, well, you come to a national park, you're safe.

- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: So, I would tell people, Ken Patrick was her husband who had been a highway patrolman and a sheriff before becoming a ranger. Was killed in Point Reyes.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Don Daniel: Okay. So, if a former highway patrolman and a former sheriff can get killed in the line of duty, what about us college kids coming right out of college, or even military, and getting five days of training? What's our chances, are even higher.
- Don Daniel: So, you know it's, you know, and then I think back earlier this year, there was a police, there were two police officers, and I don't remember where or when, killed. And one of them, it was her first day on the street.
- Lilli Tichinin: I had one last question. And that's it. And then we can wrap up. Which was just, what was the most rewarding part of your, what has been the most rewarding part of your experience with the park service? Either 30 years ago or now? Either one?
- Don Daniel: Well, there's probably been a lot of them. But the summer in 2010 when I was a horse patrolman in Yosemite Valley, at least 50 to 100 times a day people would come up. You know, the horse is a magnet.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Don Daniel: I would take a horse over another person as a partner, or a dog. Because it's an attraction to the good people, and it's a hell of a deterrent to the bad people. But probably 50 to 100 times a day in Yosemite, people would come up to pet your, "Can I pet your horse?" "Sure. Pet right here." And they would say, "You have the best job in the park service. How do I get a job like this?" (laughter) And I would say, "Yes I do. And no you can't, because I have it. You can get it when I'm done doing it."
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah, exactly.
- Don Daniel: And it was said in different ways, but that was pretty much the message is people would come up and say, "Oh my God, you have the best job in the park service." And I would go, "Yeah, I know." "How do I get a job like this?" "You don't. Because I've got it." So, I mean, the only reason I don't ride a horse at Lassen, they don't have them. I'm working on them, and I'm wearing them down. Because last year my boss, we have 17 miles of the PCT Trail that comes through the park.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: He says, "If we have a fire, I'm not worried about the campers. But what I'm really worried about are the hikers. And I said, "On a horse, I can cover those mileage. Take me in and—

- Lilli Tichinin: Get them out, yeah.
- Don Daniel: —send me out to Chester, or send me out to the north. I could sweep that trail on a horse in no time. Lassen used to have horses. But what, I don't know how long you've been in, but I would tell you this. The old park managers, there's a book. *Take Down the Flag and Feed the Horses*. They were into the horses. There's a lot of people today that are not as old, mid-level and young superintendents, who don't know about horses, who don't understand about horses. Who don't want to deal with horses.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Don Daniel: Now the superintendent at Grand Canyon, he's a superintendent. He can say, whatever. He would call me up and say, "I see on the schedule that you're riding tomorrow." And he says, "Is it okay if I ride with you?" He could have called me up and said, "I'm riding with you tomorrow. Have a horse ready."
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: But the horse program was good there. We didn't even saddle our own tack. We are on the schedule. The maintenance guy came over before our shift started. Groomed. Saddled. You drove up, you got out of your patrol car, you put the bridle in, you tightened the cinch, you put your Stetson on, and you rode. And the superintendent, he'd call me and ask. And I'd say, "You want me to come by and pick me up, or are you going to meet me there?" And he would ride with me for a few hours. Sometimes I literally would take him, let him off at his house or his office and take the horse back. But he always asked me, you know.
- Don Daniel: And I don't know, it's just, meeting people on the trail. Yosemite Valley is like a city. So, you know, the other thing is, if I had a quarter for every picture that was taken of me on that horse, I'd have another retirement.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Yeah. (laughter)
- Don Daniel: But I've got to tell you one more really funny story. I love this story.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Don Daniel: In my career, I've written two superintendents tickets. So, I'm a young seasonal at Grand Canyon. In '75, I was new there. A couple of summers in Yellowstone. Six o'clock, two of us came on at six, the rest of us came on at eight on day shift. Superintendent, down through the chain, tells whoever that he wants more enforcement in the school zone. He wants rangers running radar in the school zone. So, six o'clock each, I get my cup of coffee, my newspaper. And I'm sitting up there reading the paper. And I've got the radar going. And this car comes into the school zone, fast. I lock the radar. I step out and I wave the car over. And in those days, the government all drove mint cars. Mint green.

- Lilli Tichinin: Right. Yeah.
- Don Daniel: Pulls over, and it's him. And he goes, "What are you stopping me for?"
- Don Daniel: And I can't remember the exact words, but I'm trying to play it down. It's like, "Oh, you maybe were going a little too fast. Slow down. In the school zone, I got you on radar." And I'm just going to send him on his way.
- Don Daniel: And he goes, "Go get your ticket book." And I go, "Is it really necessary? It's just a warning."
- Don Daniel: He goes, "Nope." He says, "The rules are for everybody." And he hands me his driver's license, says, "Go get your ticket book." So, he literally, I won't say forced – yeah, I guess he forced me. He forces me into writing him a ticket. So, I write him this ticket. And I'm thinking, I'll be packing up to go home. So, he goes on his way. I'm going holy shit, what have you done?
- Don Daniel: Eight o'clock, I walk into the briefing. We all have a briefing. Throw this ticket in the middle of the table and I go, "Nobody speeds in my school zone." (laughter)
- Don Daniel: One of the guys reaches over and he tells me, "Tell me you didn't write this ticket."
- Don Daniel: And I go, "What did I just say? Nobody speeds in my school zone." And all these guys are all looking at it like, you've just doomed us all.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: But, so the superintendent goes to court. I mean, everybody knows in a day, the superintendent got a speeding ticket in the zone. He goes to court. He pays a nominal fine. But his level of acceptance by the community – which wasn't bad – went up a whole big notch. It's like, if he can get a ticket and go to court and admit that he was wrong, the rest of us are all below him.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Don Daniel: So, I never told the other guys that he forced me to do it, because it kept me up there.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right. Right.
- Don Daniel: So then jump ahead to Lassen a couple of summers ago. The superintendent there who's new, his wife works at a park in Washington. She comes to visit. They come up into the Warner Valley area to go hiking in her car and they park it. Well, one of our jobs is checking all the cars parked for entrance stickers. There's no sticker, so I write a warning. And I didn't do a ticket. I just wrote a warning.

- Don Daniel: He comes and finds me and says, “I got this from you.” And I go, “Oh, yeah.” It’s like, I don’t know what car.
- Don Daniel: And he goes, “I’m sorry. It was my fault. It’s my wife’s car.” He says, “I know I need to go see Michelle and get our entrance stickers and all that stuff.” And he says, “I’ll go take care of it right away.”
- Don Daniel: And I says, “You’re not the first superintendent I’ve written.” And he didn’t think any less of me. So those are the kind of people you want to work for.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Don Daniel: And I’m never going to be a superintendent. I’m never going to be even a supervisor. But that’s how I would do it.
- Lilli Tichinin: Good leadership and example setting.
- Don Daniel: You know, I was a training officer at the PD. And over the years, we always, every year was have an annual banquet. And you know, I’ve forgotten that they were my trainees. And a guy would come up with his wife and he’ll go, “Hey, this was my first training officer,” you know. It’s like, “He taught me this, taught me this.” So obviously it impacted them.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Don Daniel: Or they, the wife says, “Oh, yeah. I heard about you.” (laughter)
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Don Daniel: Because I would take my new trainees that were having trouble with searching, I’d take them downtown where all of our transients are that were wearing five and six layers of clothes. And I’d go, “Okay, we’re taking him for public intox. While we’re transporting him, you’ve got to search him. Do it.” And if you can learn to search those people and find stuff – you know, they don’t carry guns and stuff, but bottles and stuff – you can take an average person and it’s a breeze. And there’d be like the wife would say, “Oh you’re the one that made him search those guys that smell and stink and wear five or six layers of clothes.” And I’m going yeah, but he learned how to search. And the guy would look at his wife and go, “Yeah. Yeah, I did, honey.” Don’t mention the fact that I was bitching about it.
- Lilli Tichinin: (laughter) Right, exactly, when I got home, yeah.
- Don Daniel: So, it gives you a good feeling.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Yeah. Wonderful. Well, thank you.

Don Daniel: I wasn't sure when I first got here when I was talking to her if I really had anything – all these other people that are interviewing, these other people that are interviewing, all have you know, 20, 30, 40-year careers.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. But like I said, it was interesting to hear what it was like to come back a second time. You might be the only person we've interviewed who's had, you know, a break from the park service and then has come back. So, I think it's a different perspective than we've gotten from anybody else.

Don Daniel: Oh, yeah. From 1977 to 2010. That's thirty-some years.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Exactly. Well, thank you.

[END OF TRACK 4]

[END OF INTERVIEW]