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Thomas Cherry
October 25, 2014

Interview conducted by Lu Ann Jones
Transcribed by Teresa Bergen
Digitized by Marissa Lindsey

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ANPR Oral History Project

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The narrator was asked to review the transcript and declined

Audiofile: CHERRY Thomas 25 Oct 2014

[START OF TRACK 1]

Lu Ann Jones: Test recording here.

Thomas Cherry: Okay.

Lu Ann Jones: All right. I started out by just, well, I'll introduce our tape. This is Lu Ann Jones with Tom Cherry here at Ranger Rendezvous 2014. It's October 24th. We're at Estes Park. And we're here for our oral history interview.

Thomas Cherry: Okay.

Lu Ann Jones: Do you give me permission to—

Thomas Cherry: Absolutely. Yes.

Lu Ann Jones: And you talk just a little bit more. Tell me when you were born and where you were born.

Thomas Cherry: Born December the seventh, 1945 in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow. On the Pearl Harbor Day, right?

Thomas Cherry: Yes.

Lu Ann Jones: Let's see how—

[END OF TRACK 1]

[START OF TRACK 2]

Lu Ann Jones: So, born in Arkansas.

Thomas Cherry: Yes.

Lu Ann Jones: Can you tell me something about your growing up there?

Thomas Cherry: That's interesting. I have very few memories of like my first five years. Yet I lived very close to my grandparents. Was close to them. I remember spending time with them, taking trips with them. But as far as activities or specific – a lot of people remember specific times, dates, places. Mine's more of a general overview. Even then we moved, my folks lived south of Fort Smith, a little town 30 miles south of Fort Smith.

Lu Ann Jones: And what did they do?

Thomas Cherry: My dad was a traveling salesman for an independent wholesale grocery firm. My mom was an RN that went to nursing school in Saint Louis. Was a four-year degree nurse during the Depression. And her family had no money, so she worked to put herself through. But she never practiced as a nurse. She volunteered with the Red Cross. Took care of neighbors and friends in this very small community. But if she did, yeah, I take that back. She practiced, I think, for a few months before she and my dad married.

Thomas Cherry: The reason they were in the area, my great-grandfather was a marshal's deputy that rode out of Judge Parker's court in the Indian Territory. He

was known as Hanging Judge Parker at that time. Was a federal judge and had jurisdiction over the Indian Territory. He was one of many marshals that was killed in the line of duty. So, the history, I guess, or the evolution of that being home for them.

Lu Ann Jones: I see that you went to Oklahoma State, is that right?

Thomas Cherry: No. Oklahoma City University. It's a small, private university. Actually, it split the difference. Stillwater houses Oklahoma State. Norman, Oklahoma is the University of Oklahoma. And Oklahoma City University's in the middle. It started years ago as a private school, a Methodist-affiliated university, and since then, they have become less of a religious-oriented school. They had a night law school there that drew a lot of people because major metropolitan area, or at least for Oklahoma. Oklahoma City is.

Thomas Cherry: And what drew me to it is when I graduated, all of my friends were going to one or the other, meaning Oklahoma or the University of Oklahoma. And I simply wanted to go someplace else. So that was—

Lu Ann Jones: I'm sorry.

Thomas Cherry: No, no. That was my motivation.

Lu Ann Jones: So, had your family moved to Oklahoma from Arkansas then?

Thomas Cherry: Yes.

Lu Ann Jones: When did that happen?

Thomas Cherry: Well, we lived in Mansfield, a little town south of Fort Smith. Then we moved to Fort Smith. I was there five years. Went to grade school there. Then the wholesale grocery firm where my dad worked, he had moved into the office. That was the reason for us moving to Fort Smith. He became the sales manager. Then they decided to liquidate. And in doing so, then he no longer had gainful employment.

Thomas Cherry: So, we moved to Camden, Arkansas, which is about 90 miles south of Little Rock. My dad managed, again, a small independent wholesale grocery firm there. Mom and Pop grocery stores were still in the Midwest and the South long after they had closed their doors on the east or west coast and been run out of business, essentially, by the 7-11s and the corporate entities. So, three years in Camden, the owner, the single owner of that business decided to liquidate. So that was the reason for the move to southeast Oklahoma. So, I went through high school in Oklahoma. So, I tell people I'm half hick and half hillbilly. When you combine Arkansas and Oklahoma, that's pretty much what you get.

Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) Well, were you interested in outdoor things? Or what kinds of things were you interested in as a kid?

Thomas Cherry: I was interested in getting involved in whatever the greatest number of people were. I was in forensics in high school. I debated in high school.

Was in one-act plays. Wherever I, I had an opportunity to talk and other people would listen. How's that?

Lu Ann Jones: That sounds good. (laughs)

Thomas Cherry: I'm being honest here.

Lu Ann Jones: Well I saw that you majored in business administration in college, right?

Thomas Cherry: You're right. Well, my first couple of years at Oklahoma City University, I was a speech major because I wanted to debate in college. I loved the competition. My partner and I were very successful in high school. Well I got to college and the debate coach said, "In college debate, you have a junior and senior division. The junior division consists of freshmen and sophomore. The senior division, juniors and seniors." And he said, "I have a senior that needs a partner. You were such a hotshot debater in high school, I'm going to put you in the senior division."

Thomas Cherry: I can't tell you how quickly I learned how to lose. I mean, we were not just beaten. I tell people I was beaten by some of the best teams in the country. And the beauty of the Midwest, of being in the Midwest, is they hosted a lot of college debate tournaments, because it made it easier for the east and the west coast teams to come in. So, we were beaten by Harvards and Yales and Southern Cals. I mean, ones that were excellent. I wanted to crawl out of the room after the first couple of tournaments. (Lu Ann Jones laughs)

Thomas Cherry: Old people like me remember, for instance, where you were, where we were, when Kennedy was shot. I was at Wichita State University at a debate tournament. It was more than just debate. The tournaments consisted of extemporaneous speaking and oratory. So usually, we would enter in more than one event to justify the travel and the trip to wherever we were going.

Thomas Cherry: Then my junior year, I transferred to the University of Arkansas, only because they'd had two perfect football seasons back-to-back and they were quite a party school, and I wanted to go there. Then my grades properly reflected my attitude towards higher education, which mean they were abysmal at best.

Thomas Cherry: The draft board looked at my grades and I knew the inevitable was coming. Vietnam was going strong. So, I joined the navy. I mean, it was a question of me either joining a branch of the service or getting drafted.

Lu Ann Jones: Right.

Thomas Cherry: I knew that. So that's how I ended up as a hospital corpsman in Vietnam.

Lu Ann Jones: Was there a choice in terms of what you were going to do? I mean, how you became a corpsman?

Thomas Cherry: Yes. it was interesting. The recruiter was very adept in leading people in their decision-making process. So, I had no clue what, I had tested with

the air force. They wanted me to make, they said, if you will join the air force, we will make you an electronics technician dealing with specialty sonar, radar. I mean, it was so far above my head what they were talking about. I said, "I cannot believe that your proficiency tests show that I was anywhere capable of understanding, much less doing this." I said, "If this is the air force, and this is what you tell me I should be doing, then I'm sorry, no, I don't think I need to join." (laughter) I'm being, again, very frank.

Thomas Cherry: So, I went to the navy. They said, "You know what, Tom, we need hospital corpsmen." I said, "What in the world is a hospital corpsman?" They said they work in hospitals and clinics and our navy bases throughout the United States. Sometimes they're stationed aboard larger ships. And what they do is treat the sick and injured. And you provide a very viable service.

Thomas Cherry: And I thought, you know what? I don't know a darn thing about medicine. But that sounds very interesting. Plus, if I'm going to be in the military four years, helping people doesn't sound like such a bad idea.

Thomas Cherry: The recruiter very tactfully failed to tell me that the corpsmen in the navy are really the medics for the Marine Corps, and that I would be going to Vietnam with the Marines. He just left that out of the equation. I use that in the leadership training. I said, "Sometimes we fail to ask some very pertinent questions. And that's one question I should have asked." And I didn't know enough to ask it.

Thomas Cherry: So. Got my training as a hospital corpsman at Balboa Hospital in San Diego. Excellent training. And then first assignment was Oak Knoll, the huge naval hospital in Oakland, California. Was an old hospital dating back to World War Two era where they treated a lot of patients there as a result of injuries in the Pacific and elsewhere during World War Two when they'd bring them back stateside. The beauty of that, I was there 13 months before I got orders to Vietnam. They rotated us through the different services to give us an opportunity to become more independent in the decision-making process of how we're going to treat people.

Thomas Cherry: Spent a lot of time, the doctors there. A lot of them had already been to Vietnam and knew that the way we had been trained at basic training wasn't going to work in a wartime situation, particularly in the extreme heat, and in the elements, we had to deal with in Vietnam. So, they would volunteer their time and do clinics at night, saying, "This is how you were taught. But this is how you need to wrap people, prepare them," particularly for the Medevac flights that were capable of saving, not capable of, but responsible for saving a great many lives during that Vietnam era. The Medevac started in Korea and they were really perfected, that's my opinion, in Vietnam.

Thomas Cherry: So that's how I ended up being – I had to go to Camp Pendleton for Marine training. It was really field medicine training is what they call it.

We dealt with roots, herbs, that were growing wild in Southeast Asian countries, and how to survive, and how to treat without having a lot of, without being in a hospital stateside in the United States. And so that was, as well as getting us whipped into shape physically, because we'd had very cushy jobs stateside in the hospital, and we needed physically to get back in shape if we were going to survive in Vietnam.

Lu Ann Jones: So, what kind of setting were you in in Vietnam?

Thomas Cherry: My battalion, the term is "in the bush," meaning they weren't in a camp anywhere. They were out looking for the Vietcong. They had been attempting that for a year and a half when I got there. The rear, where the company or the battalion echelon was located, was in Phu Bai, in the northern end of the country. I was only there probably two days and one night, just to check out my gear, get my assignment. And then I met the company that I was assigned to just south of Da Nang.

Thomas Cherry: A lot of the areas in Vietnam at that time, because the names were so hard for most of us to pronounce, were given numbers. Such as Hill 55. Which made sense if you looked at the topographical map, but probably didn't make any sense to anyone else. So that's where I met the company. Then I was assigned a platoon.

Thomas Cherry: Each corpsman, if we had a full cadre of staff, each corpsman was responsible for a platoon of Marines. Normally we were short-staffed. So usually, we had a couple of platoons.

Thomas Cherry: My job was out there. Let's see, the first two weeks, we were doing what's called a reactionary force for first recon. The Marines would go out, a couple of scouts would go out, and they were surviving on their own without anyone knowing where they were, what they were redoing. They would spot a contingency of North Vietnamese or Vietcong. They would radio back in. We were seated or lying on a helicopter pad. We would immediately load the helicopter and then they would drop us in on top of the adversary.

Thomas Cherry: So as a corpsman, I was patching people up for rounds coming through the bottom of the chopper and the sides long before we ever hit the ground. So, the good thing about that is we weren't out having to look for the – they were there. I mean, before we got to them, they were there. But we incurred a lot of casualties by doing that. So that particular exercise lasted a couple of weeks.

Thomas Cherry: Then we transitioned to trying to shut down a supply route across from Cambodia. That's when the division commander had the bright idea of us sleeping during the day, when it was about 115 in the shade, and then trying to move as a company size at night in elephant grass that was taller than the ceiling in this room. Needless to say, that didn't work very well.

Thomas Cherry: So, again, my job was when we encountered enemy fire, which was daily, to try to patch up and treat as many of the casualties as I could. Got to give the grid coordinates, get a helicopter in, and get them out.

Lu Ann Jones: So, you were the sole corpsman? You were the sole medical person?

Thomas Cherry: I usually was responsible for a couple of platoons. So, when we were moving as a company, then there was usually at least one other corpsman that also had responsibility for a couple of platoons. But the attrition rate was extremely high. I was there during what they call the Tet Offensive in 1968. That was, the Marines were getting their backside kicked all over the country. No matter where they were, or what they were attempting to do, they were taking very heavy losses. General Westmoreland and others didn't want those casualty numbers reported, particularly back to the American public. But when we'd walk, we would be in columns. One man would be assigned as a point man, meaning to move well forward of the rest of the group, and his life expectancy was usually about 12, maybe 13 hours. And I say that, it didn't mean that he necessarily would be dead, but wounded badly enough that he would have to be Medevacked out, and/or, in several instances, killed.

Thomas Cherry: My company came under fire, heavy fire. We were trying to bring in artillery, to call in artillery to cover us to try to give us some breathing room, because we were pretty much surrounded on three sides with every indication that they were going to close the circle. The bottom line was that the friendly fire, as we called it then, the artillery that we called in, landed on top of us. And so, most of my company, then, was wiped out at that time. Again, from friendly fire. Several others were killed because the landing zone that we, what little bit of landing zone we had left was what we called a hot zone, meaning we couldn't secure it. We didn't have enough people to surround the perimeter to make it safe for the helicopters to come in and land. I'd already called for the Medevac helicopters and was trying to call them off. The first one that came in was shot down. And the second one came in without any lights and was successful in hitting the ground.

Thomas Cherry: In the Marine Corps, you load the bodies first and then every, depending, in order of succession – triage is the dead, the severely wounded, the badly wounded, the minor wounds and then anyone else is on the last bird out. So, we had, I was Medevacked to the army hospital in Da Nang. And then they wanted to operate there. I said I wanted a consult to go to the navy hospital. They agreed that we could wait, that it wasn't something I needed to be operated on right then. Then I was Medevacked to Okinawa, and then back stateside. I was only in Vietnam 34 days. Because if you get hit three times, then that was your ticket home. So, I had been hit two previous times before that last evening that I described.

Lu Ann Jones: Man, just from hearing your description, I assumed you'd been there for 13 months. (laughs)

Thomas Cherry: No.

Lu Ann Jones: You were there for 34 days. Hardly a month.

Thomas Cherry: The two other injuries, one was a piece of shrapnel about six inches long. I took it out of my leg. It was a white-hot burn when it went in. And then I had small pieces of shrapnel in my back and another corpsman took those out in the field. But most of the time our concern with lesser injuries like that was infection more than anything else.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, what was it like to leave that environment? I mean, having had that intense experience?

Thomas Cherry: I asked for, and I was telling some folks, it's interesting, someone asked me at noon today. I usually, I very seldom talk about Vietnam. I don't have fond memories of that. Psychiatrists, clinical psychologists are just now recognizing that maybe blocking things out isn't as bad as what they said it was for years. The philosophy or treatment that they were recommending is you have to be open; you have to talk about it. The more you talk about it, the more comfortable you get, the less anxiety, the less stress. My coping mechanism was take it and park it all the way back here and forget about it.

Thomas Cherry: But you ask a legitimate question. When I got to Okinawa, I was being treated as an outpatient. Being observed. And again, trying to decide on the need or not for surgery. Any of us that were ambulatory and capable of working, well, they said, "We have need for you in the dispensary. We're short-staffed there as well." I said, "That's fine." The corpsmen there were bemoaning the fact that they had to spend every other night in the dispensary to be on call. We had a local Okinawan that was hired as an ambulance driver, and he was there all night, but had to have a corpsman to go with him. And I said, "I'll take your duty in the dispensary. If you think you're overworked and underappreciated," I said, "that's fine with me." The Quonset hut was air conditioned, right? You could have a radio. There was a small movie theater on base where you could check out a radio and go to the theater and sit in the back. And then if there was a call, just exit out the back of the theater. I thought that was great! You'd still go to the chow hall and get something to eat. You weren't, you didn't have to – so whenever anyone didn't want to work in the dispensary, I raised my hand. I said, you know what? Nobody's shooting at me here. This is just fine with me. (laughs) I'm very comfortable here. I'm far more comfortable here.

Thomas Cherry: So, I asked to have my orders changed. Instead of going back stateside, I said, "I'm here. I'm more than willing to serve out my 13 months tour that should have been in Vietnam. I'll serve the remaining portion of it right here in Okinawa. Fine with me." They said, "No. You're headed back stateside." So typical of the military, you know, that's the way it's going to be. And that's what we did.

Thomas Cherry: So, I ended up at the naval hospital in Millington, just north of Memphis. I walked in the door and they said, "We have openings in our outpatient clinic. You'll be treating dependents, active duty military, officer and enlisted." Fine. And they said, "But the one clinic where we really need someone is the dermatology clinic. What do you know about dermatology?"

Thomas Cherry: I said, well, everything we treated in Vietnam was either foot rot, or immersion foot is truly what it was, because the feet stayed so terribly wet all the time, wading in the rice paddies. Or some kind of fungal infection that none of us knew what the origin was. We treated it with Desenex and Tinactin, because that's all we had. So, I said, "That's the extent of my dermatological education." And they said, "Fine, that's good. That's where you go."

Thomas Cherry: I was really lucky because I had a young doctor that was paying back his time to the military because they had helped support him through med school. So, he owed the military X number of years in return. He was very patient. Had slides, sat down, spent a lot of time with me, teaching me. It got to the point where between the two of us, we could split up the patients and we were seeing sometimes 40 and 45 patients a day. And I loved it. It was great. And we were making a lot of headway with dependent kids that had severe cases of acne. I don't mean a pimple or two. I mean huge craters that were terribly infected. We made progress.

Thomas Cherry: And of course, typical of the military, he rotates out. A new dermatologist comes in and says, "Here, we're not treating acne anymore, no matter how severe it is. Just give them this piece of paper that says don't eat chocolates, don't eat soda, get plenty of sleep and you'll be fine when you get through adolescence." I said, "I can't do that." He said, "What do you mean? I'm in charge." I said, "I know that. Then I need to go elsewhere, because I can't face these kids that we've been treating."

Thomas Cherry: So, the ENT clinic was right down the hall. They had a new audiogram ordered. So, I took time off. Went into Memphis and enrolled in a bell school to train audiologists and became an audiologist. And then when the new machine arrived, I was the only audiologist there, so I was assigned that task.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow. So, you stayed in the navy for four years.

Thomas Cherry: Mm hmm.

Lu Ann Jones: And when you were anticipating getting out, what were you thinking of doing?

Thomas Cherry: Well, from Memphis, I really thought that I would spend the rest of my tour there. I think I would have, but I got orders to Independent Duty School. And an order for me to take those orders. That was, I believe, independent duty at that time, I think was eight and a half or maybe 10

months long. As a result of that, I would have had to extend my enlistment another two years, that payback time for the military.

Thomas Cherry: I told the chief of personnel, I said, "Sir, I'm not going to do that. I made up my mind some time ago, when I enlisted, four years and I'm out the door. I mean, nothing against your military, right? But that's it."

Thomas Cherry: He said, "You need to think about that." He said, "I'm not very happy with you because these are name orders. Came from the Bureau of Medicine in Washington." And he said, "I can't give these orders to somebody else on staff." In other words, they didn't have a list that okay, I turned it down, mark through my name and go to someone else. He said, "You need to go home and think about that. Because you're not going to want to suffer the ramifications of what's going to occur if you don't do that."

Thomas Cherry: So, I said, "Okay." So, I went home that night. I already knew what my decision was. Went back the next morning. And he said, "Have you thought about it?" I said, "Well, no more than I really intended to." "Well, what's your response?" I said, "No. I'm not taking the orders." He said, "Then I'm going to send you someplace that's going to be one of the worst duty stations you have ever been in your entire life." And I said, "No, you cannot send me back to Vietnam. That's the worst place I've ever been. So, whatever you can come up with, I'll make it through. Do what you've got to do."

Thomas Cherry: The orders came and I was assigned to independent duty without going to independent duty school. I was assigned to independent duty in Norfolk, Virginia, teaching counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare in the SERE training for both navy and Marine officer and enlisted. That's the best duty I've ever had in my life.

Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) What did you know about that when you got there?

Thomas Cherry: Nothing. Only because of my experience in having to deal with trauma in Vietnam. I mean, we were certainly operating independent of any position there. So, we worked in a clinic at Little Creek, at the amphibious base. We had SEAL teams assigned there. We had UDT teams assigned there. The duty that we would do with them was only during training exercises, and then we would have to take a group of students to the field, usually every other week. You live in the DC area. Camp Pickett or Camp Hill were the two old World War Two army posts that we used for the field exercise where we would actually run them, keep them up all night, deprive them of food, then throw them in a prisoner of war compound. Through a combination of hard and soft interrogation, show them how quickly their entire infrastructure can fall apart.

Thomas Cherry: It was training that was desperately needed at that time. And I was, I wished from the first time I saw the exercises and took part in those that I had gone through something like that or been afforded the opportunity

before I went to Vietnam. But I enjoyed that. And really, my main task was no different than it had been. Except I had a huge medical box now, about the size of that bed. So, I had a lot more things available to me than I did in Vietnam, with a small pack called a Unit One that I carried with me in the field.

Thomas Cherry: We had access to two army dispensaries, one at each of those posts. They were not staffed with doctors. And so actually when we would take a group of our navy students, navy and Marine Corps students up, we would hold sick call on dependents and active-duty army while we were there. They had their medics that were X-ray techs, pharmacy techs, lab techs. But they couldn't diagnose and treat. We could. So, we would write the scripts and write up the charts and say, "Thank you very much." And that's usually how we would – we'd take our students up on Saturday morning and that's usually how we spent Saturday afternoon, because our exercises really started early on Sunday morning. We gave the students a chance to get a false feeling of security that well this is just like a campout. Well it became much more than that.

[END OF TRACK 2]

[START OF TRACK 3]

Thomas Cherry: And then when we would put the students in the prisoner of war compound after chasing them for a day and a half or so and harassing them, then my primary task once they were in the prisoner of war compound was to make sure that the instructors didn't get carried away with the hard interrogation. Some of them would get into their role too heavily, and then we'd end up with broken limbs. That's human nature. I mean, the group that was assigned to do that level of training had to do psychological testing every quarter. (laughs) Not every year. It was to try to cut down on the number of incidents where we had people injured.

Thomas Cherry: So, it was a wonderful duty. That was the last eight and a half months. I enjoyed medicine tremendously. I knew that I wasn't smart enough to be a doctor. I knew that I did not want to be a nurse. I would not be comfortable in that role. Nixon had a manpower cutback in 1970, cutting back on the numbers, because Vietnam had started to dramatically shrink in our commitment by that time.

Thomas Cherry: They called me, and they said, "We're letting people up to three months early. You're eligible to depart then. If you want to take advantage of that, you can leave in June. Pick a date in June." I said, "How about June the first?"

Thomas Cherry: The first thing I thought of is, this was in the spring. And I thought now what am I going to do all summer, because now I'm ready to go back to school. Now I'm ready to apply myself. I have a little different attitude towards life than I did before. If nothing else, I'd matured. Not fully matured, but I'd matured more than I was before I went in.

Thomas Cherry: First thing I thought of was going back to Yellowstone because I'd worked the blister rust crew at Canyon Village in Yellowstone in 1964.

Lu Ann Jones: Oh, I didn't pick that up.

Thomas Cherry: And I had a great time.

Lu Ann Jones: So, what was that like?

Thomas Cherry: You know, it was arduous. It was extremely physical, and yet it was a great bunch of guys. People that I still correspond with or contact periodically. Dan Sholly, if that name rings a bell with you.

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm.

Thomas Cherry: Thought it might. Dan was our chief ranger when we had such a thing in Washington, and then became chief ranger in Yellowstone. But Dan was on the same blister rust crew out of Canyon Village.

Lu Ann Jones: So, I'm not—

Thomas Cherry: You're not familiar with blister rust?

Lu Ann Jones: No.

Thomas Cherry: Okay. Blister rust is a disease of the white pine that it started in Canada, had moved down through a portion of Glacier and through Montana and was just starting in Yellowstone. What it was doing was killing the trees. It actually, it was a parasite. Would start on the tree and it was non-detectable. I mean, visually, you couldn't see it. It would go to this bush. And we shortened it to ribe bush. Its biological name was like this long, right? Don't ask me to spell it or pronounce it, because I don't know. I would show my complete ignorance. Then it would spend a period of time on the bush. Then it would go back to the tree and it would actually cause like a chancre sore, an opening in the bark. And then the sap would all bleed out. And also make it at the time it was bleeding out, make it more susceptible to infestation.

Thomas Cherry: So, we were to go in and eradicate the bushes that played host to the disease. The contention was, if it has no place to go to thrive before it goes back and actually kills it, then we can eliminate the disease. And what made it so arduous and physical is we were doing it, it was a very rugged terrain where we had no access with trails, much less, roads. And so a lot of your time was spent at higher altitudes looking for these bushes and then digging them up, removing all the dirt from the root system, finding a rock or a boulder to put them on so the sun would finish them off.

Thomas Cherry: We had spray crews at that time that would spray the bushes. And the terrible thing about that is, is that the chemicals that we used were almost the same as Agent Orange, which is what we did a lot of spraying in Vietnam with. We know the ill effects that that's had on the health of a lot of soldiers that served in Vietnam. And we're seeing some of that now on the part of some of the crews that worked there, and particularly what we

called the spray crew. They had the backpack metal tanks with the snorkel hose and a sprayer that they would go through and spray the bushes. The idea of it, of course, was it was speedier than going in and actually digging up and eradicating the bush. Just spray it and then it would kill it off.

Lu Ann Jones: How did you get that job in the first place?

Thomas Cherry: I thought I wanted to go to Washington, DC between my freshman and sophomore year. And I took a clerk/typist exam to be a summer seasonal in DC. And I flunked it miserably. I was in Oklahoma City going to school. I had an old typewriter that I borrowed from my dad's business that weighed about 10 tons. One of these old uprights. An old Royal typewriter. We were supposed to bring our own typewriter to do the test. It was in the federal building downtown. And I was running late. Had to park several blocks away. Grabbed this typewriter. And then when I got to the building, the elevator was busy, and I ran up four flights of stairs. I walk in and plop the typewriter down. At that time, the instructor from, the person monitoring the testing, said, "Start." And I'm in the back doing this, trying to get feeling back in my lower extremities so I can even feel my fingers to get started. That's no excuse. I was not that good a typist. I would imagine even if I'd been there 30 minutes early, I would have probably still flunked the typist exam because it had to be not only words per minute, but then with only X number of mistakes.

Thomas Cherry: So, when that fell through, then I called my congressman. I said, "Have you got any options for me?"

Thomas Cherry: At that time, the gentleman that later became the speaker of the House, Carl Albert, was the congressman from my home district in Oklahoma. And he said, "Well, Tom," he said, "I think there's some jobs still available at Yellowstone." I said, "Well, I wanted to come to Washington, DC." He said, "I can't show anybody your test results. Nobody's going to hire you here." He said, "If you want a job with the government, you're going to need to go to Yellowstone."

Thomas Cherry: I said, what the heck, you know. So, I rode a train from southeastern Oklahoma to Kansas City to Minneapolis/Saint Paul, across the Dakotas to Livingston, Montana. And then a bus down to Yellowstone. And I loved it. It was beautiful.

Thomas Cherry: That's the reason I say when I thought well, what am I going to do for the summer now that I'm getting out early, and I hadn't planned on getting out till mid-September, what am I going to do? Go back to Yellowstone. That was, to me that was another one of those escapes. Kind of like parking things back here [in my mind].

Thomas Cherry: So again, I made a phone call, because it was late in the game. That was long before the centralized hiring system. So, you applied directly to the park. And it was a handwritten form. You had to include a photograph, because they told you they wanted, for park rangers, they wanted men,

young men, young men that were clean-shaven, no mustache. Haircut cropped and looked good in uniforms. And that as on the application.

Lu Ann Jones: They said that.

Thomas Cherry: Yes, ma'am. Verbatim. Uh huh. And don't show up here looking – we want to see a photograph, and that's what we want you to look like when you show up.

Thomas Cherry: But I would have never gotten that job without his assistance, you know that, one of the aides in his office assisted in that endeavor. And I was assigned to the west entrance in Yellowstone. And the idea of being a seasonal ranger, you had to pay your penance time at a gate. And the beauty of it was, you were forced to learn a lot about the park in a very short time. They gave me a manual, a loose-leaf binder that was probably six inches thick. You were supposed to read it that night and be ready to respond the next morning to 100 different questions that might be somewhere in that book. Not leaf through it. And that was great. I mean, it served its purpose. And I understood that.

Thomas Cherry: So, I thought well, I'll work the season at the west gate. It's busy. That's fine. And then I'll go back to school. Old Faithful was losing a lot of their law enforcement protection rangers at that time because a lot of them are schoolteachers. Each year the window of availability for schoolteachers would shrink because the school districts, depending on what part of the country, wanted them back sooner than later to prepare for the next school year.

Thomas Cherry: So Old Faithful was going to be short of personnel. They called and said, "Would you extend the season? You said, you know, you think you'd like to do this."

Thomas Cherry: I said, "Sure." I said, "Let me continue to live—" I shared a home at the west entrance with three, maybe four other guys, and I said, "Give me a patrol car. I'll commute on my own time to and from. You have extra road coverage. I'll do whatever patrol shifts you want me to do at Old Faithful."

Thomas Cherry: They said fine, and that lasted about a week. Then they said, "Move to Old Faithful." So, I worked late in the season. I think I worked through maybe early October, mid-October, maybe. And so needless to say, I had missed going back to school the first semester, so I had to defer that.

Thomas Cherry: But the nice thing about it, Lu Ann, is I had made enough money working there and saving some. Not a lot, but some. And that and the GI Bill, even a private school, I could go to and I didn't have to work. I knew academically that I had to devote my full time and attention to hitting the books, which is something I'd never done, if I was going to make this thing work. That's when I said, you know, I really like this rangering stuff. I think it's pretty neat, and I love Yellowstone. But I know how difficult, I've already been told how difficult it is to get into this organization. And

what I need is to major in something to have a fall back. If my idea of what I want to do for a vocation doesn't pan out, I need to be able to subsist myself and make a living. So that's the whole reason for the business management major. Does that make sense?

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. It does. Well so you ended up going back to Yellowstone for five seasons. Is that right?

Thomas Cherry: Mm hmm.

Lu Ann Jones: Did what you do change over time?

Thomas Cherry: Oh, yeah. Well, I was still, we called it law enforcement. It was, law enforcement was a necessary evil at that time with the park service, and that's continued through the years. But the neat thing about Old Faithful is we were extremely busy. Huge turnover by the hour of people in and out. A lot of different things to do. And you never knew from one day to the next what kind of traumatic injury you were going to have. Multi-car automobile accidents. People mauled by a grizzly bear. I mean, we ran the whole gamut. And truly, you had to be a jack of all trades and a master of none. And because of my interest in emergency medical service, it was terrible. I mean, we were losing lives because we had no equipment to work with and nobody was trained. But this was the early '70s, and EMT standards were just on the cusp of being approved by a limited number of states at that time. So, we had a little first aid kit, a miniature bottle of oxygen that was just about that size if you combine those two.

Lu Ann Jones: Ten inches high?

Thomas Cherry: Yeah. And it was buried somewhere in the back of the patrol car, along with firefighting tools and rope and everything else. And when you opened the first aid kit, there was maybe some Band-Aids, some Merthiolate. It was terrible. And I said, we shouldn't be operating like this. And that was in '71.

Thomas Cherry: And Bud Estey was the chief ranger in Yellowstone. So, I go storming up to Mammoth. And I say, "Bud, this is terrible. We're losing lives." And he said, "What are you talking about? Losing lives?" I said, "There are people we can save. And we need to be doing that. The public has a faith and trust in us, right or wrong, this false sense of security when they come to a national park. I mean, we're going to take care of them, right? And we're not doing that." "Oh, Tom, you know, it's been this way for years."

Thomas Cherry: I said, "Well, that's BS. It shouldn't be this way for years." I said, "If you give me some time and money, I can train some of these rangers. I can give them basic training. And let me buy some equipment, some resuscitators, for instance. And let me outfit some decent sized first aid kits and get some good-sized oxygen units, and we can do some business." "Oh, Tom," he says, "our budgets are figured five years out. We don't have any money like that."

Thomas Cherry: I said, "Bud, on top of that," well, Mr. Estey, I didn't call him Bud, I knew better than that. I shouldn't even state that. No, it was with due respect. Because I already knew the man was extremely irritated with me even suggesting that. I said, "Our sedan deliveries," we were running Matadors and Ambassadors by American Motors. And those sedan deliveries were a shrunk down version of a station wagon. They weren't a sedan; they weren't a station wagon. But in the back, you only had this much room. And if we put somebody in, even on a stretcher, there wasn't room to crawl in on top of them and try to do compressions for CPR because you didn't fit in that void, so we would throw them in without a stretcher. And still, we were angling on the chest and not getting the compressions we need. I shouldn't hit the microphone. I'm sorry.

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

Thomas Cherry: I know better than that. And then I would hook up an IV. That wasn't provided, I'd been over to the hospital and talked them out of IV solution and IV hookups. And I could start the IV. But because the ceiling was this far, the blood would start coming back out of the arm and infiltrating back up here instead of the IV solution coming into the arm like it should be.

Thomas Cherry: So, I was describing all this to him. And I said, "If you give me vans. If you just buy vans with two seats in the front, we can build cabinet work in the back. We can put a couple of stretchers in, and the beauty of this is we can get in the back and we can do some work. We can save some lives."

Thomas Cherry: He said, "Tom," he said, "you know, people come to Yellowstone." And he said, "Some of them travel 150 miles and they don't even see a gas station." He said, "They don't really have a right to expect the same emergency medical service in a park, a remote, isolated park like Yellowstone, like they do back home, say, in New Jersey." And I looked at him and I said, "Are you serious?"

Thomas Cherry: He said, "Yeah." He says, "It just doesn't happen that way." And he was looking at the clock on the wall. His face was getting a little redder as I would start at him each time. Then he said, he said, "Let's play a game." He said, and these aren't his exact terms. He said, "Let me be the devil's advocate," thinking back on Mr. Estey, that's probably what he would say. He said, "Let's say I have the money and I give you the time to train the people. How much time do you need, and how much money?"

Thomas Cherry: Well, with my behavior style, I hadn't done, Lu Ann, I hadn't done my homework. I hadn't taken a pen or a pencil or anything to a piece of paper. I couldn't answer that question. Shame on me. I should have been able to answer that question.

Thomas Cherry: And he said, "Okay, if you don't have those for me," he said, "then answer this. You tell me we're losing lives. If you had this equipment, and if I had let you have the time to train these, how many lives could you have saved?"

Thomas Cherry: Well, again, I didn't have an answer. So, in my zest, zeal, my enthusiasm, "If I could just save one life, sir, that's enough." Right? One's good enough for me. Right? Well, that wasn't his, that didn't match his behavior style, and it wasn't the answer he needed to hear. So, he said, "Are you on the clock?" I believe is the way he said it. And I said, "Yes, sir."

Thomas Cherry: He said, "Well then, I think our conversation's over, and I think you need to head back to Old Faithful." And he said, "While you're driving back down there," he said, "think about this." He said, "So they come here, and they have a heart attack, or they have a traumatic injury, and they die." He said, "Can you think of a better place to go meet your maker?"

Thomas Cherry: With that, I turned and exited, right? (Lu Ann Jones laughs) And I said, I'm going to battle this man as long as it takes. And eventually we're going to have something that we can save lives with. Now that tells you how intelligent I am. Because here I am a seasonal employee, just into my second year as a park ranger, challenging the chief ranger of Yellowstone and making him extremely mad at me, and I'm trying to get a permanent job with the outfit, right? That's my inevitable goal. So that tells you something about my intellect, doesn't it? (laughter) You see what I mean? There are many times, Lu Ann, in my career where I was lacking tact, diplomacy. If I'd been more like a Walt Dabney, I would have probably had a far different, I would have had a far different approach. I would have been much better organized, and I would have probably been far more successful.

Thomas Cherry: So, in essence, we did everything we could locally there. I even brought an ambulance in from outside the park. The Livingston Clinic had the medical service contract. And I went to them and they had an old '53 Cadillac ambulance parked in a barn in Livingston, Montana. Covered with hay. Flat tires all the way around. They pulled it out, put it on a wrecker, tuned it up, put new radial tires and we brought it into the park. I had a schedule of off-duty rangers that drove it. And then because the Livingston Clinic had the contract for the medical service throughout the park, then they would bill the patient for whatever supplies and materials that we used because we were re-outfitted from the hospital once we got them there. Then we could pick up a nurse at any of the clinics to accompany us if we knew the nature or the severity of the trauma, the injury, or in the case, many times, a heart attack.

Thomas Cherry: And that made him extremely mad. I understood that and I knew to anticipate that. But in fairness to him, the next year he got vans. He was able to shift some of the money and bought the vans at Norm Dodge. And some of the other rangers up at Mammoth in the wintertime, through design work that we had done, built, literally built the cabinets in the back. We had them set up so that the stretcher brackets in the back, we could slide it out and we could meet another ambulance from another district and shift and all the equipment was the same, so it was all interchangeable.

And if you were in one, and you knew where these bandages were, or where the IV solution was, then that's where they were in the other one. So, we had the uniformity and consistency. It was beautiful. It was like night and day.

Thomas Cherry: But again, had I had a different approach, had I been willing to do some time doing homework, at least I wouldn't have made the man nearly as mad as I made him. But he never fired me, but I'm sure he thought about it. We all know he could have, as a seasonal. That would have been very easy.

Lu Ann Jones: Well how much of your time were you spending on things like emergency medicine versus law enforcement activities?

Thomas Cherry: You know, it was such a mix. And I haven't really thought about the percentages. Because Old Faithful stayed so busy because at that time, the concept on the part of a lot of the public was, okay, we've traveled 1800 miles and now we're here to see Yellowstone, but we only have two hours. And we drove in the east entrance, and how long does it take to get to Old Faithful, and when does it go off? We'll stand here and watch it. And then we're back in the car and we're gone again. And it was all the things that would happen to them in between.

Thomas Cherry: You know, I don't know that I spent any more time on, other than the training, because then during this period of time, the couple years it took us to get that, now states were starting to standardize requirements for ambulance crews, and the level of training, the number of hours of training. And certainly, they didn't give me that time to spend with the rangers. Mine was a down and dirty, cursory, whatever I could steal, timewise. But it was the basics.

Thomas Cherry: So, I think, and then even fire, because we did the structural firefighting. We had a small Jeep that had the slip-on pumper that we did small wildland fire. We were also engaged at that same time in trying to establish designated back country campsites. Because prior to that, they'd come in to get a back-country permit, we would map out a route for them, hopefully based on their level of expertise and their ability. But we would not specify, it would just be, they would be camping somewhere along the trail if they made it six miles, eight miles or ten miles on that day. So, we saw the need because we would go back in then along the trails, and here's a fire ring here, a burn area here, trash here, garbage over here. And we realized that we were a contributing factor to what was going on in the back country.

Thomas Cherry: At the same time, is when we decided to deal directly with the bear, and bear management issues. We were closing down all the dumps, making them sanitary landfills, installing what we called "bear-proof" garbage cans. We were trapping and tranquilizing bears. Slinging them under helicopters or taking them in one of those big culvert traps back into the

back country, releasing them, letting them get a chance to re-adapt to a natural food source.

Thomas Cherry: So that's why I say there was just a mix, a hodgepodge of whatever we were doing, whatever needed to be done at that time. We rotated doing horse patrol, both in the congested areas and in the parking lots, because it gave us the visibility, being up on the back of that critter, or also patrolling some in the back country. We would rotate, those of us that had had some experience riding horses, would rotate doing that task as well

Thomas Cherry: Later on, there became designated back country patrol rangers. But out of Old Faithful, it was just one thing. We had the critters up there and then somebody had to feed them, muck the stall, and take care of removing the residue, right? (Lu Ann Jones laughs) So there really were a lot of different things. I mean, jack of all trades and master of none. But that's what made the job so challenging and interesting for the majority of us. Because it wasn't routine and mundane.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah. Well, what kind of law enforcement training did you get once you got to the park service?

Thomas Cherry: Whatever piecemeal, whichever district was doing a two-day in-service and was bringing an FBI agent or someone in from the outside. There was no standard for seasonals. There wasn't such a thing at that time as a seasonal law enforcement training academy. If we had an opportunity during that off season when we were back home and we could get into a local sheriff's office for whatever training they were doing for their officers, or a local police department, then we would record that. Date, time, who the instructor was. And then if anyone were to look at our certifications, it was whatever we could piece together. That was certainly, as you know, not a way to do professional law enforcement.

Thomas Cherry: We had some very stringent requirements. And when I said it was just not only, not using that term, but the weapon was issued. We weren't to wear the weapon during the day. It was to be in the glove compartment or a briefcase. It was not to be seen by the public. It would be intrusive or intimidating to them, threatening to them. If we wore it at night, a parka had to cover the weapon, so it was not visible. Which also meant it was harder than heck to get if you needed it.

Thomas Cherry: So, they seemed to tolerate the number of traffic citations, and we wrote quite a few of those. Again, because the amount of traffic we had into and out of Old Faithful. I don't remember hearing about the number of citations and the fact that we were writing too many. I don't remember that being an issue. But we had some excellent leadership, too, in the form of, very thankful for the people that you work under there, that gave us a great deal of latitude to make those decisions as to how you were going, whether you were going to handle this at the lowest level or the next level or the next one. But it seemed like at Old Faithful, you worked for a different, at that time it was a sub-district, now, I think, it's a district, but

that's neither, it's all semantics. But Jim Brady and Jim Fox, worked under him. And then behind, I'm trying to think. Oh, Jerry Tays came behind Jim.

Lu Ann Jones: What's his last name?

Thomas Cherry: Jerry Tays. T-a-y-s. Jerry Tays was only at Old Faithful a few months.

[END OF TRACK 3]

[START OF TRACK 4]

Thomas Cherry: And he had worked on the upper reach of Glen Canyon and had done a lot of boat patrol up there because of the remote part of the canyon. That would have been in '72. We hosted the World Conference on Ecology at that time. And we were having, what, the Bicentennial as well, and so a lot of dignitaries coming to Yellowstone on almost a weekly basis. Pat Nixon came out that fall. Jerry Tays went to one of the receptions. They had moved whatever activities down to the Tetons, to Jackson Lake Lodge. And Jerry and maybe Dale Nuss, who was over on the Lake District, was the district ranger there, I don't know how many went down to this formal dinner, down at Jackson Lake Lodge. But he ran into [George] Hartzog. And Hartzog said, "Son, I like you. I like your attitude. You're coming back to Washington with me."

Thomas Cherry: Jerry said, "I just got to Old Faithful." He said, "I'm in the middle right now of buying a winter's worth of groceries because I'm going to be wintering in Old Faithful."

Thomas Cherry: Mr. Hartzog said, "Did you not hear what I said? I'm the director of this outfit, and I said you're coming to Washington, and besides that, you're a pretty sharp fellow and you're going to be in legislative affairs." And then he told him what the GS grade was with that job.

Thomas Cherry: Jerry said, "I'm not half that grade. I'm not even eligible for that grade, because I just got a promotion to come to Old Faithful." He said, "I got the promotion on paper, but I don't have the check yet."

Thomas Cherry: Hartzog said, "I don't care. You're coming back and this is the job you're filling." (laughter)

Thomas Cherry: He was pretty, he was pretty set in his ways, and let people know who was in charge. And he was. He was the man.

Thomas Cherry: So, Jerry came back and said, "Well, I won't be spending much time with you folks. I'm out of here." And that's what he did.

Thomas Cherry: Oh, gee, the fellow that then came after him was Marv Miller. Marv is now dead. The one that came after him was Vern Hurt. All of them, I'm not sure that I would have had the faith and trust, particularly in seasonal employees, that they were willing to show, and the latitude that they gave us to take care of situations and make decisions. That also, I think, added to my being enamored with the job and feeling that this is something I

wanted to do. Because I had a lot of great experience, a lot of very good experiences, with what I construed to be very good leadership. That just reinforces a lot of what we try to tell people today in the leadership training is you know; your people that leave you don't leave the job they leave because of poor supervision. I said, "All the exit interviews bear this out. That's not me making this up." So why should you run them off? It takes too much time, effort and energy to recruit and train the people and get them onboard, and even get them up to an average performance level. Why do you want them to leave? That doesn't serve your purpose.

Thomas Cherry: So, the park service has given me examples, good examples to use and bad ones. You know, I've worked for some very frustrating bosses, some very intelligent bosses, extremely intelligent people that were unwilling to make a decision. Particularly at the Washington level. That I refer to as the city of madness. That was my term. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) So when I was down at FLETC [Federal Law Enforcement Training Center], I was a Washington Office employee. Even though geographically we were part of the Southeast Region.

Thomas Cherry: But that was probably as far as training down there, and you're leading this and I'm jumping ahead. But training, we needed to improve our basic training program. I had a great interest in that because of the training that I had not received. Not because of the wonderful training I had, and I said, we need to take it all up to here. it was all this that I didn't get. We were training rangers in law enforcement and literally sending them back to a lot of these very small parks where they were going to be the lone ranger. There was no one there to mentor, teach, train, advise, in the realm of law enforcement. They were going to have to walk in the door and start doing that task on their own, and sometimes under some very unsafe conditions. So that was my objective, was try to see how much we can improve. And as a result of that, it extended our basic training. Each time we would make what we felt was an improvement, well that meant more time.

Thomas Cherry: So, supervisors, managers and superintendents in the park are saying, "What in the world are you doing to me?" Right? "I hire somebody, I think I've got a vacancy filled, and then I have to send them to FLETC for a year." Exaggeration. But a long time. And, "I need my functioning employee back here."

Thomas Cherry: Most of them, the majority of them, had spent their pittance time as seasonals, like most of us did at that time. After listening to some of the dialog in that meeting yesterday morning, that's still going on today. You know, I spent eight years, 10 years, why am I not part of the outfit yet?

Thomas Cherry: But that was our attempt. Then we got involved and engaged because Ranger Activities Office agreed to include us in a lot of the law enforcement policy realm. And it made sense, because it had to tie into the qualifications of the individuals as well as the certifications, as well as the training. It just seemed to make sense and fit.

Thomas Cherry: But after I spent the five long summer seasons and then the winter at Old Faithful. I was told in a visitors' center at Old Faithful that winter by someone from Washington that was making the circuit and wanted to see the park and come in by snowmobile. And they were one of the deputies and I don't remember the name and that's immaterial. But there were several of us as seasonals that had been selected, chosen, to spend the winter in Yellowstone, right?

Thomas Cherry: So, we said, when we found out about the visit, we said, "Well, could you arrange it so they're down here at Old Faithful?" That's the second year the snow lodge was available and had housing available and meals at Old Faithful. That was the second winter for that. We said, "Could you arrange for the visit so they could possibly spend the night at Old Faithful? We'd like to have some time, we'd like to ask them questions like, 'What about us? When's our turn?'" Much the same as like I say you were hearing yesterday morning.

Thomas Cherry: So, we asked, you know, one said, "I've been here six years." Another one, seven. And whatever. "When am I going to get a permanent job?"

Thomas Cherry: Right back in our face was, "Wait a minute. We have given you one of the most beautiful places on the face of this earth to work. We allow you to come here as our employee and we pay you to be here. And you get out on the trails and you can get in the back country. You know of places to go and see and use and enjoy that the public has no knowledge of. And, no. There is no guarantee. In fact, there's every likelihood you'll never be hired. So why don't you just take advantage of the opportunity and color yourself good?"

Thomas Cherry: That was a (slapping noise) wham! Whoa! But it was a reality shock that probably a lot of us needed to hear. I mean, we honestly thought we knew others that had put in their time year after year and eventually they had been able to break through.

Thomas Cherry: And I was on a register, an OPM [Office of Personnel Management] register, out of Sacramento. And hoping that because of the number of people that had transferred from Yellowstone to Yosemite at that time – Yosemite had become Yellowstone west, I mean, staffing wise. A lot of people. And I thought well, maybe a job would open up in Yosemite, and they could reach me on a register there.

Thomas Cherry: But I got a call from the Corps of Engineers offering me a park ranger job. And I didn't, again, in my ignorance, just like with the Marines or the navy, I didn't know which questions to ask. I never knew the Corps of Engineers even had park rangers. And honestly, at that time in the mid '70s, they had more park rangers than the National Park Service. Nationwide.

Lu Ann Jones: How about that?

Thomas Cherry: Because of the number of lake projects. But they did not embrace law enforcement. They gave their rangers citation authority only. The lady from personnel called me and she says, "We're offering you the one thing you're after, which is a career job. It's a competitive job off of a register. We know that's what you want, that's what you need because you've been seasonal. Do not expect us to train you. We're hiring you because of the experience and the background you have from your application working in Yellowstone. So we're hiring you, giving you what you want, which is your foot in the door into the federal system, and we know that as soon as you get an opportunity, there's every likelihood you're going to leave us and go back to the park service. So, don't be looking for us to train you and spend a lot of money. We want you to come here and work and use your experience and your background. Now, do you want the job?"

Thomas Cherry: I thought well, that was refreshing. I mean they're open, they're honest, they're above board. And I thought under those conditions I would be very foolish not to take that.

Thomas Cherry: So, we moved to Sonora, California. On the Melones project on the Stanislaus River. And I ended up not only just getting the career status, which would have been good for three years rehire. But I spent over three years, three years and two months, which meant I had completed my probationary period. So technically I would have had rehire rights from then on.

Thomas Cherry: Then I was fortunate to get back into the, I call it back into the park service, even though I really wasn't in it, technically, at Cape Cod. So that's the assignment to Cape Cod, and then the transition from the Corps to the Cape.

Lu Ann Jones: Well you said you weren't technically in the park service? What do you mean by that, if you were on Cape—

Thomas Cherry: Well, no, no. I wasn't technically in the park service when I was a seasonal in Yellowstone.

Lu Ann Jones: Oh, yes. Right.

Thomas Cherry: And yet I was saying, my narrow outlook, I was getting back to the agency that I wanted to work for all along. And yet I had never really been part of it, other than a seasonal. Does that make any sense?

Lu Ann Jones: Yes, yes. Now I see what you're talking about. What did you think of that transition from one coast to the next?

Thomas Cherry: I, again, I was fortunate. In California I was working for the project engineer that was building the dam. He was an Engineer with a big capital "E." That was his job, that was what he was going to do. It was his last project before retiring. He wanted nothing to do with recreation. In fact, he said, "I don't want any complaints. I don't want you in here bothering my office personnel. Anything you need done; you need to do it. I don't want you using my procurement system to order anything. If you need it, you

go down to the local hardware store. We'll pay for it. But we're not going to take up our GS system for those little superfluous things that you need in the way of power tools or hand tools at the campground." He said, "We'll make out our budget in pencil." And I remember that. It was on a legal pad. He said, "We'll sit right here at the desk. You tell me what you think your needs are for the year. And we're doing it in pencil because if you run out and you've mis-calibrated, come in here and we'll erase it and we'll adjust it accordingly. And it probably means you'll need more, and that's fine. But I don't want to hear any complaints. You take care of the recreation end, and I'm on the—"

Thomas Cherry: These were simply very primitive, temporary sites along the parameter of the old lake that would be inundated when the new dam was complete, and upstream on the river, for the white water rafting that occurred there, primarily in the spring.

Thomas Cherry: The beauty of this was that the Corps of Engineers had, to me, more money than I had ever imagined. I mean, when I was in Yellowstone, just like dealing with Mr. Estey, there never seemed to be money for anything, right? And we were pinching every penny till old Abe just screamed. And then the analogy I use is them with the Corps of Engineers, it's almost like they were dealing hundred-dollar bills. Now they weren't burning hundred-dollar bills, but they just had a great deal of money in their budget. Recreation was a sideline, something they had been forced into and not something they really wanted to engage in, and yet they had this cadre of rangers throughout a lot of their projects and on the east and west coast, some in the Midwest, that had to have some level of support.

Thomas Cherry: But the project manager at actually the closest lake that was a fully functioning project, he was my boss in name, I guess, because he's actually the one that wrote my evaluation, even though I very seldom saw him. And the money came from the funding at the dam site. Not d-a-m-n, d-a-m site.

Thomas Cherry: So again, I was given a great deal of latitude and, I'm sure, to make a lot of mistakes, which I did. But they were very honest when they said – and they let me, they let me deal with their design people there to set up what would then be the new campgrounds, the picnic areas, the boat-launching ramps, all along the perimeter of the new lake, and well downstream for several miles, about 50 miles downstream from the lake. And that was nice. That was nice to be part of a planning process, particularly coming from Yellowstone. I mean, all of that was going to stay the way it was. They were not going to be that, some changes, like the Clover Leaf Loop that the Department of Transportation engineered outside of Old Faithful, and parking lots. But for the most part, Old Faithful was Old Faithful. I know there's been construction since then. But it was nice to be part the, to have a say in some of the planning process as well.

Thomas Cherry: So, I really didn't regret the time, that three years I spent there. And then, the big thing was, it gave me an opportunity to be competitive then, for the position at Cape Cod.

Lu Ann Jones: So, when did you start applying for park service jobs? And how did that—

Thomas Cherry: About two and a half years into that three years. Because I had made up my mind that it would, I didn't want to, I could have gone there and spent one day and resigned and had three years, according to OPM, I would have had three years rehire status with the government. I said, but that won't serve me well on a resume. I need to go there and not only show that I was capable of showing up, I found the place, but that I did something and hopefully accomplished something. And hopefully my evaluations would reflect that. And be positive when someone was considering me wherever in the park service.

Thomas Cherry: So about two and a half years into California, I started, I started trying to understand how to go about applying. At that time, Lu Ann, we had what's called BE&E, Bureau of Employee, something, there were maybe four letters to the acronym, and one escapes me right now. But the whole idea was they were old punch cards that the employee would punch based on a variety of skill sets that they had and what level of skill they had in that particular subject matter area. I never saw this, but the way it was explained to – are you familiar with what I'm talking about?

Lu Ann Jones: No, I'm not.

Thomas Cherry: They had rods or pins in these huge cabinets. As jobs would come available in parks, these pins would start through the holes in the pieces of paper, and then the ones that didn't have that skill set would drop out. Then at the end, when they went through punching in all of the skills that the supervisor said that that potential applicant needed to have, there would be so many remaining on this long rod. And then they would stack them up. And those are the ones that they would actually read and evaluate and screen through.

Thomas Cherry: At that time, employees that could be, were being considered for positions that they didn't even know were vacant – think about that. I mean, let's say you're at a seashore somewhere and Assateague has a need for a ranger there, a vacancy. Unless you knew through the grapevine that that vacancy was there and they were even considering someone, you didn't know that. Much less, you didn't know that your name had survived this mechanical process and that you were even being considered. And this is for permanent rangers that at the time were in the National Park Service. So, they'd get a phone call saying, "We've got this job. You meet the criteria. Do you want it?" Yeah. Usually the employee could turn down one job without it having a negative impact on their career. Sometimes two. If they even thought about turning down a third one, they'd better have some very good reasons for, not just that they didn't want it or didn't want to go there.

Thomas Cherry: The reason I went through this long harangue, by this time I was a GS-9 with the Corps of Engineers. Well a GS-9 in the park service was supervisory level. So no longer was I competing as if I were on the outside through OPM. I needed to compete at that level from inside the system. Is that making any sense?

Lu Ann Jones: Yes.

Thomas Cherry: So, I had to figure out a way, how to get that form that I would fill out so they'd punch holes in it so my application would survive when they threw that through there. In order to do that, I was told I had to have the three years. In order to have that true career status and having completed the probationary time. So even though I started trying to figure out the process, two and a half years in, by that, I did have the forms. I had asked for civil service handbook X-118, which describes what the 025 series is. And found that that was loose-leaf volumes that covered the entire basement of a federal building in DC. So, I was learning these things as I went along. Thankfully enough, it wasn't that long after my application, after they agreed to accept it in Washington, that I was offered the position at Cape Cod.

Lu Ann Jones: Did you just kind of get a call out of the blue? Or how did it—

Thomas Cherry: Well, I was very fortunate. The gentleman I told you, Jerry Tays, that had gone to Washington in legislative affairs, was asked to be on the screening committee for the job at Cape Cod. Vern Hurt, who I'd worked a summer for at Old Faithful, was the district ranger at Cape Cod who was actually the selecting official. So, with the combination of those two and without their, with the combination of those two, I survived that process and was offered the job. I think there's every likelihood that had that set of circumstances not happened the way they did, I might still be in California waiting for someone in the park service to call me. I'm being very honest. Because it took, I'm sure it took a concerted effort on their part. And I know it did.

Thomas Cherry: Jerry Tays was the one that I was constantly asking the questions, "Well, how does the system work? And what do you have to do to get into that selection process?" Just to have an opportunity to compete. So, he was the one that initially was willing to spend the time and try to edify me, so I had some idea of what was going on.

Thomas Cherry: As a result of that throughout my career, I was terribly interested in the seasonal hiring process, because I didn't think the park service needed to make it as complex as it was, and didn't need to change the applications every year when a seasonal thinks they have figured out what the KSA [Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities] should be and what level of training or skill set they needed.

Thomas Cherry: That was a challenge, too. I get down to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, and there are 22 seasonal law enforcement training

programs that are approved throughout the United States. I said, this is ludicrous! I don't have the numbers, I'll somehow figure out how to get the numbers, but we're hiring a couple of hundred new law enforcement protection seasonals every year. We've got 22 schools, and at that time, Santa Rosa was doing five sessions a year. I mean, there were a lot of graduates with no place to go. I said, that's not right. We shouldn't be allowing schools to take their money with very little likelihood of gainful employment, even seasonal employment, being on the other side. So that was a challenge to try to get a handle on how many we had, where they were, the good ones, the bad ones, the ugly ones, and try to figure out how to support the good ones, and how to encourage the lesser ones to fall out of this, to drop out of the system. And still not come in and sever the cord immediately, because they had been doing the training the park service had asked them to do for the park service.

Thomas Cherry: We had been reaping, the service had been reaping the benefit of their efforts for several years. Even those that had, let's say, a mediocre program, they were still providing a graduate from which park service was selecting.

Thomas Cherry: So that's really the reason, the challenges of improving our basic training, the seasonal program. Trying to standardize advanced training programs. Defensive tactics is a quick example.

Thomas Cherry: Defensive tactics instructors came from the ranks of highway patrol, sheriff's departments, or a park ranger who was very physically fit that had taken a keen interest in that. And maybe they were taekwondo or karate or something else. There was no continuity and consistency in defensive tactics training once the rangers finished basic training and went back to their park. And they got refresher training. And that refresher training, many times was exposing them to things that are brand new to them that they had never been exposed to before.

Thomas Cherry: So, I said, why aren't we bringing, why aren't we designating instructors and bringing them back to FLETC and getting them certified as instructors, but they're teaching the same thing that FLETC is teaching to basic students so it's a continuum, then it truly is a refresher. Instead of just something, and we can say okay, we put them in a mat room, and they beat on each other for two and a half hours and they survived, so they must be ready to go for another year. Of course, I'm grossly exaggerating.

Thomas Cherry: Some of the regions had established a standard on their own, but it was a standard different from what FLETC's was. I'll give them credit. At least they had a standard. And then of course I heard from parks, "Well, every park can't have a defensive tactics instructor, a physical fitness coordinator, a firearms instructor. We can't afford all that."

Thomas Cherry: I know that. So, let's geographically select our instructors with the agreement that you, Park A, will share your firearms instructor with four other parks in a geographic zone or five others, depending on the distance.

You in turn will house an instructor designated that's shown an interest and shown they're capable, he or she, of doing this. And that's how we'll share this. That standardization, I felt, would save a lot of time, effort, energy and money and give us the consistency that we were looking for. But that was a hard sell. Because again, we had never done it that way. And if you know enough about the park service to know that gray and green, old tradition dies very slow. Very slow.

Lu Ann Jones: Well when did you kind of make that shift to a focus on training?

Thomas Cherry: I guess I was interested in it at Cape Cod, but I was also trying to figure out the job and the organization and was spending a lot of time doing what I thought I needed to do to fulfill the responsibilities of the position there. And so, I guess in honesty, it's when I transferred to Cuyahoga and became a district ranger there. And then I started an association with a seasonal program that had already been approved at Hocking Tech., one that wanted to come online at Slippery Rock University, at Cuyahoga Community College and Indiana University at Pennsylvania. And so, I was on the steering committee, trying to work with them based on what I had seen and my experience of hiring seasonal fee collection, seasonal lifeguards and seasonal patrol people at Cape Cod. Because that whole operation, because of being such a short season, like just over a two-month season. And yet I was trying to remember the numbers. So, I hope someone doesn't hold me to this. But I think total numbers of law enforcement, fee operation and lifeguards just in the South District was close to 50. I would sit up at nights with stacks of applications this high, trying to call dorm rooms with a phone out in the hallway, and the janitor picking it up, saying—

[END OF TRACK 4]

[START OF TRACK 5]

Thomas Cherry: — "they've already finished their last exam. They've gone home." And that was long before cell phones and other means of reaching people. And how frustrating it was working under what I construed to be a very cumbersome system. I started to say antiquated. Well, it wasn't really antiquated, but it was terribly cumbersome. I knew it wasn't meeting my needs for the amount of time and effort I had to spend each, getting ready each spring, for the next cadre of people to come in, and to do the job once they arrived. So, I guess that was the realization time.

Thomas Cherry: When I was afforded an opportunity to get involved in the steering committees, and recognizing again the need for consistency and encouraging these schools, being honest with these schools and saying, "If you're in it for the money and you think you're going to have 100 percent of the kids that graduate from your program get a job with the park service, then you have no business here. This isn't for you."

Thomas Cherry: Thankfully enough, Indiana University from Pennsylvania, they pulled out. Slippery Rock stayed in and Cuyahoga Community College stayed in, with that agreement.

Thomas Cherry: Then, of course, the onus was on me to try to help them collaborate with, partner, our new word, the last few years, with other entities like Ohio State Park, Cleveland Metro Parks, Akron Metro Parks, so that they would agree to accept the curriculum that was taught and the certification, so that these young men and women would have an opportunity to apply to numerous departments and agencies, which would do nothing but enhance the potential of them getting at least seasonal employment.

Thomas Cherry: So, I guess the challenge was there to see if, to put my effort where my mouth had been, which is, we needed to improve the system. It was so convoluted. But look, some of these kids are still asking that today. "How do you get a job in this outfit?" And the slides that Reynolds showed, Mike showed yesterday morning, if we could have removed some of his acronyms, you and I could have used that same slide presentation 40 years ago and it would have been just as valid 40 years ago as it was yesterday morning. We still haven't fixed a lot of the things that we should have. And I say "we." I'm not saying "they" or "them." Shame on us. We should be able; we should be able to do that. I mean, some of this is not rocket science. But it takes a concerted effort.

Thomas Cherry: Then I had to obligate myself to teach in some of these schools, right? I enjoyed that. I enjoyed the interaction in the classroom. It was something I'd become very familiar with at that time. I had firsthand knowledge, not secondhand. It wasn't theory from a textbook. And I particularly enjoyed then the segments on dealing with some of the history, the evolution of the law enforcement program. Because we'd gone through a lot of battles on Cape Cod with the hidden weapons and everything else, and the downplaying of this element called law enforcement.

Thomas Cherry: So, I'd work all day and then drive all night to Hocking and teach the next two days. And then drive back home, and then back to work. But I enjoyed that.

Thomas Cherry: Then I got on a Midwest Region teaching team for position management. So, we were addressing not just the law enforcement or protection community, that was maintenance, admin. So, we were traveling to the various parks to do those programs. I enjoyed that.

Thomas Cherry: I really thought that I, in my mind, I thought I would enjoy going down to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. But I wasn't sure. I knew if I just had a chance to look at it from the inside out instead of the outside in, I thought it would answer that question.

Thomas Cherry: And Bill Supernaugh announced a three-month detail because his deputy, for lack of a better term, he didn't have a position. He had a vacancy. He announced for a three-month detail down to FLETC, dealing with the

seasonal program, the curriculum review, the basic training that the park service was doing.

Thomas Cherry: Well, my boss didn't want me to be gone during the summer months for three months. I found out that a gentleman in Yosemite had the same difficulty with his supervisor. So, I called him, and I said, "Let's strike a deal. I know why you want to go. You want to look at it, same reason I do. I know we're going to be competing against each other. But let's decide that for the greater good of all, and particularly for you and I, let's see if our supervisors will let us split that six months. I'll do six weeks, you do six. I don't care if you're front, back, it doesn't matter. And that would afford us both the opportunity to go down there and see for ourselves." He said, "Done."

Thomas Cherry: So bottom line is, our supervisors, his supervisor bought into it. Mine didn't. I had to go up to the superintendent to get an override, but it got signed.

Thomas Cherry: So, when I got down there and I saw what it was, and I said, now this is a place where you can make a difference. I said, "I know that the people in the Washington office and Ranger Activities, I know they make a difference. But I know the sacrifice that they make both grade-wise and cost of living, and the commute that they have to go through, many of them." I was selfish. I wasn't willing to do that. But to go to Georgia and have an opportunity to be part of that process is what drew me as well. So, it was a composite. Does that make sense?

Lu Ann Jones: Yes, it does. Well when did you get into the kind of leadership training? I mean, that's really fascinating to me. Kind of when did you kind of get more interested in that?

Thomas Cherry: When I was going through the growing pains, trying to improve the park service program, I was having to deal with a lot of different federal entities down at the law enforcement training center, as well as what was the treasury overhead at that time. Treasury Department was running the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. Now it's transitioned, it did several years ago, to Homeland Security. Regardless, we were having to work, we were a mini bureaucracy working within a much larger bureaucracy that still answered another to a bureaucracy in Washington. Even my role at FLETC dealing with basic training and advanced training and what I was trying to do there, and then I was the risk management training manager for a while, also. They decided that I needed that, also. But even doing that, then I had a boss in training. And then Flip Hagood, being in training, had a huge impetus and emphasis on HBCUs and HHCUs, the Hispanic schools, and wanted me to devote a lot of time, effort and energy to try to expand the seasonal law enforcement training to those programs. So, I was getting pulled two different directions.

Thomas Cherry: I got a pretty good idea what would happen to, I knew what was happening to me, and could only assume what was happening to others,

when you've got leaders pulling from totally opposite directions with different goals in mind.

Thomas Cherry: It was hard to please three different taskmasters at once. I became more diplomatic than I had been dealing with that chief ranger in Yellowstone. (laughter) But I still did not have the tools that I needed. I didn't understand how my behavior could so quickly become so aggressive, assertive, demonstrative, and in turn, turn a lot of people off, no matter how well intended I was and how goal driven I was, not for me, but to try to make things better for other people. Does that make any sense?

Thomas Cherry: I was trying to work within the system to change the system, and I hadn't figured out yet how to do that. Because while at Cuyahoga, also, Walt Dabney had let me engage in being on numerous task forces, trying to promote what later became Ranger Careers. I got involved in housing issues to the point of writing, or I drafted a very rough draft of legislation for which, thankfully enough, Mr. Rick Smith, being 100 times smarter than I am, was capable of actually taking what little bit of input I had based on some research I had done and trying to improve it.

Thomas Cherry: We lost our, for rangers throughout the park system, we lost our protection from OMB [Office of Management and Budget] on the 845 Circular, which said that rangers couldn't be charged more than 20 percent of their gross salary for their rental rate. Po parks had misused and abused that for years. They didn't pay the rangers call-out or overtime. They gave them a break on their housing rent for being there, right? Being available. And so, I saw the times that I had failed trying to do those things. And thinking how in the world, I need to figure out how to be more successful. I have some decent ideas, but I'm not capable of selling those ideas because of who I am. Just like with Bud Estey. I should have read the look on his face the first time I posed that and should have realized that his behavior style said I needed to have done my homework. I should have realized and said, "Thank you. I'm sorry to have bothered you. I'm not prepared yet to make my sales pitch. I'm going to go back and do my homework. And if you'll allow me, I'll be back at a later date." See? That wasn't part of my repertoire, right?

Thomas Cherry: Then I got on a steering committee for supervisory training for all federal agencies at FLETC. And when I started looking at the curriculum that we were putting together, everybody was putting their two cents' worth in. and I was thinking, you know, this is really neat stuff. Marston's DISC model, the values that drive those behaviors. Blanchard's situational leadership, or Hersey's, it doesn't matter, it's the same thing, just with different names. I said, if I had had those things at Cape Cod and at Cuyahoga, think what I would have been able to accomplish. Not if I'd just been exposed to those, but then if I had been willing to practice them and give them an opportunity to work. Think how much more successful I could have been in what I might have been able to accomplish. It wasn't an ego thing. It was realizing what I needed to move me from here to

there. Then I said, "But if that's true for me, that's true for a lot of people."

Thomas Cherry: So that's what, it simply was a way to whet my appetite. The more I was exposed to it, meaning those essentials of leadership, the more I realized that there's really nothing new in leadership in the last two or three hundred years. It's the same stuff. Authors put different names or titles because that allows them to sell books. Or, in the case of Blanchard, opportunity to make a whole lot more money, right? If you have to certify your instructors.

Thomas Cherry: So right at the end of my career at FLETC, we had three rangers killed in less than five years. Murdered. In the National Park Service. And then the phone rang, and the Washington office said, "You know, we remember you talking about a field training program. Maybe we do need more than just basic training."

Thomas Cherry: And I thought, my goodness. See, that was another failure on my part. For 10 years, no, for 8 ½ years, we had had a designed, developed field training program on the shelf. I mean, it was ready to go. We brought a lot of very intelligent people down to FLETC. It wasn't because Tom Cherry did it. A lot of people made a huge contribution to that. People with excellent field experience, with knowledge of the occupation, with an understanding of training. And it was a great package. But see, every time I would pose that to the Washington office, no money, no time, no energy. You know, that's not our emphasis right now. Take it and go put it on the shelf. Everybody has their priorities. But see, if I had taken a different tack, if I had understood more about these different behavior styles and the people that I had to work through, then possibly we wouldn't have had three rangers killed to finally get the point across.

Thomas Cherry: So, people say, if you had to take your whole career and say, what do you think's your best accomplishment? It was finally having a formalized field training program approved by the National Park Service. And if they say what's your biggest failure? I said because I couldn't sell it 10 years before. So, it's the same thing, but it's my lack of or inability to do what I should have been able to do.

Lu Ann Jones: Well when did you start kind of realizing, I mean, you talk about behavioral style. So where does that come from, and what do you think are kind of the essential elements of leadership?

Thomas Cherry: Because of that exposure, you know me, I hadn't done the whole package. We had the field training program on the shelf, but we hadn't thought about how do we train the trainer? Where are field training rangers going to come from? And I said, we're not going to make the mistake that we've made over the years of promoting people because of excellent field skills. Those don't necessarily make your best supervisors. They're damn good field rangers. They know the job, but that doesn't mean they can supervise. Or doesn't mean they want to supervise.

Thomas Cherry: I said, "We've forced good field level people into supervisory positions that don't want to do it, they're not good at it, they'll never be good at it. But they do it because of the grade level. That's the only way they can move up. And that's a heck of a way to do business." So, I said, "In picking our field training officers, we're going to have a 40-hour curriculum, or more, where we're going to train them in how to do this thing called 'be a field training officer.' Not just pick the ones that are paramedics and they rappel, and they do search and rescue and they're wildland fire and structural fire." I mean, those are all good. Don't get me wrong. Those are all viable parts of the vocation. But we need people that can coach, teach, train, supervise, and they need to do all of that at one time, depending on that situation, that employee, that need right then, given that task. And they need to be able to diagnose that (snaps fingers) in just about that period of time to move them forward through this arduous task book called a field training program. Do you see the tie-in?

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm.

Thomas Cherry: I queried a lot of field training programs throughout the United States. Good ones that I had heard were excellent programs. I said, "I don't want to mimic your, we've got a field training program and it will stand the test in court. It's good. But I want to know how to you train the trainer?"

Thomas Cherry: "Well, we just bring them in here and we talk about the supervisory evaluation guides and a scale of one to 10, one to five, and whether we're going to do daily observation reports, weekly observation reports," and da, da, da. I said, "That's the process. That's the minutiae. I want to know how do you train your field training officers?" "And usually our training's only, I don't know, three or four days long. They travel in here on a Monday and back home on a Friday. And we just cover the basics." I said, "Well, wait a minute. You have a good program, or I wouldn't be calling you. It's a very informal survey, so I hope you're open with me. Nothing's perfect." I said, "So if there's any shortcoming your program has, what would it be?" Across the board, it's the lack of the, or the inability of the field training officer to let the new employee make and learn from their mistakes. I said, "Then what are you doing to overcome that?" "Well, nothing. Because all our time's taken up on all the process of the reporting," right? "And getting them through the system." I said, "So you're not addressing that."

Thomas Cherry: So that's when I said, then, fine. I'll put DISC and values and situational leadership into the field training ranger program. Because these rangers are going to get the training so it will help move them through and they won't be spending the same amount of time, by the clock, on every employee regardless of their skill set and their ability. They'll move them through at their pace. And when they become proficient, they move to the next task. That's the leadership block and how I saw it fitting with the needs of not just the field training program, because then I was able to sell, putting self-situational leadership in the pre-basic for the basic students so

they could use it dealing with each other and with every instructor down at FLETC as they went through the basic program. You can challenge these instructors without making them mad, if you pose your question in a way that's not threatening. And these instructors have come to figure out finally that park rangers are some of the most intelligent, some of the most dedicated people, and have a great deal of experience before they ever arrive here because we force you to do eight or ten years as a seasonal.

Thomas Cherry: I said, "You can challenge them in the courtroom, but you can't back them into a law, because the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center says they're in charge in that classroom. So, you have to know how to go about challenging them." And I said, "So self-situational leadership says you're responsible for your own success. Not cry, 'Oh, woe is me, my district ranger didn't give me this and my chief ranger didn't give me this.' It's up to you. If anybody's going to succeed here, and see to it you succeed, it's you." Now others can be asked to assist in that endeavor.

Thomas Cherry: So, we frontloaded the basic training with self-situational leadership. Then we gave the field training officers the tools to work with. That didn't mean they perfected them, but we got them exposed to this. I truly think that's one of the core reasons that the field training program has survived in the park service. And become a viable program. It's not just its acceptance, but the fact that supervisors throughout the system have seen the level of product that it produces. To me, then that's the essence of leadership when you can get your people to assume that level of responsibility for themselves, move them forward, and not only, success is good, but make them more effective. Not necessarily efficient, but effective. Effective means to a supervisor, I don't have to worry about that employee and what they're doing when I'm not here. I know that they're doing it the way, not only the manual says, or the law says, but they're doing it the way that my park and that I want them doing. And they're conducting themselves in a professional way. And you walk away, or you go away for however long you want to go away, and they continue doing good, solid, viable work.

Thomas Cherry: So that was how I was able for myself to try to pull all of that stuff together. And so, I told the leadership institute that if they ever had an opening, I was really interested in this, I would like to learn more. I just scratched the surface. And I said, "If you ever have an opening, I'm going into retirement. I'm going to do some of this training on my own." I'd already gotten certified by the Blanchard Company to teach situational leadership. I had gone to training for certification in Marston's DISC model and the values. And so, I said, I'll see if I can't do some of this on my own. But I touched base with the leadership institute.

Thomas Cherry: So, about a year, I was doing teaching and training on my own, doing those elements. I was successful in doing some very small contracts on a limited basis but staying busy and having a good time. Then the leadership institute called. And I was at an Association of Law enforcement Trainers Conference in Jacksonville, Florida, and the leadership institute called,

and they said, "We've got an opening. You have an application on file. Are you still interested in doing this?"

Thomas Cherry: And I said, "Yes, I am. But I know the federal government and you probably want me to come to work tomorrow if not today." And they said, "Yes, that's right." (Lu Ann Jones laughs)

Thomas Cherry: And I said, "Well then, as badly as I would like to do this, thankfully enough I have trips set up and clients that I have agreed to be there to do training for them for about the next three months. Now, it's not solid; it's intermittent. And I said, "If you tell me that that's a conflict of interest, that I cannot continue doing that, which I expect you to say, or you can't wait that long, then as badly as I'd like to come back and get more deeply immersed in this, I'm going to have to turn you down."

Thomas Cherry: And they said, "Well, are you serious?" I said, "Yeah. I told these folks I'll show up and do something." I need to do that, right? That's not going to serve me very well.

Thomas Cherry: A couple of weeks later they called back they said, "Okay, what's your drop-dead date? And what if we can get you, what if we ask for permission for you not to do any more contracting, just simply you give us the dates and the clients, the ones you have already obligated for, and then you would take leave without pay from the leadership institute. You would go do that. And then as soon as those obligations are fulfilled, you won't be servicing anymore." I said, "That's fine." That's all I asked for to begin with.

Thomas Cherry: Then I became much more immersed in trying to understand the applicability and how to make all this fit, and was able to take it into the classroom then. Over that nine-year, almost nine-year period, had the luxury, if you would, of having a vast and varied audiences, particularly with the overseas audiences, and the ability to try and sell it. That's my term. To get their buy-in to at least the fact that there's validity here. And if you're willing to try it, you might find your life a whole lot easier. Because particularly in the old, the ex-Soviet Bloc countries, their way of leading is – and this is their term – if that employee's not moving, that subordinate's not doing what they're doing – you plant a boot in their backside, right? And then they jump.

Thomas Cherry: I said, "That's fine. But they don't just keep jumping. They stop. And what happens, then, when they stop doing what it is you want?" "Well, you kick them again." I said, "At the end of the day, your foot's probably going to get tired and I guarantee you their backside's not going to feel very good. Wouldn't you consider doing something other than that?"

Thomas Cherry: The thing that I think made that for me such a neat opportunity was even in a class of 40, if I had a half a dozen of them come up through the interpreter and say to me, "You know what? When I get back, I'm going to try that." My intention was never to try to win 40 to begin with. I knew

better than that. Six of them maybe representing four or five different countries. I'll take that. And Ken Blanchard said this years ago with his material. He said, "Do you know? All the people we trained over the years in situational leadership, and it's a lot," he said, "our surveys show that only 20 percent will even attempt to apply anything they got out of this three-day session with us, will even attempt when they go back to the work site to apply this." And he said, "That's success." He said, "If you don't believe it, I'll take you down to the bank and I will authorize them to show you the balance in my accounts." He said, "The other reason is, because that's 20 percent, the most important reason is," and he did that with humor about his bank account, right? He said the real test is that's 20 percent more than were willing to use it before. And he said, "Twenty percent increase in productivity and effectiveness and success," he said, "think about that. That's money in the bank. For anyone."

Lu Ann Jones: Well, thinking about the park service, and I was thinking about some of the comments that Mike Reynolds made yesterday and that I've heard for a long time. What do you think leads to change? What's good about park service culture, and what needs to be changed in park service culture?

Thomas Cherry: Isn't it interesting, when we see the acceptance of the American public, and it's been this way for years. Rangers are held in such high esteem. I mean, we get, our rangers, whether they're interpreters, and I shouldn't have used the term "rangers." Our park personnel. I don't care if it's gardeners, maintenance personnel, that doesn't matter. Our park service personnel that come in contact with the visiting public get extremely high marks. I don't care where we are in the country. Yet when these government surveys come out every couple of years and our employees are asked to respond to, "What do you think about management and leadership?" The park service is down here at the bottom. We're not at the very bottom, but we're down here in the heap at the bottom.

Lu Ann Jones: Yes.

Thomas Cherry: Yeah. You say to yourself, if we're such good stewards of the resource, both cultural and natural, why aren't we such good stewards of our most important resource, which is our human resource? Why can't we do that? Why aren't we doing that? Well, maybe we're our own worst enemy because the people we hire are so darn dedicated, and so intent on doing the right thing for the public and for the park, that we figure they're going to stick around regardless of how we treat them. Now, this is a guess on my part.

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Thomas Cherry: –have the answer. But I can tell you that on more than one occasion, particularly that two-week course, the supervisory level course that we set up for law enforcement supervisors was an outstanding, was and still is, an

outstanding course. I would get park rangers to come down. I would pay the travel out of the training budget. When I say "I," you knew what I meant. It was government funds. Didn't take it out of my pocket. Bring them down, ask them to sit through the course, give me an honest, comprehensive evaluation at the end and say to them as a chief ranger, do you think that you would get something out of this, had you been here 15 years before when you first got your job as a district or sub-district ranger, and you started and you had to assume responsibility for supervision? Across the board, they said yes.

Thomas Cherry: Then the park service would put together a training task force. I would convince them to come look at the curriculum and they'd say, "Oh, no. No, no. See, we're unique and we're different in the National Park Service. We're not like these other eighty-something agencies that train here. We need in this supervisory leadership training, we need how to assign housing, park quarters. How to assign a basic monthly rental rate. How to do payrolls."

Thomas Cherry: I said, "Excuse me?" I mean, they'd come up with huge lists. And that was all that process and the minutiae that does go with the job, depending on what division you're in. I'm not belittling, I'm not demeaning those tasks. But that's not supervision and leadership. And yet, that, see, is what these task forces and work groups would come up with. And they'd say, look, and this is not agency-specific, no? And supervision and leadership really isn't.

Thomas Cherry: And so, we could never— "Oh, it costs too much money. We have to pay a plane ticket to FLETC." Okay. And it costs you about $22 a day for a room, and then another ten dollars for meals, for three meals a day. What you pay for a two-week course out of your park budget, or your regional budget, would not even pay to bring a Blanchard instructor into your park for one four-hour session. But, "Oh, no. No." You know, look the tuition of this two-week course, look, it's 350 dollars. Yeah. That includes the material. "We need something locally. We need something we can get locally and easily accessible."

Thomas Cherry: Training, no matter what the vocation, no matter what the skill set, training is a wonderful scapegoat. Right? "Well, they must not have been trained." Training's not going to fix everything in the National Park Service or any other organization. But I can tell you that agencies that bought into that supervisory training, and one of the agencies is the Federal Protection Service! And they're doing succession planning. They're sending people that have yet--they're designated to become potentially competitive for supervisory positions sometime in the future. And then we don't send our people to any level of supervisory training until five years after they've become a supervisor, even though the OPM says it will be in that first year. And by the time they get there, they say, "You know what? This is really good stuff, but I should have been here five years ago. I've already figured out nine-tenths of this on my own. I'm

not dumb, right? I've made a whole lot of mistakes, and I wish I'd know those things then. But I've already made my mistakes and I'm not making those same ones. I'm making new mistakes, but I'm not making those same one." (laughter)

Thomas Cherry: That's what was so frustrating for me is there just doesn't seem to be time. Time to devote to something like that. Or the willingness to – and I'm not saying that that two-week course is the only thing out there. But I was just thinking to myself, if we had something that dealt with the principles, the dynamics. The opportunity to do practical exercises, to role-play. And then let them go back to their individual parks and see if some of this might make a difference. Then I think we could start to get those numbers up. But that requires a concerted effort on the part of everyone from the employee all the way up, and I'm not sure if anyone's recognized the true need to do that or the willingness to do that.

Thomas Cherry: We thought when we did the kick-off session for the Ranger Careers, when we were implementing the benchmark position descriptions in 1994, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and we had compromised down to the GS-9 level, for the journeyman level, those of us that had been on task force for about 14 years working on that, or a dozen years, honestly thought that someone would pick up the torch in the next few months. And would take it from there to try to get it up to the GS-11 level, which had been our target all along. You and I are sitting here 20 years later – and to my knowledge, and that doesn't mean I know everything that goes on in the park service, I've been away for a while – but I don't know of anyone that's attempted to do that. And I think that's a shame. I know that people in charge of budget at the Washington level thought that was going to be the demise of the park service.

Thomas Cherry: All of a sudden, we'd been getting away with paying people GS-5 salary, and then wham! Now they're going to be GS-9s, we're going to bankrupt the National Park Service. I mean, same excuse they used for two years after the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act not to pay overtime. They said the park service was exempt. And we said, "Excuse me?" Well, yeah, Congress knows they don't give us enough money for overtime. So, they shouldn't assume that we're going to pay. So, we're not. And they didn't. (laughs) And they didn't! And park rangers kept on working and putting in the time.

Thomas Cherry: So. Sometimes we can be our own worst enemy because of that dedication and devotion. Because a lot of occupations, I think, we're seeing a change now with this generation, but a lot of occupations, even back when I was coming up through the ranks, didn't sell their soul to the company store. They didn't live, eat, breathe, sleep, it wasn't all the National Park Service. I mean, they had a life other than that. And so, when you factor all those things in, a 40-hour or an 80-hour course is not going to overnight improve leadership. But I just, I was sitting there with Mike's presentation, because that was your question, and I said to you, you know,

we could back this thing up 40 years and it would still be the same stuff. We made a lot of inroads. And Bill Sanders working for Jim Brady, dealing with OPM, made huge inroads. The training task force that was set up under Gil Lusk. We put patterns together that showed the overlap in the vocations. There's a good possibility if we look at it again, it's not a specific career ladder, but it's an improvement over the old latticework that we had that said you start here and maybe you go over here and maybe you go over there and sometime maybe you'll end up somewhere. I mean, Butch Farabee and I did bubble charts on the vocations that we were familiar with and the skill sets and tried to show where the training overlapped. Just because you're an interpreter or a law enforcement ranger doesn't mean you don't need this, or you do need this.

Thomas Cherry: And that Gil Lusk, what I call the Gil Lusk grandiose scheme, and I was on, I think I attended every meeting, I think that was a three-year endeavor. But we come to then things like this, where we find out there's now another anticipated new direction. And no one seems to know where this stuff is that already a lot of time, energy, has been spent on. I'm not saying that it's something, a document, you could go to right now, dust it off, and implement it tomorrow. I'm not that naïve. But there has to still be good, solid, foundation there. Does that make sense?

Lu Ann Jones: Yes.

Thomas Cherry: Something to build on. But the park service has always been wonderful about reinventing the wheel. Right? It may be round, but maybe we could make it just a little rounder. Is that right?

Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) Yes.

Thomas Cherry: And so that was, that was always a frustration with me. Every time I'd shoot my big mouth off in general meetings, and that's usually what, people understood that. I didn't hide that frustration. I wasn't good at that.

Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) Yeah. Nor am I.

Thomas Cherry: The park service was wonderful. I don't regret, I enjoyed it. I truly did. But what I'm afraid of, and the message that we take overseas and, you know, when I was with the Leadership Institute, and I'm going back to work for them in a couple of weeks. I was offered another contract yesterday. And I'll be back training TSA managers. And what did we teach their supervisors? The three-stripers and the checkpoint that you'll have to go through at the Denver airport? DISC, values and situational leadership. Forty-six hundred of them in 18 months. And now, 7600 two-stripers that are the leads are getting two days of situational leadership. DISC and values.

Lu Ann Jones: What was the one that starts with a D?

Thomas Cherry: Oh, the D? This is Marston's DISC model. In the 1920s, he capitalized and went back to old Greek studies that said that there are four basic behavior styles. The "D" is the demonstrative, the demanding, the angry,

the very task-oriented individual that comes across and is right in your face. What their intent is, to get the job done, and get it now. Direct, to the point, and you have to know how to address those people. There are a lot of Ds that are in charge of some very successful companies. And they have a task orientation, not a people orientation. They are extraverts, very much extraverts. Very demonstrative. I said angry and I should have said demonstrative. Some of them can become, they do become angry at the drop of a hat. And they blow right in your face and they back you against the wall and then they forget about it. Before they're ever out of your office or your cubicle. They don't even remember it occurred. You remember, and you're going to remember the rest of your life. You've never been talked to that way. And we shut down our communication with our employees.

Thomas Cherry: The next one is the "I," the influencer. Very outgoing. But people orientation, not task orientation. The larger the group, the more, the merrier, we're getting along with everybody. It's all peace, love and harmony, and we all just need to get along. And very little attention to detail. Right? But somebody else. We'll work with other groups and we'll get it done. But let's have fun.

Thomas Cherry: And then the "S." And thankfully enough, the strong, supportive individual, the steadfast individual, the one that not only shows up but gets work done, that's about 55 percent of your workforce, regardless of the occupation. And they have, they're introverts. They have a people orientation, but nothing like this "I" over here. They like the people they like. They have a very small cadre of friends, relatives, people that they like to associate with, but they don't like everybody. But they're devoted to the organization, to the cause. And they will do everything, not only to help the supervisor be successful, but to help other employees. And they will put their work aside to help others because they want the whole unit to succeed. I say thankfully enough, that's 55 percent.

Thomas Cherry: Then you've got the Cs. The very concise, exacting, analytical, that beat things to death. They want more and more and more facts, more information, before they're willing to even entertain thinking about making a decision. They're very much the introvert, but they're extremely task-oriented to the same level of task orientation as the D, but they don't want to serve on work groups or task force. They want to be given their task or assignment, go back to their cubicle or the basement, or some of them would be happy in a closet if they had a light and a computer. Because they don't need other people to get viable work done.

Thomas Cherry: So, each of these can be terribly frustrating for the other. And we can start to take it personally when we're treated in the way that they like to be treated if we don't understand that it's nothing personal. That's who they are.

Thomas Cherry: And I tell people, Dick Ring was one of the smartest people that I worked for when he was a deputy. But he was one of those damn Cs, and he was one of the most frustrating people because he would not make a decision. I'd say, "Dick, I need one decision, and it needs to come from the Washington level. We can't make it down here. We can't decide this. But you can." "Well, write that up, Tom, and send it to me." Okay. "And by the way, let me know how some of the other agencies handle that." "Okay. I can do that, too." And I'd write it up and then I'd call his assistant. "Well, it's still in the corner of his desk." "Do you think he's looked at it?" "No. But Tom, in the next couple of days, I'll mention to him maybe he needs to." He would do that.

Thomas Cherry: And then, "Well, maybe we need to survey a few more people. Maybe I need—" See, always seeking more facts. And in one particular instance, that went on over a year. And then finally there was a committee formed. And never was a decision reached.

Thomas Cherry: I liked the guy. I ran into him at a Rendezvous in Charleston. And I said, "Dick, I want you to know, I'm still using you as an example of one of those damn Cs." (Lu Ann Jones laughs) "I'm not going to talk behind your back. I love you, but doggone it, if you'd just been—"

Thomas Cherry: And he would, he asked me two or three times, I gave him three different, I said, "Here, you can choose one, two, or three." "Well, what would be your recommendation?"

Thomas Cherry: "I don't care. I don't have a dog in this fight, right?" I'm telling you, well the basic students down here, I needed them treated with consistency and continuity by their individual parks or regions. I don't need disparate treatment, and that's what they're getting. So, one, two or three, it doesn't matter. But at least while they're here, they'll be treated the same way. And this was in reference to payroll. I said, "As soon as they leave here and they go back to those parks, they can get all the disparate treatment for the rest of their career, the rest of their life, I don't care. And they will, knowing the park service. But just for now, help me out."

Thomas Cherry: But he was never comfortable. Part of that could have been, I already told you, I don't pay great attention to detail. That's another one of my many fallacies. So regardless of how much paper I sent, it still wasn't meeting his need. He still wasn't comfortable.

Thomas Cherry: I think so many of us concentrate on what makes us comfortable, and we fail to recognize what makes the receiver comfortable. The golden rule, you know, there's this black book that has espoused that for many years. And most of us are familiar with that. And I say to the students, to the participants, "What about the platinum rule? Why don't we treat other people the way *they* want to be treated, and talk to them the way *they* want to hear it, and make it the most comfortable for them? Do you think that would help in us sending and them receiving and then understanding each other?" I said, "Try it. There's nothing wrong with the golden rule. I

would be very foolish to take on religion. But maybe add the platinum rule to that. Not just how *I* want to be treated."

Thomas Cherry: Because particularly with Marston's DISC model, if I'm one of these Ds, one of these demonstrative Ds, that's the way I like. Short, dirty, direct, to the point, and then that's it. I'm moving on to something else. And I don't want to get all bogged down in the details and the minutiae. Now I can. I can transition over and I can assume the role of being a C. I had to do that to proofread that last version of the manual when we started training, field training, and officers. And I hated that. Oh! I would rather have gone to the dentist and had three teeth pulled, you know? But that's something that was necessary. Did I procrastinate and put it off to the last minute? You bet I did. I mean, when I walked in Staples on a Sunday afternoon, right, saying, "I need a rush job on this," I was still proofreading at that time. I mean, that's, oh.

Thomas Cherry: But I said, "We've got," and we did it to ourselves in a lot of policies and directives. You will. You shall. You must. Just those three words. We would use them throughout a document. And then a supervisor would say, "This didn't say I had to." Well, yeah, it does. "Nope. Not to me, it doesn't." Will. Must. Should. They would provide their own interpretation. I said, "If nothing else, if we would just pick one of the three or four terms that are overlapping in many instances, use it consistently throughout the document, and tell people, "and when you see shall, that doesn't mean you have latitude. It means whether it's a funded mandate or not, it's still a mandate and you will do this." Right? Wherever you see this, let us interpret this for you at this time." So, we brought a lot of those things on ourselves.

Thomas Cherry: See what I mean? I took those on as a lot of challenges. (Lu Ann Jones laughs). I added to my own frustration.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, I was curious. One of the things that I do hear about is the need for succession planning in the park service.

Thomas Cherry: Yes.

Lu Ann Jones: So that would say that I don't, from where I sit, I don't see much of it. Maybe it happens in other quarters. But where have you seen that work, and what form does that take?

Thomas Cherry: I think the best example I gave you is before in these supervisory training programs at FLETC, and now we're up to 90 agencies, I think, that train there. All except FBI and DEA; they're still up in Quantico. But instead of seeing those people show up five years and six years after they have been supervisors, just seeing the transition on the part of some of the agencies to start sending those people that they want to even think about considering for a supervisory job. That, to me, is succession planning. Now I know that's not the purest form. But even a few years ago, when we found out that throughout the federal system, the revelation hit with

this 57 age cut off that out the door, if you have a 6E enhanced annuity law enforcement position, the facts and figures said that the majority of federal agencies would be losing over 50 percent of their senior law enforcement personnel either through mandatory retirement or through voluntary retirement because they had put in the number of years they needed to, to be eligible for retirement.

Thomas Cherry: The park service was not the only one that didn't sit back and take a look at it and say, "Now, what are we going to do? How are we going to fill that void?" There are a lot of agencies that just put the blinders on and said, "Oh, you know what? We'll face that bridge when we come to it."

Thomas Cherry: So, I started, I started to add that to my list of concerns. And I have a very long list. Then I read an article about Fortune 500 companies. And it says 50 percent of some of the most successful Fortune 500 companies do zero succession planning, and never intend to do that. Twenty-five percent are considering, they recognize there's a need to it, but they haven't formulated a plan yet as to how they do that. And there's another 25 percent that says there is absolutely no need for it because we're going to hire from the outside. This is usually, what they're referring to is that very upper tier of leadership or management. Those percentages vary depending on whose statistics you read. But I'm thinking, isn't that interesting? I thought maybe the park service was the only one out there that wasn't doing this. But just because other entities aren't doing it, does that mean it's okay for the park service not to do that? Why would it not be beneficial for us? Even if all the employees that were put in this pool for potential to move up, what if they all didn't get selected? I mean, there are only so many superintendencies and so many regional directorates, right? But how much more would that employee gain, and possibly how much better supervisor, manager and leader would they become if they had the skill set, and had been given the skill set, to do that, even if they had to continue to function at a lesser level? Or a lower level? And in the pecking order of the GS grades.

Thomas Cherry: As I said earlier, we force a lot of our employees, the system forces a lot of our employees into supervision that shouldn't be supervisors, didn't want to be supervisors, and feel that's the only way they can get ahead or move up. There's more than one federal entity now, and don't ask me which one, because it's not registering. But they're looking strongly at allowing officers, agents, to stay in their field-level positions and still have a progression or a career ladder that recognizes, not just the seniority, years in service, but the level of performance that they're providing. And is not going to force them over into supervision but allows them the increased GS grades. Their contention is, they're going to benefit from that because they're leaving good, solid field people where they're comfortable, where they enjoy the task, and where they're darn good at it – and not forcing them across the line into something else. I think that would be interesting to see, but now they have to deal with the same OPM

constraints that we have to, as the park service has to as an organization. And so, there's going to be, there are going to be growing pains there.

Thomas Cherry: That Marston's DISC model. I mean, when we had teams in our parks. We have sub-districts, districts, right? And if we had need for a certain skill set in the park, let's say we're Rocky [Mountain National Park] and we require a higher skill set for climbers than maybe some other park that doesn't have near the rock they do here. So, we have basic skill sets and we screen out a stack of applicants that are all basically qualified and meet the criteria for those skill sets. And we say, "Yeah but, you know, we have a small team." And I've already got an I. I've got two or three Ss. I've got one D. You know what I need? That person that vacated here and went on to bigger and better things was a C. Why couldn't we hire that behavior style that would fill out our need in that team for somebody to be concise, exacting, analytical? Someone that would check and recheck and double check? Now, others can do that. They can adapt to that. But they aren't going to enjoy doing that. And there's one person that not only would do it and do it darn well, but that would be their forte. So, the Department of Labor has upheld more than one case where organizations have used that. They have to be able to articulate that they only use the Marston's behavior style for one-third of the decision-making process. It can be somehow they hung their hat on 33 1/3. So, you have to be a pretty darn good writer, and you have to show that all of the other criteria is even, meaning all of these people are evenly matched. And if so, what is it that took this person above and beyond that caused me to offer them this position. On at least a couple of court cases, because those other employees, the non-successful candidates, certainly challenged that. But they upheld that that—

Thomas Cherry: Now, OPM has not written that into their regulations yet. I can't tell you how many years, but it's been at least five if not six years ago that I heard they were at least considering this. So, they're moving very slowly on this, and, I'm sure, for their own good reasons. But I was thinking, as I get more exposure to this, why that couldn't be a viable option and help us to understand why we don't need four of those Ds. In fact, one is probably enough, right? We need those Ss, because they're the ones that see to it, we're successful and help everyone else be successful. We don't need the person that's going to monopolize the conversation and be still talking about it six days from now when we should have done it four days ago. And we need the people that can provide the checks and balances, and to round out the whole thing.

Thomas Cherry: That's how I see leadership working both outside the federal government, both outside and inside. Because I think it has the potential to do that.

Thomas Cherry: When you have leaders of countrywide policing organizations and on continents like Africa, and you see how they handle the contingency of people they bring to these sessions, and certainly it's usually the higher ranked among them. It's very much rank and structure. I watched this with

the chief of the Angola delegation. They'd just come off a bloody five-year civil war. This was about six or seven years ago. Seven years ago. We would break them out into the work groups. Even though I didn't understand any Portuguese, I'd just watch the body language from the door. And he was, the head of the delegation was actually the number two man in the national police force. And they don't have 50 different federal organizations like we do, or 100. They have one. And that is the police force. He would listen. Or pretend to listen, as it would go around the table. And those on his team would give him their viewpoints when we were working through some of the practical exercises. Then he would sit back in his chair and he'd hit the table and you knew the decision had been made. We put him in competition—

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Thomas Cherry: —to one country to the next. We would post the results, and his team, his cadre of people were getting the absolute marks. And so, through the interpreter, I decided okay, I would take a chance. And I asked him, removed him through the room. I told him to keep talking, again, through the interpreter. I said, "Sir, you need to listen to your people. They're yours. They're intelligent people. They have paid attention just like you have. You need to not just pretend you're listening. You need to listen." And I said, "If you would do me a favor, just this one time, this one exercise, and let's see what happens."

Thomas Cherry: He went back in and the scores throughout the next couple of days started improving. Not dramatically, but at least they were on the upward scale. We had no more dialog. And then at the end of the session I see him. They've graduated. He comes, two weeks is over, and through the interpreter I see him coming across the room. I'm thinking now he wants my name, rank and serial number. He's going to file a formal protest for me singling him out. And I didn't do it in front of the group, but I still thought I anticipated it.

Thomas Cherry: But through the interpreter he says, "Let me see if I understand this. You told me that I need to go back to the president of my country and tell him we have a new way of doing business."

Thomas Cherry: For once, I kept my big mouth shut and I paused, and I took a deep breath. I said, "No, sir. I would be very foolish to tell you that. You have a president that still has not given the public a free, democratic election. He has also self-appointed himself as not only president but prime minister. He truly is the head of government." I said, "You and I know if you went back and even attempted to stay that, you probably would no longer hold your post." I said, "If you really think there's any validity to this, and you must, or you would not have asked me this question, if you just try implementing this one step at a time – and if nothing else, see if it

improves the rapport that you have with your senior echelon – see if that doesn't make life a little easier for you."

Thomas Cherry: He smiled and said okay. He never had an opportunity to try that. He died about two weeks later while he was there in Botswana because he had internal injuries. He had fought that bloody civil war and he had internal injuries no one had diagnosed. He had external scars that were very visible. You could tell he didn't fight that war from behind his desk but had internal injuries. So, he had passed away before he, but I thought what a wonderful opportunity. Because I was really curious to see if he would follow up, if I would ever hear anything further from him again. So, to me, that's leadership. That's scraping the surface. But we've got to take the first step.

Thomas Cherry: I never have attempted for any of these groups to define leadership. That's up to them. You know what a leader looks like and feels like to you. And it may be exactly like the person seated next to you or totally different. And that's okay. Because you know the person that you are the most comfortable following. And to me, that's leadership. It fits.

Lu Ann Jones: I've got to say, I've got somebody else [waiting to be interviewed].

Thomas Cherry: It's fine.

Lu Ann Jones: But thank you so much. I appreciate this conversation a lot. Just kind of quickly, you said that you had kind of a list of things (laughter) that you thought the park service could attend to. You want to talk about a couple of those?

Thomas Cherry: You know, when I said that, my wife teases me. That's another inherent trait with that D that we described. There's so many things in this world fixing and there's not enough time to fix it all. One year when Jim Brady was the chief ranger in Washington, I had to call him. I said, "Jim, I'm hearing through the grapevine because I'm involved, even in," I was in a field level position. I wasn't down at FLETC. I was a district ranger. I said, "Aren't you getting a lot of complaints about the seasonal register this year?"

Thomas Cherry: He says, "Yeah!" He said, "And I don't understand why." I said, "Would you like to know why?" He said, "I sure would." He said, "Boy, my phone's been ringing off the hook and everybody's been complaining." I said, "Jim, a screen-out item was placed in here for this person to have first aid training up to the level of EMT." "Yeah? Yeah?" He said, "We talked about that. I knew that the seasonal hiring unit was putting that in place."

Thomas Cherry: I said, "What you don't know is when a paramedic applies, it's not from here to there. It's above that and they fall out and their name doesn't even show up on a list of eligible." He said, "That can't be! Paramedic's above an EMT."

Thomas Cherry: "I know that, and you know that, but that piece of paper and that automated device that's scoring these people out doesn't know that." It was erroneously, it was not set up to accept a higher level. It was up to this level. So, they were given points depending on where it was here, here, here. But the other one, not only were they not given any points, they weren't even considered. Things like that.

Thomas Cherry: I got so tired of the park service. The park service fought this battle for years. When we were carrying revolvers, whether it was going to be a two-inch barrel or a four-inch barrel. Who cared? You know? The gun nuts cared. The guys that were really into shooting. And bless them, they're great. But you know, I was never that person. I was proficient enough with a weapon to qualify. And that was it.

Thomas Cherry: So, everybody started talking about the semiautomatic weapon. Okay. Then through a lot of good fortune, we were finally able to transition to the semiautomatic weapon. There were a lot of those, I guess, minor battles along the way. Oh, and having a separate badge for law enforcement rangers. Oh my gosh, that was a horrific event. I mean, that raged on for I don't know how long, about whether, and then we finally got the badges. And then whether regional directors were going to allow their parks to issue them or not. I mean, it seems like we have spent so much time, time, effort and energy fighting a lot of these minor battles over the years. And yet the big ones, like leadership and the need to develop our people and succession planning and where our next leaders are going to come from, just tend to get lip service.

Thomas Cherry: So, I guess to narrow it down, and I know you've got somebody, I need to get out of here, you and I can't fix everything. But I do think that, I'm convinced that particularly with this generation, the generation that has more concerns for themselves, and I don't mean that they're not dedicated to the job just as much as we were, but they have their own priorities. And those priorities mean many instances, the time away from the job is more important to them than the time on the job. and if we don't know how to recognize and realize this and not see it as confrontational, but just accept it and say, this is who my people are now, and this is how I need to deal with them. Right? That's part of that leadership block. I'm afraid that we're going to lose that high ranking we're getting from the public now. And if we lose that and we have to somehow down the road start to rebuild that in addition to rebuilding how our employees think they're treated by the organization, that's going to be too much to swallow. Let's take advantage of the fact we're still up here in the eyes of the public and start to build a firmer foundation down below. And let these other more minor things, which seem very big at the time.

Thomas Cherry: You know, I got involved in that legislation I shared with you on housing just because I think what Russ Dickinson said, "Well, you know, then, Cherry, if you think it's abysmal, then fix it." I said, "Only legislation will fix it." "Then write it."

Thomas Cherry: Yeah. And then trying to get some kind of support on the part of a congressman or senator to support that legislation. You know? Well, how many of us at field level positions knew anyone that would even answer the phone in a congressional office? Much less give us the time of day to support that, particularly when the department wasn't supporting it? I mean, you know. If we had leadership here somewhere in this top tier that could help and assist with those things, could take some of the burden off of some of those lesser graded supervisors and leave them free to do the things that they on the ground are responsible for.

Thomas Cherry: Of course, the director made it very apparent to several of us over the years when we were working on the Ranger Careers and the housing, that will be on weekends and nights. That's not on government time. And that, in many instances, that wasn't all the time, but particularly in that housing issue. The last one that we were successful, that was several years ago, was this thing about criminal investigators. We never had this thing called a CI, an 1811 criminal investigator. There was no series like that in the park service. We had a whole criminal investigative unit above the fire cache in Yosemite.

Thomas Cherry: A survey was sent out by the directorate. Wanted the parks to be honest and respond, is this work being done at this level in your park by an individual or individuals? And parks across the board knew that the Washington office didn't want any part of that. So, all of them, no, no, no, and no. Right?

Thomas Cherry: Walt Dabney was chief at that time. And he said, "That's not right. These parks didn't respond honestly."

Thomas Cherry: So, we formed teams and we went out as a ranger and a classification specialist. And we sat and locked up together with stacks of criminal investigative records. Our job was to go through and sort through and convince the classification specialist that the work was being conducted at that level. Or wasn't. If it wasn't, it went over in this pile.

Thomas Cherry: As a result of that, then I went to Delaware Water Gap with a classification specialist that was, I think he was a Rocky Mountain regional employee, but he was housed at the Tetons. I sat with him for three days, beating heads one against the other. But he tolerated me. At the end of that time, his recommendation was that he work was being done and documented at that level, the historic record. In fairness to him, he was willing to listen. But the superintendent could have said, "No. If that's true, then I'm going to dilute this, I'm going to divide this work up among six of my, or four of my employees, so nobody's going to be doing it for enough percentage of the time to justify that. So, we will have no criminal investigator." I mean, that was his prerogative.

Thomas Cherry: So, the superintendent's the one that really bit the bullet and said, "Okay, fine. If that's what it says, and that's what the classification specialist says, and I've got somebody here that's been doing that job, then I'm going to

change his classification and pay him accordingly." And Clark Guy became the first 1811 in the National Park Service.

Thomas Cherry: So, those little battles along the way—

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah.

Thomas Cherry: —were interesting.

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. Well, thank you so much for the—

Thomas Cherry: All right.

Lu Ann Jones: I'm going to need you to fill this part—

Thomas Cherry: Can I unclip this?

Lu Ann Jones: Yes, you can unclip that. Yes. Thanks.

[END OF TRACK 7]

[END OF INTERVIEW]