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Dwight Dixon
January 14, 2002

Interview conducted by Mark Schoepfle
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September 11, 2001
Oral History Documentation Project
Northeast Region, National Park Service

INTERVIEWEE: Dwight Dixon
Park Ranger
Catoctin Mountain Park
(Interview No. Unlisted)

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INTERVIEW DATE: January 14, 2002

PLACE: Catoctin Mountain Park

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START OF TAPE

Mark Schoepfle: — with Dwight Dixon, 14 January, 2002. Well, Dwight, the first question I just want to ask — an open-ended one — from the moment you were aware of what had happened, what went on? What started? What happened all?

Dwight Dixon: All right. I had my patrol vehicle in the shop that morning, getting the oil changed, and the owner of the shop had a TV going in his office, and came out and told me that a plane — only one at that time — had hit the World Trade Center, not knowing if it was an accident or what else — at that time didn't expect anything else, as far as a terrorist act. A short time later he came back out and said a second one had hit the other World Trade Tower.

Dwight Dixon: At that point, I sort of knew in the back of my mind that that couldn't be an accident. When I left the shop — they completed the servicing of my vehicle — and went to the local Ranger station there in Hancock, Maryland. I was to meet another Ranger there that morning for another assignment, and ran into him, and briefed him on what had happened, and we went there to the Ranger station, and made a call to our Communications Center to what other information they'd had. Our Communication Center handles all the communications for the entire region, including those parts in and around the DC area.

Mark Schoepfle: This Communications Center is where?

Dwight Dixon: It's here in the park, but it's a regional communications center, the National Capitol Region Communication Center is the official — they had the news going, and were receiving calls about other things going on, including a report that there had been a bombing or something on the Mall area, which turned out to be false, and by that time the other — another plane had struck the Pentagon. They had a report at that time, as well, that another plane was missing and feared down, but they didn't know the location. It turned out that to be the plane in Pennsylvania.

Dwight Dixon: At that point, I got the other Ranger and we started to the Communications Center, ourselves, so that we could get all the information directly. In route to the Communications Center here at Ferry Hill from Hancock, I got a radio call that the Regional Chief Ranger wanted all available law enforcement personnel to come immediately to the DC area, so through radio traffic, I had the Communications Center start contacting all of my on-duty and off-site Rangers, and have them either respond directly to DC, the staging area there, or to meet up here at Ferry Hill, which those that needed to were just carpooled out.

- Dwight Dixon: We were probably here at the Communications Center for maybe 15 or 20 minutes, getting some supplies and gear together, and then we went to directly to DC, the staging area there, which was at the Parkway there. I forget the name of it.
- Mark Schoepfle: Is this the Shenandoah one, or —?
- Dwight Dixon: No. It's the Parkway going into D.C.
- Mark Schoepfle: Oh, okay. George Washington?
- Dwight Dixon: George Washington. Yes. Their headquarters is where the staging area was. We met the Regional Chief Ranger there, and he was going to give our assignments, put us into teams, and actually have us go out and accept — help the Park Police or whoever else wanted — whatever agencies might need us in the DC area. I headed up one of the teams. The first five Rangers that got on the scene there went with me as Team One. We were dispatched from there to the Clara Barton Parkway, and there at the Clara Barton Parkway, the daycare center from the Pentagon — they had evacuated all the daycare center, the children and the staff out to the Clara Barton Parkway. They were actually in the grass, adjacent to the Parkway there.
- Mark Schoepfle: Wow.
- Dwight Dixon: With rollaway beds and strollers and blankets and, basically, they just got them out of the building and then they took them to that area.
- Mark Schoepfle: When you say that they were in the grass, was this grass by the Parkway? I mean, where — kind of like where were they?
- Dwight Dixon: It's right next to the Parkway. They were on — that would be the westbound lane, that side of the road, between that and the Potomac River. There were probably about 50 to 60, altogether — staff and children from infants up to toddlers in age that were all, I guess, children of the staff from the Pentagon. [Phone rings.] I'm going to let it ring.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay.
- Dwight Dixon: It will catch in a minute. [Phone keeps ringing.] But the — our purpose for that was to go secure and make sure that the children and the staff there were secure and had whatever supplies that they needed. Interesting enough, the first thing that they were asking for when we arrived were diapers, because the infants, I guess, needed the diapers, and they hadn't been able to get any when they left the building. Someone was able to get some diapers and bring those over.

- Dwight Dixon: We set up a perimeter around the children and the staff; blocked off one lane of the westbound traffic to get the — well, the traffic was light at that time. There wasn't much leaving that route, at least out of DC. So, we blocked off that lane to make it a little safer with the children being there, along the — in the grass along the side of the Parkway.
- Dwight Dixon: We got information. I believe it was from the Air Force. There was a Captain there from the Air Force that was kind of overseeing this part of the moving of the children, and he had — I believe it was him that had acquired the use of a DOT facility, if we could get the children there, that they would be a lot safer in this building, rather than out there in the grass along the Parkway, but the problem was getting them to that location. DOT is next to the Naval Annex Building. It's a short distance from the Pentagon, but on the other side of the Pentagon.
- Dwight Dixon: About the time we were trying to figure out how to get the folks moved up there, a bus came along — a tour bus — empty, leaving DC. So, we basically just stopped the tour bus, and commandeered it, and asked if he would be willing to help, and he would. He offered his assistance. We loaded all the children and blankets and everything we had there — staff — all on to the bus, and escorted it up to the DOT building, next to the Naval Annex. There we moved the children and staff and the beds — the rollaway cribs they had — into that building; someone was able to order up some food for them — for the staff. I guess they hadn't had lunch or anything.
- Mark Schoepfle: Wow.
- Dwight Dixon: The children — I believe they got some food for them, some formula for the infants, and that sort of thing. We set up security around that building, and basically waited for the parents to come and pick their children up, and not knowing who these parents were, of course, we checked ID and had staff members confirm that these were, indeed, their children that they were picking up. And we assisted with some traffic there in front of DOT. It was also a staging point for the State Police, and some of the FBI, so we assisted with some of the traffic control in that location. A lot of emergency vehicles were using that route to get down to the Pentagon.
- Dwight Dixon: The bus route over to DOT from Clara Barton, unfortunately, took us right in front of the Pentagon. The staff from the daycare, of course, evacuated out of the back of the Pentagon, and had not seen the front where the plane had hit the building, so unfortunately, they had to see that, and a few of them, of course, were emotional about seeing that — that scene.

- Dwight Dixon: Pretty much by 5:30 or so, all the children had been picked up by a parent. The only remaining were a couple of staff members, and the Air Force Captain and his wife, who was also in the Air Force. They only lived a short ways from there, and of course, they couldn't get their vehicles, because that area was blocked off — as part down there at the Pentagon, and so we transported the Air Force Captain and his wife to their home. The other staff members — there was a motel across the street, and they went to that location to call to have someone come pick them up, as they were unable to get to their vehicles, as well.
- Dwight Dixon: A second team — Park Service team — had gotten together after we had departed the staging area, and they went to the Mall. I'm not sure what their duties then were. Once we had completed that, and all the children were picked up, we called back to the staging area to see what our next assignment was, and pretty much they had gotten everything secured, and the Park Police had secured the Mall area along with Park Team Two, and we departed DC, and we came back home.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. Okay. When you had — you had basically gone — well, first question. I guess I've asked you about the Shenandoah — I guess they have a Communications Center out there?
- Dwight Dixon: Yes.
- Mark Schoepfle: Was that of any relevance to you all?
- Dwight Dixon: No. No. All of our communications went through our National Capitol Region Communications Center.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes. And that was out here?
- Dwight Dixon: Yes. That was actually physically here on the site of it.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. Well, okay. About what time did you get down to the daycare — to where the new daycare center had been set up?
- Dwight Dixon: It was probably — I'm going to say around 11:00 or 11:30. It may have been just in that area — 11:00 to 12:00.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. And you're saying traffic was light?
- Dwight Dixon: Yes. On that Parkway. Of course, they weren't allowing anything, but emergency vehicles inbound, and pretty much everyone else, I guess, had been evacuated or were using other routes to get out of DC. Traffic between Ferry Hill, here at this office and DC — all the way into DC was very light. Coming out, of course, it was backed up — all lanes, bumper-to-bumper.
- Mark Schoepfle: And this was by the time you came out in the evening?

Dwight Dixon: No. This was in the morning, inbound.

Mark Schoepfle: Oh, okay. The usual commuter traffic in other words?

Dwight Dixon: Well, there was nobody going in — into the town

Mark Schoepfle: Oh, yes.

Dwight Dixon: Because of the emergency, but everybody else leaving DC — getting out of DC — that the outbound lanes were packed; the inbound lanes were very light.

Mark Schoepfle: What effect did that have on what was going on for you all?

Dwight Dixon: The traffic?

Mark Schoepfle: The outbound traffic?

Dwight Dixon: The outbound traffic didn't have any effect on us, but the inbound, being light, allowed us to get down there quickly.

Mark Schoepfle: You got down there quickly? And it didn't provide — it didn't cause too much problem with where the little ones were?

Dwight Dixon: No, no. Like I say, the inbound lanes were shut down, except for emergency traffic, on the Clara Barton Parkway. And the outbound lanes had been either cleared already — pretty much everybody had already gotten out of town that were going to leave, or they were taking other routes, because it was fairly light. It was steady, but light. It wasn't your usual traffic.

Mark Schoepfle: Yes. Another question comes up. When you say that you secured the area while the — where the kids and the staff were —

Dwight Dixon: Mmhmm.

Mark Schoepfle: — what did that entail.

Dwight Dixon: We —

Mark Schoepfle: For those of us who have no knowledge of that.

Dwight Dixon: Yes. Well, I had six people on my team, and we spread out, and basically had a secure perimeter around the children. Of course, these were all well-armed Law Enforcement officers. I had a couple of them — were being sure that traffic was safe and getting by them there on the Parkway.

- Dwight Dixon: I had a couple of others that were stopping folks that were bicycling or walking along the trail, there, adjacent to the Parkway, between the Parkway, and the Potomac River, asking them to get off their bikes and walk through the area, because of the children, and being sure that no one came into the area armed that was not a local officer, or known to us. And just generally being sure of the safety of the staff and the children.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. And did anybody come into this that was armed?
- Dwight Dixon: Yes. There was some — a couple of officers, and I forget the department they were with — and that might have been [inaudible]. I can't recall whether they were Secret Service Officers. They had their credentials, and were badged, and I believe they're actually the ones that went — and was able to get some diapers and other provisions for the children.
- Mark Schoepfle: Hmm!
- Dwight Dixon: But they were in plain clothes. They properly identified themselves. They were — well, they were of great assistance to us.
- Mark Schoepfle: What else — you mentioned that they got diapers. What else did they do?
- Dwight Dixon: Well, some blankets for the children to lay on. I believe they also brought some water down.
- Mark Schoepfle: But basically, up there at Clara Barton, there wasn't any food or anything like that at that point?
- Dwight Dixon: Nothing. They were just moved out of the building for safety, real quick and hastily, and stationed there in the grass between the park and the Potomac River.
- Mark Schoepfle: How were the kids taking it? I mean, how were they —
- Dwight Dixon: Well, I don't believe at their age they realized what was going on. I think it was probably more like a field trip for them — you know, we're going — the idea of going down to the river, and they have a picnic without — [laughter] but I don't think they knew exactly what was happening
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. And the staff? How would they operate under this?
- Dwight Dixon: They were extremely professional in doing their job. Again, they went out the back, so they weren't really completely aware of what had happened. They knew a plane had hit, but they weren't aware of the damage that it had done, and had not seen it until we drove by, relocating them — they were all composed, and doing their job, and doing a great job in taking care of the children.

- Mark Schoepfle: You mentioned that they got emotional when they had seen — when they actually saw what had happened up in the front, so what happened there?
- Dwight Dixon: Well, I had two staff members in my vehicle with me, and they just basically broke down and cried somewhat at the sight of the damage that the plane had done to the front of the building. One of the ladies mentioned that she thought she knew who was in that area, either their offices or their station in that area, and hoped — you know, that they had not been injured. But we just kind of comforted each other, and kind of tried to keep our mind on taking care of the children.
- Mark Schoepfle: Oh, sure.
- Dwight Dixon: And getting that sort of thing straightened out. By the time we had reached the DOT building and started unloading the buses and getting the children in there, everything — everybody had composed themselves, and was doing what we needed to do. I think it was the shock for them to see exactly how big of a hole and damage that had made in the building. And just luckily, I guess, that the daycare was on the back side or side that was unaffected by the plane. There were quite a few children.
- Mark Schoepfle: You mentioned the Air Force Captain who was kind of in charge of getting everybody — the moving the kids back there.
- Dwight Dixon: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: What else was he doing?
- Dwight Dixon: Well, he was basically coordinating everything. He had communications, and moved people, I guess, in the Pentagon, and in and around the area, and I'm just guessing at this point, but I suppose he worked there in the Pentagon. So, he was trying to coordinate everything, and he did a real good job, too. He was attempting to get some vans before this bus showed up. He was getting some vans and some vehicles, so we could move the children.
- Mark Schoepfle: I was going to say, what were some of the fallback options that — for you all, had the bus not happened to show up?
- Dwight Dixon: We would have waited on those vehicles or tried to get a van or a bus through another agency or another means.
- Mark Schoepfle: What were some of these means — possible means to you all, or were those things that just were — you would have called as you went along?
- Dwight Dixon: We — well, we would have either gone through the Park Police, or through our dispatcher to see who else in the area might have a van, and personnel that could drive them down there.

- Dwight Dixon: There were several other options. It happened fairly quick that that bus — we were probably there only a half-hour, 45 minutes before that bus showed up.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. What tour line was it? Do you happen to remember?
- Dwight Dixon: I really don't. It happened so quick. I remember just thanking him. When we got off the bus at DOT, I remember going and thanking the bus driver for helping us out, and he mentioned the — he had to be — I can't recall the city, but he had to be somewhere to pick up another tour to take some folks somewhere, and I asked him if he knew who these folks that he had just transported were, and I informed that those were the children from the daycare out of the Pentagon.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. And his reaction?
- Dwight Dixon: He was amazed and seemed somewhat pleased that he could help in that respect.
- Mark Schoepfle: It was just basically one of those private tour lines that's around there?
- Dwight Dixon: Yes. Mmhmm.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Another thing you mentioned, and we're still on this very same day, that by — that you had — once you got to the new area, which was — let's see if I've got that right. It was down by this DOT —
- Dwight Dixon: Yes. Virginia DOT.
- Mark Schoepfle: Virginia? Oh, Virginia DOT. For some reason, I had — now, what happened as far as setting — was it different for setting up security around there?
- Dwight Dixon: Uh, it was actually very simple there, because it's a fenced-in compound. There were only a couple of entrances into the area, so basically, we closed the gates to the fence, and then staffed those, and set up a perimeter around that building, and the compound, as well, to be sure that only those folks that are supposed to be in there were there, and to be sure that the people coming to pick up the children were the parents or guardian.
- Mark Schoepfle: What happened during that period? I mean, was the — I don't know what would be routine, and what's not under those circumstances. I'm trying to visualize what would have happened if I'd have been there and had to do something.
- Dwight Dixon: Basically, it was — I guess you'd say routine. We just, like I said, set up a perimeter to be sure that only authorized folks came in, and we had a plan that if we needed to evacuate that building, how we would evacuate those folks from that building with the children and the staff.

- Dwight Dixon: And basically, that was to just take them out the back door into the back of the compound. There was some heavy construction and road equipment on the back of the compound that would probably be safe shelter to leave that area.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, you would have just been out there in that construction area?
- Dwight Dixon: Yes. Well, it's not a construction area. It was more of a pole barn/parking lot on the back of the compound.
- Dwight Dixon: It's a fairly large compound, and the heavy steel machinery that was there, we thought that would probably be the safest place —
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure.
- Dwight Dixon: — to have the children in case there were other explosions [inaudible].
- Mark Schoepfle: Sure. What — how did you get the DOT facility? How did that happen?
- Dwight Dixon: I believe —
- Mark Schoepfle: Of all facilities I could think of, over there?
- Dwight Dixon: Yes. I'm not sure, but I believe it was the Air Force Captain that was able to work that up. Like I said, he was putting all this together, and had a good handle on everything before we got there.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mhmm. So, you — you all were finished — what? — did you say about 5:00 o'clock?
- Dwight Dixon: I'd say 5:30, maybe 6:00 o'clock we were probably leaving the DC area, 5:30-6:00 o'clock.
- Mark Schoepfle: What happened then?
- Dwight Dixon: I — we weren't sure — well, on the way down, we weren't sure if we were going to stay all night, or a week, or whatever, but we all knew that that was a possibility, so we were a bit surprised when we were released that night. I had my team go ahead and take their vehicles to their residence in case we were called back out that night or early the next morning. The thought was that most likely we would be dispatched back down there for additional security or other details the next morning. We got a call the next morning about 10:00 o'clock — 9:00 or 10:00 o'clock — that pretty much everything had stabilized and was secure, and just basically to be on the radio in our park.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. So, for the rest of that day, what happened?
- Dwight Dixon: The first day? Or —

Mark Schoepfle: This — after 10:00 o'clock when you had gotten this message?

Dwight Dixon: We just kept on our normal duties here in the park and monitoring the radio. Of course, there's a heightened awareness in our patrols, looking for anything suspicious. We kept getting communications, through our dispatch of vehicles that may or may not be associated with the terrorist's acts, and we were looking for those.

Mark Schoepfle: You mean you actually got a read out of vehicles that you ought to be on the lookout for?

Dwight Dixon: Yes. Tags and vehicles descriptions, as well as a few names. The park on the first day was shut down. The superintendent closed all buildings and sent everyone home.

Mark Schoepfle: So, on the 12th were they back in business or what?

Dwight Dixon: Pretty much. They may have had some areas down towards DC that — they probably weren't back to complete normal down there, but everybody up in Western Maryland was back to pretty much normal operations.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. When you say that you were on a heightened level of alertness, the one thing you mentioned that you were doing was keeping close attention to the radio dispatches to watch out for vehicles and suspicious characters. What other things were part of this awareness?

Dwight Dixon: Suspicious packages in and around buildings. We checked our campgrounds to be sure that somebody would not be holed up in our campgrounds.

Mark Schoepfle: Did you find anything of interest, or did anything happen that was noteworthy or anything like that?

Dwight Dixon: No. We — pretty much everything was normal for now.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. What happened in the days after that? Okay. This was sort of the second day we're talking about.

Dwight Dixon: Mmhmm.

Mark Schoepfle: And the park had been closed down the first day. By the second day things were more or less, you're saying, back to normal?

Dwight Dixon: Back to normal, as far as park operations; we were still getting requests for personnel to go out on security at other areas. I sent two Rangers up to Boston for a security detail up there, and I had —

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START OF SIDE 2

Dwight Dixon: — well, it's just a draw-down on the park. It's tough to staff the park and give the park the protection that it requires under normal operations with everything open and provide personnel to these details. It's all important; it's just tough to do with limited personnel.

Mark Schoepfle: Mhmm. What is the basic — the base number of Rangers and police that you had to begin with?

Dwight Dixon: If we're full staffed, we have a total in my district of eight Protection Rangers. At that time, I was already short two positions; one of them was on training, and one was vacant.

Mark Schoepfle: And this meant that you had —

Dwight Dixon: Six.

Mark Schoepfle: — that you ordinarily would have ten, or that you were actually down to six?

Dwight Dixon: I was down to six.

Mark Schoepfle: What — okay, when you were saying that the draw-down had a lot of — sort of put a strain on — what are the things that you were doing, what are some of the normal activities that you all would be — well, I know that there are probably quite a few — what are some of the normal activities that sort of stick out, or are unique to this area, or probably to this area that you have to worry about?

Dwight Dixon: We have a lot of hunting violations, archeological resource theft, a multitude of different types of first aid incidents with bike accidents, and hikers being out. So, we get quite a few calls for that, and if there's only two or three folks in the park giving lead days — we're 100 — my district is 165 miles long; it takes a while to respond, as well as backup for the Rangers that are on duty. There's usually no backup, or it is a long ways off, as well. We're talking 30 minutes to an hour it would probably easily take them to respond or to back another Ranger up, given we're spread out.

Mark Schoepfle: What's the normal time for a backup response?

Dwight Dixon: If everybody's on and in their district, 15 or 20 minutes. That's if all Rangers are in — in their district and on duty. It's a possibility. That could be less, but probably at the most, to get from one end of your district or subdistrict to another, if there's two of you on, it's probably 15 to 20 minutes.

Mark Schoepfle: Uh-huh. So, now with this increased strain on things it takes half an hour, or even more?

Dwight Dixon: Easily. If — for instance, Matt is one of the Rangers that I sent to Boston, and he's the only Ranger in the Cumberland section of the park — that's a subdistrict of this district, and it's as far west as you can get in the park — so if we're the only other Ranger on that day, and there were an emergency up there — well, during the two-week period that he was gone, to respond from here to Ferry Hill it would take me easily 45 minutes to an hour to get up there.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. And you're saying most of the issues that you've got to deal with — I mean, the sort of top priority items, I guess, are like the hunting violations, the archeological resource violations, and injured hikers and bikers?

Dwight Dixon: Yes. Some medical incidents, yes.

Mark Schoepfle: So, you don't have a high crime, like drug dealing or any of that kind of stuff going on?

Dwight Dixon: We do have drug incidence, but it goes on year-round, whether we're there or not. We wouldn't be there to detect it, of course, but it's more of a public safety in having somebody available — for the public safety is, I think, our largest worry, is having somebody available to respond, because — and just being seen. If you're highly visible you can probably deter a lot of crime, just from being seen, and if there's only one or two Rangers spread out over 165-mile district, it's not inconceivable that some visitors may come here fairly regular and never see a Ranger, because we're so spread out. And I think by being visible, we probably reduce a lot of the car breaking-and-enterings — car clouts. We probably reduce a lot of vandalism, just because they know we're out and about, looking for that sort of thing.

Mark Schoepfle: Is there any indication that some of these crimes, such as the archeological resources, the hunting violations, the break-ins and vandalism — is there any indication that they've been on an increase because of this lack of presence or —

Dwight Dixon: I can't say exactly what it is related to, but I can say that all of those crimes from my district — interestingly enough, I've just gotten the report last week — were up for the year. I actually had fewer Rangers in the field, and a higher number of incidents, pretty much across the board. Had I had full staff in the field, there's a strong possibility that we have even detected or caught more crimes in progress. It's directly related to how

many folks you have in the field, but I can't say that our incidence is directly related to those terrorist attacks, and not having folks here.

Mark Schoepfle: You can't really be sure? But —

Dwight Dixon: I can't really say.

Mark Schoepfle: But you have nevertheless seen an increase in these things?

Dwight Dixon: Certainly. Certainly.

Mark Schoepfle: Is there any way — I mean, just so that when we hope to be writing this up, that we can have numbers to go with this, is there a way that we could get some of this information?

Dwight Dixon: Sure. I can see if — I was passing the report around. I can see if it's still in a mailbox out here and make you a copy.

Mark Schoepfle: Oh, that would be great. That would be great.

Dwight Dixon: You'll see — basically, the report shows the various incidents. It gives how many we had in that area last year, and how many we had in that area this year. So, it will list everything from vandalism to car break-ins, to injuries, and show that.

Mark Schoepfle: Well — and this is intriguing, because one of the questions I guess I would ask is — you know, you were saying earlier it wasn't — you're not really sure it's because of the changes in these patterns or the because of these events. What else would cause this increases — these increases?

Dwight Dixon: I think for this park, it's probably increases in visitation and use of the park. We continue to grow every year, as far as our visitation stats. I think we have 2.1 or 2.3 million visitors in this park last year, and that's quite a few people.

Mark Schoepfle: Now, what kind of rate is that — I mean, from what you remember — what kind of rate is that of growth? I mean, you've got 2.1 to maybe 2.3 this year. What was it the year before?

Dwight Dixon: I think it was either 2 or 1.9.

Mark Schoepfle: Whoa.

Dwight Dixon: So, it had gone up quite a bit.

Mark Schoepfle: So, you have quite a trend. In other words, over the years.

Dwight Dixon: Sure.

- Mark Schoepfle: And so, it would be fairly easy to sit down and see if the trend for the crime increase, if there's a sort of matching trend or variance in the crime over time versus the use.
- Dwight Dixon: Sure would.
- Mark Schoepfle: In what you've seen so far, do you see that the crime increases from all these things are increasing faster than the use rate, or what? I'm digging at something here, because I want to see if I can get at a cause here.
- Dwight Dixon: It would just be a guess, but I think it is, pretty much coincides with our visitation increase.
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.
- Dwight Dixon: And probably growth in the area, as well — housing and just general growth in this area, headed west; there's been a lot of development at this one.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes. Has anybody in the Park Service been tracking any of this? Growth increase, need for law enforcement, this kind of thing?
- Dwight Dixon: Yes. Every year we do a law enforcement report that, of course, shows all of our incidents for the year. It shows how much we've spent on law enforcement activities for the year, and it — it also records our visitation. There's a visitor and resource protection software program that you plug in the miles of trails, miles of roads, acreage of the park; you figure in the local density population. It's called a V-Wrap program, and it computes out what it suggests you have as far as Law Enforcement Rangers for what you have going on in the park. You list archeological incidents. You list pretty much all of the law enforcement incidents over a three — what is it — three-year period?
- Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm.
- Dwight Dixon: As well as the population and visitation, and it gives you this big — so they are tracking it.
- Mark Schoepfle: Okay. Is there a way I could get these, just so I have backup documentation to write this up?
- Dwight Dixon: Sure. Sure.
- Mark Schoepfle: From here, or is there a central —
- Dwight Dixon: Yes. I have it — you — I've got a copy of that.
- Mark Schoepfle: Oh, that's great. That's great.

- Dwight Dixon: It said that our park — I believe it was a little over 21 positions we should have full-time — positions to cover our park area.
- Mark Schoepfle: Should have 21?
- Dwight Dixon: Yes. It was actually 21 point something — 3 or something like that.
- Mark Schoepfle: And you said you had about 8?
- Dwight Dixon: In my district, and they're — if they're full-staffed, again. We have quite a change over here — turnover. They have five additional positions in the other district, so that's a total of — what? — 13?
- Mark Schoepfle: Wow. In this regard — okay, the reason I'm bearing down so hard on this kind of thing — this is very intriguing — and in some of the other interviews I've had, particularly with the police, such as Mr. Berberich — Captain Berberich in the Capitol, you know, he's pointing out that because they had to become more stationary when they're patrolling and this kind of think that a lot of their crime is going up.
- Dwight Dixon: Right.
- Mark Schoepfle: And this is an important kind of effect, and therefore being able to document it, and somebody not coming back and saying, well, it could be something else.
- Dwight Dixon: Right, right. Yes. When you're — when you're reduced in staff, as we are, you do kind of switch to more of a reaction than proactive mode, and I'll use an example: The poachers in the area, if we have a routine, they know our routine. I have known poachers to actually come by and look to see if there were patrol cars at residences to know whether that patrolman was out on patrol — that Ranger was on patrol, or he was at his house. So, they do catch on pretty quick; they all have scanners, so they monitor radio traffic and that sort of thing. You've got to vary your patrol tactics and what you do, but certainly, when you only have two or three folks, you get into more a reactive than proactive, because your time is dedicated to covering the essentials.
- Mark Schoepfle: And the essentials being?
- Dwight Dixon: The normal duties that we have to carry out every day. We also do the fee collection for our campgrounds. Of course, there's stacks and stacks of paperwork of reports that have to be done. There's ongoing investigations that have to be followed up; you have to appear in court. Every month we have to take care of all of those things, and we have park-specific committees that we're on. And so, even though we're short-handed the job still has to be done, and the folks that are still here kind of have to bite the bullet and see that it gets done, and that occupies a lot of that time,

whereas some of that time may have been spent doing generalized patrol on foot, walking the boundary doing the things that take a little bit more time than we're allowed to get into with the staffing shortages.

Mark Schoepfle: Mmhmm. With these kind of staffing shortages, and all of things that you're pointing out here, any kind of sense that you all have returned to any kind of normalcy?

Dwight Dixon: Well, we did a plan — required a plan that's a draw-down plan — that basically spells out what our park would be able to offer as far personnel to some of these areas, like Boston, and they're also requesting people to guard some dams, and I think they had a special detail at the Independence. But anyway, the plan spells out at what staffing levels, how many folks we would be able to provide, and keep — basically keep functioning as a park — keep things open without shutting down camping grounds or visitor center, some of your public contact stations.

Dwight Dixon: But with my normal vacancies that I have right now, I'm at a level where I don't have many folks available to send to these details. So, what we are doing is we allow the Rangers if they want to work one of their days off at one of these details in which case this has been [inaudible] park — the details out West to guard the dams and to Boston were longer details, and it would be difficult, if not impossible for me to send somebody out there for two to three weeks to keep the park functioning, and to minimally staff and keep the public safe and do what we needed to do.

Mark Schoepfle: Okay. So, in other words, you haven't had to send anybody yet out to the western parks, out to these dams or anything like that?

Dwight Dixon: No. Basically, I've had to decline, because I don't have the staff for anyone for a month or two or three weeks. They're working on their days off doing some of the local coverage that's required in some areas.

Mark Schoepfle: That's the next thing I was going to ask, that some of the — I know that in DC they had reported from going from eight to twelve-hour shifts. How does that work here?

Dwight Dixon: It's part of our draw-down plan to go to that in, I believe it's level five, which is the highest awareness level. We're in a level four now. If we had another emergency that calls us — a request for personnel, and we would work twelve-hour shifts, and all leave will be cancelled, but as of yet I've not had to do that. We're pretty much working eight-hour shifts, but we are working up to six days a week.

Mark Schoepfle: Is there a concern about — I know this has certainly been an issue down there in Washington, proper — about burnout and this kind of thing? Is this an issue here yet?

- Dwight Dixon: It does affect personnel morale, when you have to decline leave or cancel leave. Right now, the extra duties that they are working are on a voluntary basis.
- Dwight Dixon: Again, if we go to the next level, it won't be voluntary, they will have to work a twelve-hour shift, and possibly longer work weeks, but right now it's all been voluntary, so it hasn't affected us in the burnout sense, but I have had to decline some leave, whereas maybe one or two folks want to take off a week or so at a time, just because of the shortages of where we're at level four, I try to have them reschedule and just have one Ranger out at a time. I have not accepted any leave slips for February at this point. As I've said, I've got two vacancies right now. If I can fill those, I'll go ahead and restore the leave for February.
- Mark Schoepfle: Yes. What's the chance of filling vacancies?
- Dwight Dixon: The park's budget is in the red right now. We've lapsed these two positions that I have open now for a while, as well as other positions in the park that have been lapsed, and so I'm hoping that this lapse money will cover the amount that we have in the red, and I can fill these positions. I do have a certificate for the positions. I just haven't been working on it until I get the okay to fill those once more.
- Mark Schoepfle: Well, I hate to sound like Geraldo on this, but you're mentioning beforehand that you would — it would be really nice to have around 21 people.
- Dwight Dixon: Mmhmm.
- Mark Schoepfle: And you've only got eight. What would you be able to do with the 21? I know you were mentioning being able — you know, like the less static positions and this kind of thing.
- Dwight Dixon: Well, when we're to our full staff of eight positions in this district, we can cover a shift, shift and a half, maybe two if we kind of spread things thin. Right now, at the staffing level we have, I basically cover one eight-hour shift in the park. Now, the park is a 24-hour park. It never closes. There's no way of closing it, so that means that sixteen hours, basically, out of the day, there's no Ranger on duty.
- Mark Schoepfle: So, 16 hours. Run that by me again?
- Dwight Dixon: It's a 24-hour park.
- Mark Schoepfle: Right.
- Dwight Dixon: And if I have a Ranger working one shift — an eight-hour shift — that still leave 16 hours that there's no coverage really in the park.

Mark Schoepfle: Got it.

Dwight Dixon: We try to put the Rangers on when the most visitation is, and right now, that's pretty much during the day.

Mark Schoepfle: What — considering that most of the visitation is during the days now, what's going to happen come summertime?

Dwight Dixon: Oh, it increases considerably, and it goes year-round. Of course, our campgrounds will be full, and that's 24-hours. Folks come into the camp and bike the canal, usually on the back-country camp sites. That increases considerably, and special events; people doing charity walks and other benefits on the canal, so we spend a lot of time with those.

Dwight Dixon: And the summertime seems to bring out those that come to the park for other than recreation purposes, that come to here to party, basically, and enjoy themselves other ways, which presents its problems: Bonfire parties, that sort of thing. We get a lot more, of course, of that in the evenings during the summer, because of the temperatures, I guess, and the kids being out of school.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, so, from what you're describing, there really has not been a return to normalcy in any way. Or am I misunderstanding how — what you're —

Dwight Dixon: Well, I think it is as normal as we can get it at this point, given our staffing, and what we're being asked to do, as far as helping out with some of these other sites. It's not unusual to be short staff at any park. We're all — you know, we all need staff, and so you learn to adapt and kind of cope with that. They were some long days and long weeks, of course, right after the events of the 11th, but that's kind of fit into the schedule now. If we get requests for personnel to go to one of these details, I post the dates and times that they're needed, and if a Ranger wants to, they can volunteer for those.

Mark Schoepfle: Is there a point in your judgment and experience in which the system would just break down? Is there kind of a threshold below which the staff go in which there would be some real trouble?

Dwight Dixon: I don't think it would break down. What I think would happen is similar several years back, when they had trouble getting the budget passed, and several parks closed their gates, or closed their visitor centers. I think we would see that sort of thing happening, and in which case, probably a similar response from the visiting public to some degree. If it were an emergency, such as what happened on the 11th, I think they would be more accepting or understanding of that sort of thing of why Rangers were not here, and why this visitor center wasn't open, whereas in the case with the budget, they weren't so accepting of that [laughter]. They thought that

should have been done. So, I don't think it would ever break down completely, but I think it could certainly be strained.

Mark Schoepfle: Mhmm. If you had the — looking back at what's been going on, are there any lessons to be learned from this?

Dwight Dixon: I think we probably all or at least a good many of us didn't think that something like that could happen within the US. I think it opened our eyes, security-wise and otherwise, to know that we are vulnerable to that sort of thing. It doesn't just happen overseas. And in that respect, I think it serves us well to be prepared, and as best prepared as we can, to respond should it ever happen again to things like that. I know that the team I have — the team of Rangers — were the most professional. We got there. We had a job to do; it wasn't completely clear at times, but we did it. They were great guys. We accomplished what we were sent down there to do.

Dwight Dixon: The folks down there that were running the daycare, amongst all that turmoil down there, still were doing their jobs. They were taking care of those little children and providing for their needs. The Air Force Captain there, I guess from instinct or from his training, was coordinating everything, and had it going. So, it wasn't that we were unprepared, but I think we should keep in the back of our minds that should this sort of thing happen again, that we be made even more aware and more aware and more prepared for that sort of thing.

Mark Schoepfle: When you say more aware and more prepared, what are some of the things we might do?

Dwight Dixon: Well, some of the things we're already doing are some of these drawdown plans coming up with plans ahead of time: Where we would have staging areas if something would happen in DC or should happen in western Maryland. So, some of these are already in the works. Some law enforcement equipment is being looked at, as far as a cache — radio cache for law enforcement, particularly, you know, with the specific channels just for incidents; so, we're looking at other law enforcement equipment that might be useful and that sort of thing. And I think a lot of it still comes back to staffing and realizing if we want or need this sort of —

END OF TAPE 1

START OF TAPE 2

Dwight Dixon: — someone requested a report in WASO or in region that says, you know, we'd like for you to talk to all these folks or anybody that might have been involved and kind of let us know, or is it just something you're doing on your own?

Mark Schoepfle: Kate Stevenson, the Associate Director of Cultural Resources, has asked for a report. The question that always comes up in these things is what goes into the report? Is it “we did this and we did that,” which is what it usually — they end up being, or is it “we found this and we found that,” and “this is what people are telling us” sort of thing?

Dwight Dixon: Going from one to the other is — well, we’d like to the other, and we want to see how far we can get with that, and that’s the honest answer at this point.

Dwight Dixon: It might be interesting to see who reads, and what they make of it.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, if something comes out, you’re on the list, definitely. I can assure you of that, and we’re going to make sure something comes out.

Dwight Dixon: Good.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, thank you very much for your time. I appreciate it. How long have you been here?

Dwight Dixon: Sure thing. Sure thing.

Mark Schoepfle: How long have you been here?

Dwight Dixon: A little over a year. About a year and three months.

Mark Schoepfle: Oh, wow. So, you really hit the ground running, literally [laughter]. Have you been in the Park Service for a while?

Dwight Dixon: Yes. I’ve been in — well, as of tomorrow nineteen years.

Mark Schoepfle: Nineteen years?

Dwight Dixon: Mmhmm.

Mark Schoepfle: Where else have you been?

Dwight Dixon: All up and down the East Coast. I came here from Little River Canyon, a new park in northeast Alabama.

Mark Schoepfle: Sure.

Dwight Dixon: I was the first Chief Ranger there — the first Ranger and got that program up and running before I came back here.

Mark Schoepfle: Very good.

Dwight Dixon: But I’ve been to Cape Canaveral National Seashore; Cape Lookout; Fire Island, New York; Morristown, New Jersey; Everglades; Natchez Trace Parkway, Horseshoe Bend— up, up and around.

Mark Schoepfle: Now, were you starting from — when you were out there at Little River, are you from around there? Or where are you from?

Dwight Dixon: I'm originally from western North Carolina.

Mark Schoepfle: Oh, okay. I gathered your accent was western North Carolina, east Tennessee.

Dwight Dixon: Yes. I graduated high school in Chattanooga, Tennessee, so I was real familiar with the area.

Mark Schoepfle: Is that right?

Dwight Dixon: Yes. That's where my accent comes from.

Mark Schoepfle: Yes. I lived for a couple of years up in Knoxville, that's why I thought — and that sounded northern Georgia, northern Alabama — you know, that kind of area.

Dwight Dixon: Yes. Yes. It certainly is. I can tell the difference as to — I really can.

Mark Schoepfle: Well, great. Well, good talking to you, definitely

END OF TAPE