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Association of National Park Rangers Oral History Project, 2012-2016



Tomie Patrick Lee
October 29, 2016

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

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ANPR Oral History Project

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The narrator was invited to review and correct the transcript, but did not accept.

Audiofile: LEE Tomie 29 Oct 20146

[START OF TAPE 1]

Lilli Tichinin: All right. So this is Lilli Tichinin here at an Association of National Park Rangers Ranger Rendezvous on October 29, 2016. And I am here with Tomie Lee. Tomie, could you just introduce yourself? For starters?

Tomie Lee: I'm Tomie Lee.

Lilli Tichinin: Perfect.

Tomie Lee: Retired since 2007.

Lilli Tichinin: Wonderful. Great. So we're going to start with just some of the biographical info. So, when and where were you born?

Tomie Lee: I was born in Carlsbad, New Mexico, in February 21, 1944.

Lilli Tichinin: Wonderful.

Tomie Lee: I'm currently 72 years old.

Lilli Tichinin: And did you grow up in Carlsbad, or—

Tomie Lee: Just for the first eleven years.

Lilli Tichinin: And then where did you go after that?

Tomie Lee: (laughs) All over the West, basically. I went to schools, usually two or three schools a year. My stepfather was a foreman on a mineral exploration crew, so we traveled all over. I went to schools in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Arizona, and we lived in a lot of other states as well.

Lilli Tichinin: Wow. When you were growing up, did you take family trips to national parks? Or have any sort of knowledge of national parks in any way?

Tomie Lee: The only national park that I recall was Yellowstone. We stayed there overnight just before the big earthquake occurred. And because we were moving to Rock Springs, Wyoming. But that was it.

Lilli Tichinin: Mm hmm. And it was a stopover as you were moving.

Tomie Lee: It was. It was just overnight in the campground.

Lilli Tichinin: Interesting. Wonderful. And changing schools so often, I wonder, did you have any teachers or adults in your life, other than your parents, who were influential for you? In terms of what you were interested in?

- Tomie Lee: Not really, because we moved so often.
- Lilli Tichinin: Mm hmm. Yeah.
- Tomie Lee: My senior year in high school, I did spend one whole year in one school. And that was Sanders, Arizona, that was right on the edge of the Navajo reservation. I had good teachers, it seems like, every place that I went. But because I didn't spend a lot of time at any one school, it was difficult to really be able to say I had a particular teacher who was influential, even though I spent the whole, one whole school year in Sanders. Again, I had good teachers, but none of them that I, you know, was really – they were just very good.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. No one that stands out, really.
- Tomie Lee: No.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Yeah. What types of things were you interested in when you were, all through school, but even as you were graduating high school? What were you interested in and what did you do next?
- Tomie Lee: Science.
- Lilli Tichinin: Science. Yeah.
- Tomie Lee: I took all the science that I could. I wasn't real fond of math, but, you know, I took math classes. And I knew I wanted to go to college. I graduated, and that summer, I had my very first job waiting tables. I did that until school started, and I started my freshman year at Northern Arizona University, although at the time, it was Arizona State College.
- Lilli Tichinin: Oh, okay.
- Tomie Lee: That was in 1962. I did the first year, school year, two semesters. That summer, I went to work for a place called Dinosaur Caverns, just west of Seligman, Arizona, on the old Route 66. But the new interstate system had not gone anyplace close to there. Actually, I worked in several different jobs. I worked in their snack bar. I also led cave tours, and just did a little bit of whatever they needed done there. Then I went back to school my sophomore year.
- Tomie Lee: One of the things that I will never forget my sophomore year was walking through one of my friends' dorms – not the dorm I lived in, but a friend's dorm – and hearing the radio talking about an assassination. I remember saying to myself, "Oh, I'm so glad we live in America. We don't have these things happen here." Well, of course, we did. It was JFK. And that made a huge impact on me, basically, I guess, for the rest of my life. I couldn't tell you that it changed anything I did or whatever. It just, I think, made me realize maybe a little reality about politics, the country we live in and just, I think it shook my sense of security somewhat. But you know, wow. At the end of my first semester my

sophomore year, I had to go back to work because my money had run out. So I worked for, off and on, I'd work for usually a semester and a summer and then go back for a semester and then drop out. I was working during the semesters, too. And did that.

Tomie Lee: Then I met my first husband who, at the time, had lived for many years at the Grand Canyon. But he had been in maintenance there and had left that job and had gone, when I met him, he was an Arizona highway patrolman.

Lilli Tichinin: Okay.

Tomie Lee: But we were, we got married and he left the highway patrol and had a western band. We traveled with his band for several years. He had contracts with the casinos in Nevada. He was a headliner at the Golden Nugget several times.

Lilli Tichinin: Oh, my goodness. What was the name of the band?

Tomie Lee: It was Ken Patrick and the [Kinsmen?]. But it was country music. We did that. Then we had first one child, and then we had the opportunity to take his son from a previous marriage. So we did that. The decision was made that he needed, we needed to be more settled for that. And Kenny, my stepson, was in school, and so we needed some security. So Ken went back to the National Park Service, and we were at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. Southern Arizona. And—

Lilli Tichinin: And what year was that?

Tomie Lee: That would have been 1970. And—

Lilli Tichinin: And what was his position there?

Tomie Lee: He actually started off in maintenance again. But because of his law enforcement background with the Arizona Highway Patrol, they decided they would rather have him work as a law enforcement ranger. And he did. He switched over. And loved it. We were there for a couple of years when we were transferred to Point Reyes National Seashore. He had just received a promotion to, I guess it was district ranger, when he was shot and killed. And then here I was. Kenny's birth mother chose to take Kenny. So, I ended up with – Ken and I had had our second child when we were at Organ Pipe.

Tomie Lee: So, James was five. Had just turned five two weeks before his dad's murder.

Lilli Tichinin: Oh, my goodness.

Tomie Lee: And Clayton was 20 months old. So we packed up. And at that time, there were no real benefits for people in my situation. You know, there wasn't—

Lilli Tichinin: Park widows. Yeah.

- Tomie Lee: Yes, I would get a survivor's benefit, because he had been killed on duty. But there was no – for instance now when a law enforcement officer is killed, there's, I think last I heard it was over two hundred thousand dollars that the federal government gave to the family. We had nothing like that. In fact, I was living in park housing. Ken had always loved the Grand Canyon and wanted to be buried there, so he was buried there. When I got back from his burial, my boys and I were at home the day after we got back. The superintendent came, and was very kind, John Lansing, and he said that I didn't need to move out right away. That he understood it would take a while. But they already had Ken's replacement living in a motel in [Innisfree?]. And it was, it really sounds stupid, but suddenly I realized we had no place to live.
- Tomie Lee: So, we packed up and moved from Point Reyes National Seashore in California back to Flagstaff. I enrolled in school, and changed my major and minor, and took a double major in, at that time, NAU was NAU [Northern Arizona University].
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Tomie Lee: But they couldn't decide whether to call the program resource management or land management, recreation land management. So one year it was one, and the second year it was something else. But it didn't change what I was taking. So, my two double majors were, whatever you want to call it, recreation land management or resource management with the geology forestry slant.
- Lilli Tichinin: Interesting.
- Tomie Lee: Or emphasis. And my second major was poli science. So, we got out of school in May of 1975, and I got my job at Tuzigoot.
- Lilli Tichinin: You had mentioned when we were talking before about the letter that you received when you chose to go back to school.
- Tomie Lee: Yes.
- Lilli Tichinin: And I was wondering if you could tell me about that again?
- Tomie Lee: After Ken's death, I received a letter from the director of the National Park Service at the time, who was Ron Walker. He had mentioned in the letter that he had heard that I had gone back to school, to college, to get my degree, and that when I finished my degree, there would be a place for me in the National Park Service.
- Tomie Lee: So, when I graduated, or just before I graduated, January of 1975, I sent a letter to Washington, DC, the office there, saying that I was graduating in May and that I could be picked up because of my grade average. Also, I had taken the civil service exam. I also had the 10-point veteran's preference, because Ken had been in the air force during the Korean War. Just an aside, he was 11 years older than I was. (laughs)

- Tomie Lee: Anyway, and the letter I got back was probably more or less a form letter that said, well, you've missed the deadline to apply for seasonal positions, but try again next year. At that time, I made a photocopy of the letter that I had received from Ron Walker and had submitted that along with a cover letter directly to the director of the National Park Service – who was not Ron Walker anymore; it was, I believe, [Russ] Dickinson – and sent it off. His associate director of operations, which is basically, at that time, the deputy director of the National Park Service, John Cook, said he was just transferring back to the Southwest region here in Santa Fe. He said, “I will have a job for her.”
- Tomie Lee: They had a job down at Tuzigoot National Monument, a GS-4, and I was very fortunate to get it, and very grateful for it. But I always felt a little guilty about how I obtained my job, my permanent status. Because I knew of so many other people had been trying for status for so long. But I took it. (laughs)
- Lilli Tichinin: Right. Yeah. Absolutely.
- Tomie Lee: I had loved Ken's job. He would come home and talk about the things that he saw and did during the day. And Organ Pipe was a beautiful, quiet little park at that time. We did a lot of hiking and just really enjoyed our time there. Went to Point Reyes and loved it there, too.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. And so, when you made the decision to go back to school, did you go back knowing that when you got out you wanted to get a Park Service job?
- Tomie Lee: Absolutely. Absolutely. And I wanted a Park Service job in the field. In other words, I wanted to be a ranger. I, nothing wrong with any of the other functions. But I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to do what Ken had done. I wanted those experiences.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Absolutely. Wonderful. Well, can you tell me a little bit about that first job? And how long you were there? And what you were doing in that first position?
- Tomie Lee: I had two weeks in between when I graduated from college and when I started work. When I got to Tuzigoot, I really knew nothing about it as a park. But it was a very small archeological site. When I got there, I gave talks, educational talks, interpretive talks. My supervisor was a great guy named Bill Bolton. He was very artistic, and he was redoing all the exhibitory in the museum. I was able to help with that. We did the first inventory that had been done in probably close to a decade of all of the wonderful artifacts that had been dug up when the ruins had been excavated several decades before. I also supervised a couple of seasonals. And I mean it was like, whoa! Hmm. I had had no training as a supervisor or anything. But thank goodness the seasonals that I was supervising had been there for several seasons. They were schoolteachers, local schoolteachers. So, it was—
- Tomie Lee: Because I had been so busy with my two boys and college – when I went back that first semester, I talked them into letting me carry 16 hours credit. My last

semester was 22 credits, because I wanted to get out and get a job as soon as I could. So, I was really so busy all the time that I was tremendously bored, frankly, at Tuzigoot, because we were a very quiet little park.

Tomie Lee: So, we had one administrative officer for Tuzigoot, Montezuma Castle and Montezuma. Well, she was really swamped all the time, so when there was nothing else to do, I would go in and ask her if I could help her. She said that I could file, and she had tons of files that she just hadn't had time. But she went through in great detail about how to file, thank goodness. But once I proved to her I knew how, I could follow her directions and file, then she got me started in other administrative jobs. She taught me budgeting. She taught me filing, of course. But hiring practices. The whole things, over the next year and a half.

Tomie Lee: In fact, after a year as a GS-4, because of the administrative duties that I had, they rewrote my position description, and I got a GS-5. But a good, probably 50 percent of my time was actually spent doing administrative work.

Lilli Tichinin: And that first year, it sounds like it was very much sort of an informal learning process.

Tomie Lee: Oh, it was. The whole two years I was there. And I really enjoyed it. It really helped, too, because one of our maintenance workers, his wife took care of my children, my two sons, while I was working. She was wonderful. She was Hispanic. And my two boys picked up quite a bit of Spanish, and some Spanish culture, which was great for them. So those two years were a great learning experience for me, and for my two little guys.

Tomie Lee: Then the administrative officer down in the southern Arizona group office in Phoenix, he was calling all of us park technicians and told us we should take the new federal civil service test if we wanted to get out of the O26 series and into the O25. And there were only two or three of all of us who bothered to do that, and all three of us, got O25 jobs within just a few months.

Tomie Lee: I was hired by Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Lake Powell. But my job was educational specialist. So I went there and I was there for just a few months. One of the rangers came to me and said that his background had been teaching, and that he hated his job as what we call a protection ranger now. But there it was mainly, well, it was law enforcement, fire and emergency medicine. But he hated it. He said he just wasn't, you know, by choice or by temperament, good at emergency services, and would I be willing to switch jobs with him? (Lilli Tichinin laughs)

Tomie Lee: So, I said, "Oh, yeah!" But then he went to his boss, and he was actually a new district ranger, Doug [Bull?]. And Doug said, "Sure. Great." I went to my boss, chief of interpretation, [Art Cletere?], and he said, "No way."

Tomie Lee: But the person I replaced, Dave Pape, went to our superintendent at the time, Temp Reynolds, and talked to Temp. Temp had the two of us, Dave Pape and

myself, and all of his division chiefs and the assistant superintendent, Joe Kennedy there. They discussed this with the two of us there, Dave and I. They asked Dave why he wanted to make the change, and he did. And they asked me, and I told them oh, that's what I really wanted to do, that's where I wanted my career to go. I did not want to be a teacher. But if that's what it was, I would still do it and be happy to do it. I remember, they asked questions. And Ralph [Iorio?], the AO, administrative officer, said, "But Tomie, the rangers only have one little houseboat up at Dangling Rope, because," not Dangling Rope, Rainbow Marina. Rainbow Bridge Marina. Dangling Rope didn't exist then. He says, "And you'd have to take 10-day rotations up there like everybody else."

Tomie Lee: I said, "I understand that, and I have childcare."

Tomie Lee: He says, "No, no. It's just one, one, you know, little houseboat," he says. "And there's just one little bedroom there." And I said, well – he said, "Well, sometimes we have two rangers up there, and sometimes we have VIPs, and there's men. We don't have any women up there on the marina."

Tomie Lee: I explained that there were the two bunkbeds in the bedroom, and we had a sofa bed that would fold out in the living area. And he says, "But Tomie, what, what if someone made a pass at you?" Okay?

Tomie Lee: I made the comment, I said, "Well, I'd tell them to knock it off."

Tomie Lee: He said, "And what if they didn't do it?"

Tomie Lee: And I'm going to tell you exactly what I said. I said, "Then I'd break his fucking neck." I didn't use that kind of language very often. In fact, I don't think I had ever used that word before. I had heard it a lot, but I had never used it in my life. I was so exasperated and so angry.

Tomie Lee: My superintendent at the time, Temp Reynolds, slapped the table. Started to laugh. And he said, "Done." And we made the switch.

Tomie Lee: I never had any problems. No one ever made a pass at me. I went up. I did my 10-day rotations. I learned how to boat. I did everything the rangers did. I got my certificate as a park medic, and with the cardiac module, so basically, a paramedic. I did everything that my male partners did. The coworkers.

Tomie Lee: I've heard from other women over the years how difficult it was for them in that atmosphere. Well, I never had to face that. And I'm not quite sure, because I was in law enforcement. I mean, we made arrests. We served search warrants. We were a recreation area. We had a trailer village with the concession employees, and there were all kinds of ugly things going on. We were cross-deputized in one county, in Arizona, four in Utah. Tribal, with the Navajo tribe. So, I mean, and at that time, we went wherever we were needed.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

- Tomie Lee: And I never, never, had any problems with harassment or, as far as I could tell, any kind of discrimination. I was expected to do my job, and that was it. And you know, I loved everything I did. The job lived up to what I had wanted and expected.
- Tomie Lee: Structural fire. That was the one that always worried me the most. And we only had two or three fires, structural fires, while I was there. But that was the one function that had me less confident, if you will. And that was because we trained in it, but we only trained like once a year.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Tomie Lee: But when it happened, I mean, you just reacted. But the law enforcement and the search and rescues, and the accident investigations, all of those, and the medicals, all of those were, they were exciting, they were fun. And it wasn't until a few years later I realized I'm probably an adrenaline junkie. (laughter)
- Tomie Lee: I did get my clock cleaned once. I had a seasonal that was about my same height. You know, I'm five one and a quarter on my tallest days back then. Ellen Dempsey was about the same size. About that time, I had blonde hair, bleached blonde hair. And she was a natural blonde. And we were pretty cocky. I hate to have to admit that, but we were. We had been making arrests, we had been doing all these kind of things. And we were really an anomaly. Two female, little female rangers. And, but we were being treated by all these other agencies, including Page Police Department officers, just like one of the guys. So, we were pretty cocky.
- Tomie Lee: We were called to the picnic area. The Coast Guard Auxiliary were having a meeting and a big family picnic. And they called because there was a drunk there causing problems. Just about an hour and a half before that, we had been called down to a very popular area for swimming and so forth. This was in the evening. We had gone down there, and it was a young man who had been assaulted by his uncle, who was drunk. The uncle was drunk.
- Tomie Lee: Well, we got to the picnic area, and it was the uncle. So we told him that we were going to take him, and take him into town where he would be able to spend the night in, actually it wasn't the jail. It was a place that they had for drunks, to let them sleep it off. He seemed to want to go along with us. I had him on one, his arm on one side, and not in any kind of a lock or anything. And Ellen was on the other. Just as we got to the patrol car, he brought both arms forward and back and caught us both right in the middle with his elbows and took off running.
- Tomie Lee: We took off after him.

[END OF TRACK 1]

[START OF TRACK 2]

Tomie Lee: Ellen got to him first and grabbed him around the arm, the bicep. He turned around and hit her square in the face. Knocked her down. She had glasses. Her glasses went flying and she fell. I took my Kel-Lite and caught him, he had turned to run, and I caught him on the legs and brought him down. I didn't hit him. I just put my Kel-Lite in between his legs and tripped him, basically. He was on his knees. And of course every time I tell this, he gets taller and bigger. (laughter) But I was almost eye level with him. I'm standing, and he's on his knees. And he brought his fist up and I had my Kel-Lite up, thank goodness. But he hit so hard my Kel-Lite flew, and he caught me just on the side of my left temple. And I had this, you can't believe what a purple, big swelling.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Tomie Lee: Ellen and I both had concussions. But she got back up, shook her head, and jumped on his back. And I mean, [unclear] yelling at her, "Ellen, grab his balls! Grab his balls!" (laughter) You know, it was just like, holy shit.

Lilli Tichinin: Do something!

Tomie Lee: Boy, we were wrestling this guy and just about had him down. And three or four of the Coast Guard auxiliary men showed up. I had him by the head and had brought it down to the ground. I thought for a moment about, I could have caught his face on my knee. And I thought, and I'll probably kill him if I do that, or hurt him badly. So we just were wrestling. She was right on his back, and these guys came. One sat on his legs, got his legs together and sat on his legs. They helped Ellen get off his back and they sat on his back. I handcuffed him. It took those four men and Ellen and I to carry this guy and throw him in the back of the patrol car.

Lilli Tichinin: Wow!

Tomie Lee: And then we, because we had wrestled around in the dirt and kicked and done whatever, we went to the emergency room first to make sure he was okay before we took him to the little jail. We had him checked out, and they checked us out. Ellen and I both had concussions. But we took him up and booked him in jail. He was supposed to appear for a court hearing. And he disappeared and didn't show up. He was there for the preliminary, of course, but then he didn't show up for his regular trial.

Tomie Lee: So, a year later, the FBI caught him out on the reservation where the man lived, and brought him in. We had a trial. And believe it or not, he was found not guilty of assaulting federal officers. Because he didn't realize we were federal officers because we were women. That was the argument that was made by the defense. Yet we were in full uniform. Guns, badges, the whole bit. The defense attorney was up there and he said, "Well, did you say to Mr., 'This is my badge. This is my gun. I'm a federal officer.'"

Tomie Lee: And I said, "No. I always say I'm a law enforcement park ranger."

Tomie Lee: Well, that's not enough. He had no idea. He just thought he was being assaulted by two girls." And here we had a fully marked, you know, patrol package, actually. A law enforcement package, marked patrol car with the big light bars at that time. We were fully in uniform. Flat hats.

Lilli Tichinin: Everything.

Tomie Lee: The everything. And he was acquitted because the jury had never seen us women. One of the women who was actually from Page, we had the trial down in Flagstaff – one of the women who was on the jury later, we got from third hand, she was saying, "Well, those girls had no business doing that kind of work." That was the first time and, to my knowledge, the only time when being a female in law enforcement in the National Park Service, was an issue. And it was from outside the agency.

Lilli Tichinin: That's very interesting. Yeah.

Tomie Lee: And I was very unhappy. And so was Ellen. Ellen decided that she did not want to be a law enforcement ranger.

Lilli Tichinin: Really.

Tomie Lee: She actually came back the next year, but wanted to go up lake, which was less busy. I think she went to Bullfrog. And she really wanted to do nothing except emergency services. And after that summer, that second summer, she left and went into nursing. Which was good. I mean, that was no problem. But I wanted to stay doing what I was doing. I was never that cocky again. And I never took someone in any type of custody, if you will, that I didn't immediately handcuff them, shake them down, well, pat them down, make sure, and then always, always watching. I felt that that whole situation was my responsibility and my fault, because Ellen was the seasonal, I was the permanent, and she was following, she was following me, my directions. So I got her hurt, and I never forgot that. So those are the kind of things that—

Tomie Lee: Then we got a new chief ranger. He and I did not necessarily see eye to eye. We had an individual who had been, we had had many run-ins with. He had actually pistol-whipped one of his coworkers, concession employees, up at trailer village. The person who was injured left as soon as he could get out of the hospital. So we had no witnesses and this kind of thing. So, the man skated.

Tomie Lee: My new chief ranger was very religious, if you will. He had joined a charismatic church in town. And this person who, this concession employee, who was an alcoholic and a drug user, started going to the church. So our new chief ranger got him a job with the National Park Service in maintenance up at Rainbow Marina. A couple of the maintenance people who had to work with him up there said that he really frightened them. That he was drinking heavily, and he got, they thought he was very violent and they were very concerned.

- Tomie Lee: So, I went to my chief ranger and reported it. And basically, he told me no, it couldn't be, that this man had been saved.
- Tomie Lee: So, I did something that I had never done before, and I have never done since. I went over his head. I took and did the folder with all of the arrests that had been made on this man, the situation, the reports on the beating he had done. The fact I had the maintenance men write me a report. And I took it into our—
- Lilli Tichinin: Superintendent.
- Tomie Lee: Superintendent. And, of course, this individual, a couple of other rangers were sent up to bring him down and he was fired. The chief ranger got a good talking to. And he told me, he leaned across his desk and he says, "I'll get you. I'll get you!"
- Tomie Lee: And I believed him. I had been offered a district ranger job at Pinnacles. I had already said no, I don't think so, I like what I'm doing here. So I called over there and talked to that superintendent, Rod Broyles, and said, "Is the job still open?" And he said yes. And I said, "Well, I'd like to bring my," and I had gotten married in, while, in 1981. I'd been at Glen Canyon from '77. And I met Pat in '79 and we got married in '81. So, anyway, Pat and I went over. We looked at Pinnacles, said we can do this. I made the transfer. And was there for two years. No, four years, by golly. From '82 to '86. Then I went to Wupakti for two years and did the law enforcement and everything except there, again, we were back in an archeological site. So I had a great time working in the visitors' center, working out on the trails, giving programs, but doing what little law enforcement was there. Mending fences.
- Lilli Tichinin: A little bit of everything.
- Tomie Lee: Yes. Helping with ruin stabilization, cleaning toilets, helping our resource management specialist doing many of the projects he had. Anything to keep busy. And then I had the opportunity, while I was at Pinnacles, I had a year detail as the chief of maintenance.
- Lilli Tichinin: That's right.
- Tomie Lee: And we had had a big major flood that had taken out many of our, well, all of our septic systems. We had some problems with our water supply. We had trail damage. We had to, we had our one entrance road in and out of the east side of the park that was almost washed out. We had major things to do. So, I was kept very busy that year.
- Lilli Tichinin: I'm sure.
- Tomie Lee: Our chief ranger there at the time had some issues and he was relieved of duty for six months. And I was acting chief ranger for six months. But anyway, then I got to go to Wupakti. I worked there and about three months before I transferred, my

boss, Wayne Landrum, left there and went to Homestead to work at Biscayne, and I was made acting chief ranger again for Sunset Crater and Wupakti.

Lilli Tichinin: Oh, wow.

Tomie Lee: Then I got offered the job to go to FLETC [Federal Law Enforcement Training Center] on a detail. I went there and taught law enforcement for four and a half years. But I really taught, the first year I was there, I taught land management classes. But after that, the center, the department, or Treasury, they had me teaching the criminal investigators school, the advanced courses. They were sending me out on details to teach state and local out different places, and other federal agencies out, off campus in other states. I did that for four and a half years. Then I applied for the chief ranger job back home at Lake Powell, and I was selected.

Lilli Tichinin: Wow. And what was your husband doing during all of this time? (laughs)

Tomie Lee: When I met Pat, he had 18 years in with the Arizona Highway Patrol. State trooper. He was a sergeant. He was in Flagstaff, I was in Page, 135 miles away. He had been married before and was divorced. He had his son living with him, and three older daughters, one married and gone, another one in college and one in high school, living with their mother. But anyway, with Pat and his son Bill and me and my two sons, we saw a lot of each other. But we got to know every mile of that 135 miles.

Lilli Tichinin: Sure!

Tomie Lee: But when Pat asked me to marry him, he said that he would retire from the highway patrol because he would have his 20 years in in July first of 1981, and that he would then go anyplace with my career that he needed to go. He also had a side business that he had had and basically he was a private investigator, licensed private investigator. And also did what I think they call now secret shopper kind of thing, but for big resorts and hotels where he was paid to go in and evaluate the whole thing with no one knowing who he was. And looking at safety issues, security issues, and also employee theft. He had been doing that for many years before I met him. So he said, you know, I've got this job. He said, we've got, we'll have three boys. And he said, that's great.

Tomie Lee: So, we got married. A year later, we went to Pinnacles, and he lived up to every promise he made. Whenever I wanted to go someplace, I'd come home and say, "You know, I'd like to do this." "Okay!" You know, he's a very outgoing person. He's the only father my two boys know, and he was a great role model. He just made sure that I had a clear road to my career. And has been a really great asset, probably my greatest asset. You know, he always encouraged everything.

Tomie Lee: When I was at Wupakti – well, when I was at Pinnacles first, I went out on detail to the Forest Service on project fires. The big wildland fires. When I went to

Wupakti, then, I also did some large project fires. In fact, I was a total of 81 days on the fires at Yellowstone. And so, you know, I got to do so many things.

Tomie Lee: Also, Wayne was the captain of the, my boss there, of one of the two southwest regional events teams.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Tomie Lee: So, he drafted me to do this. So I got to go on a number of pretty interesting assignments on that, too. Had a great time. And then from there, went to FLETC. Taught for four and a half years. From there, then, I went back to Glen Canyon as chief ranger.

Lilli Tichinin: And how long were you there as chief ranger?

Tomie Lee: Five years. So I was there the first time for five years, and five years the second time. And I loved it.

Lilli Tichinin: And what was it like to go back?

Tomie Lee: It was great. It was great. You can go back. (laughs)

Lilli Tichinin: That's a good distinction. Yeah.

Tomie Lee: It was very different, of course. I had a real eye-opening experience there. I was actually 31 when I finished school and went back in the National Park Service as an employee. So by this time, I'm in my forties. At least. And I had been used to these wild holiday weekends, particularly when we had a three or a four-day weekend. Memorial Day, Labor Day, Fourth of July, those kinds of things. I was used to back, years before, working 18-hour shifts and thinking nothing of it. Well, I was very concerned about, we were shorthanded. We would bring in extra rangers when our budget would allow us to do that. I just thought, well, I can help. And so I realized that jiminy Christmas, 18-hour shifts, I'm getting a little long in the tooth with this. But I did that for a couple of years. I realized that I wasn't as sharp as I used to be. I got very tired. And it took me a couple of weeks to recover. I still went to work. But I was like, huh? (laughs)

Lilli Tichinin: Out of it for a bit.

Tomie Lee: I was just, I was exhausted. So I decided that I was probably less effective and my really last time on down at Lone Rock Beach for all hell was breaking loose, that my staff, my rangers, were looking after me. And that was like oh, this is not good.

Lilli Tichinin: Interesting.

Tomie Lee: I'm not helping them. They're so concerned about me that you know, because I'd wade into these things like I did—

- Lilli Tichinin: Ten years ago. (laughs)
- Tomie Lee: Yeah. And I shouldn't have been doing that. Just because of my age. And the fact that I, you know, I was getting long in the tooth. I spent so much time in the office that I wasn't out there on a daily basis doing the law enforcement. So I had to say to myself, all right, Self, maybe you ought to stay in the background a bit and let them do their job. And just make sure they have the support they want. I made sure whenever we had a major incident, we had usually about twelve, at least twelve drownings a year in the summer. I would always go out, but I'd keep out of people's way. Whenever we had fatalities, or a real nasty accident, I would get there as quickly as I could. If it was up lake and I couldn't get there until maybe the next morning, I would still go up to make sure that the people who'd had to deal with this stuff were okay. We had peer counseling. We had some really ugly situations there. And my staff was so great. It was a wonderful experience.
- Tomie Lee: I had been used to do some internal affair kind of things over the years, too. While I was there, I was called to do one in Yellowstone, which was rather traumatic. It was done. But I thought, quite frankly, that probably my career had hit a dead end. Because the person who was found guilty, including in a big hearing, was very popular and a legend in the Park Service. And I expected that, yeah, I would be able to stay in my job at Glen Canyon until I had to retire at 57. Because I still had a law enforcement commission.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Tomie Lee: But, I decided, what the heck. So I applied for the superintendency at Glacier Bay National Park Reserve in Alaska, and I also applied for the deputy superintendency at Yosemite. I was interviewed for both. And I got the phone call from the regional director in Alaska, Bob Barbee, and he offered me the job. It was interesting because I was a GS-13, chief ranger, and the job up there was a 14/15 superintendency. And normally, at least at that time, you either lateralled grade-wise into your first superintendency. Or sometimes you even took a grade lower to get your first superintendency.
- Lilli Tichinin: Oh, interesting. Yeah.
- Tomie Lee: In this instance, I was promoted into my first superintendency. The day after I accepted the job in Alaska, my superintendent got the call from Yosemite. And he said, "Ah, she's already taken the job in Alaska."
- Lilli Tichinin: (laughs) Sorry! She's off to Alaska.
- Tomie Lee: So, I went to Alaska and stayed there for nine years.
- Lilli Tichinin: Wow. And what was that like to be in such a new role?
- Tomie Lee: It was absolutely wonderful. Because I hate to kind of admit it, but I was always one of those people that if I wasn't real vocal – and sometimes I was, hopefully

more appropriate than my thoughts – and that was, why do “they” do this? Why don’t “they” do that? What really changed me and made me decide actually to leave FLETC and to take a chief ranger job and to try for a superintendent’s position, I was walking in Washington, DC, was there on business from FLETC. I was walking with one of the people out of the law enforcement office there in DC, Bob Marriott, and I was complaining to him, “Well, why don’t they” blah, blah, blah. (groans)

Tomie Lee: Bob stopped right in the middle of the sidewalk and looked at me and he said, “Tomie. Don’t you realize we’re ‘they’ now?” He said, “It’s time to step up.” He said, “You know, you can stay out here in the field and do all this other stuff.” He said, “Or you can step up and be somebody in the Park Service,” basically is what he said. He said, you know, instead of complaining, be part of the solution. It was like, you know, like he had slapped me in the face. It’s like, yeah! You know? It was a wakeup call.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Tomie Lee: And so, I went back and I taught another year at FLETC. But when this opportunity to go to Glen Canyon as a chief ranger, I said okay. And so, you know, it’s been one of the most interesting, wonderful careers for me, anyway, that I could possibly have. I love the National Park Service. But at the same time, I’ve never been blind to the problems. To the weaknesses. And I’ve been fairly vocal, which surprised me, too, that I managed to go as far as I did in the Park Service, because I’ve never been too shy about sharing my opinions. But people have listened. They may not have paid any attention beyond that. But I just, I’ve been so fortunate.

Tomie Lee: The ANPR, my first time to go was in 1981, I believe. So it had actually been going for about five years, after the first year, one of our rangers at Glen Canyon had gone, and said, “You really ought to go, too, Tomie.” Well, I didn’t, for any number of reasons. But in ’81, I had married Pat, I had someone to go with me, and I had some childcare for our three boys. So I could leave. I’ve been a life member since they had the life membership. But I paid dues from 1981 on. And I loved the organization, particularly in the beginning, because we had so many issues that we were dealing with. We had been told, we, in law enforcement, law enforcement rangers, that we could not unionize. Legally, we could not unionize. So what we were saying was, well, we need an organization that will advocate for us, for the park rangers. And the group, I guess I kind of hung with or agreed with, we were pushing for enhanced retirement so that we, and we understood it would be a mandatory retirement at 57 for law enforcement and 55 for fire. We were desperate for good equipment, good vehicles, guns, better training. Just a whole number of things that were so important to us in the field.

Lilli Tichinin: Right. To do your jobs.

Tomie Lee: To do our jobs. And do it safely. And to be recognized. Because in the, somewhere around 1975, there was this big push to soften the image of the ranger. You know, the park ranger image. Yes. Park Service image. And we felt that it was being detrimental. Not that we wanted to, not that we wanted to be jackbooted thugs or anything. But it was that we were feeling that being in law enforcement, that we were not being appreciated or supported. We were always at that time, or everyone I knew, we were concerned that if we were ever in a position where we had to take deadly force, that we weren't sure we were going to be supported by the Park Service. And of course, when it actually happened—

[END OF TRACK 2]

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Tomie Lee: —the Park Service was solidly there, and so was the Department of Interior. But it was that atmosphere.

Lilli Tichinin: A feeling.

Tomie Lee: Yes, that fear, that atmosphere, that the work we did was not fully appreciated. I think that's maybe some of the problems with some of the employee morale now, whether it's the law enforcement rangers or whether it's maintenance or whether it's whoever. Interpretive rangers. It doesn't matter.

Lilli Tichinin: Everyone. Yeah.

Tomie Lee: The morale. I mean, you've got to love the Park Service to stay in it. You really do. You have to love your job. You have to believe in what you're doing. There are a few exceptions, people who it's just a job and they do it. You know, they go to their job and they do it however. But the vast majority of park employees absolutely love what they do. For those who understand the mission of the Park Service, it's more than a job; it's life. It's your life. It's just one of those, on every one of those things that I guess for those old gray people like me, you know, us old guys, we didn't think anything about working 10-hour days, getting paid for 40 hours a week, but working at least 50, 60 hours a week. Doing all those kind of things. But I was very glad when suddenly those things changed. And employees, I don't think I want to call it employee rights, but more concern for employees started happening. We were less of a military or paramilitary, not military, but paramilitary organization. We still have some hierarchy and this kind of thing.

Lilli Tichinin: Those structures, yeah.

Tomie Lee: But it, we started recognizing what our employees went through more. We started getting peer counseling. We started getting the equipment that was needed. People started getting recognition. That sort of thing.

- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Tomie Lee: And that was such a plus. But morale is really pretty low now. And I, and this is just my personal opinion. Back when I started, way back, (Lilli Tichinin laughs), we went to what was called, I think, Introduction to National Park Service. It had been, I think, 16 or 18 weeks when I went through it. I actually had 14 weeks. What we did, it was a class of 48. One of the students was actually from California state parks. But the other 48 or 47 of us, we came from administration, interpretation, protection and maintenance. In other words, all the functions. We spent that time, everybody had to give programs, learn how to give interpretive programs. We had to learn how to write reports. We understood we were introduced, if you will, to all of the different functions, so that, you know, we knew what maintenance did. We knew what their problems were. They knew what our problems were. We knew what administration had to do. We knew what their problems were. And I mean, the history of the Park Service was there every single day. And it became, I think that's what helped all of us who had the opportunity to go through that. But it was very costly. And the Park Service has never had enough money. Almost every organization, whether it's private corporations or whether it's governmental, at any level, when the budgets really start to get tough, it's usually the training that gets hit first. So they quit these. I think I was in either the second to the last or third to the last of these wonderful programs.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Tomie Lee: And we have what's called Fundamentals. But it doesn't, it doesn't bring people together long enough, and there's not enough emphasis on building a foundation. It's the best we can do, apparently, with what we have to work with money-wise. We have very talented people. We have people who are good instructors, teachers. We just don't have the time. Having 14 weeks, I had 14 weeks, that really changed, helped me understand the function of all the Park Service divisions.
- Lilli Tichinin: Absolutely.
- Tomie Lee: And feel a part of all of it, instead of just my own narrow work and division and function.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right. Do you think that had an impact then when you became a superintendent?
- Tomie Lee: Absolutely!
- Lilli Tichinin: Did that affect how you viewed your role?
- Tomie Lee: Absolutely. Yes. Because I understood where all the pieces fit. And that it wasn't, it wasn't just these people are more important, or their function's more important than everybody else's. That wasn't it. I think I was more fair, more objective than I would have been otherwise.

- Tomie Lee: I know one of my law enforcement rangers, he was a district ranger, made the comment that I'm not sure he thought would ever get back to me. Or maybe he meant for it to, I'm not sure. But he made the comment that he thought that since my background had been law enforcement, that the rangers at Glacier Bay were going to get all this wonderful stuff. You know, all these great things. Well, frankly, our budget, I think, was fair across the board. Nobody had enough money.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right. (laughs)
- Tomie Lee: We prioritized, and it was one of those things that I had such a really good staff there that the division chiefs were very vocal, which was great. We had meetings on all the major decisions.
- Lilli Tichinin: I'm going to pause you for one, I'm going to close that. Just heard the motorcycle. Real quick. [closes door]
- Tomie Lee: But you know, but as anytime you're trying to get consensus, if we weren't able to come to consensus, I would say after we'd gone around and around sometimes, "If we can't come to a consensus, I will make the decision. So what do we want to do?" And sometimes I did—
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Tomie Lee: —say, "Okay, this is what it's going to be." Other times we would have a decision made and then the next squad meeting, somebody wanted to argue again. And it was like, no. We've already done that. We're past, we're going on. But I had really, really good feedback. And that really helped me. Because I didn't have all the answers. Nine years. And I had the opportunity to try all these things I had said in the past, either verbally or in my mind, that I would like to try. Or why they didn't do this, or why they did that. And I found a lot of times it was, I finally understood why they had done this or not done that.
- Lilli Tichinin: Why they had done things the way they had, yeah.
- Tomie Lee: Yes. But it was, it was absolutely fascinating to be able to try these things. And really feel like I was making a real contribution to the park and to a wider area, too. Glacier Bay had had terrible relationships with the Huna Tlingit; they were the indigenous people who were living across icy straits in the community of Huna.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Tomie Lee: And I had a wonderful staff to help me with these things. Something that Jim Brady had started in the two years he was there before I replaced him, after he retired. And one in particular. Wayne Howe was so, he was a cultural archeologist. He should have been an anthropologist. He understood and was so

helpful. My [high school] senior year up at Sanders on the Navajo reservation, I spent a lot of time with Navajo. My peers.

Lilli Tichinin: Other students, yeah, at your school.

Tomie Lee: We went out on the reservation with them, and we visited traditional families. We were invited to ceremonies that we would be the only – I say “we,” my two cousins, myself and my sister. We would be invited out to these different ceremonies that we were the only non-Navajo people there. And learned about the oral histories because when – were you here when Revas—

Lilli Tichinin: Yes.

Tomie Lee: And he said, “I came from this clan and this clan,” and so forth? I understood that from my experience my senior year in high school. And that’s how the Tlingit were. There were so many people on my staff and from the regional office and so forth who would get very impatient. Because, for instance, a meeting, we might have two hours’ worth of business, but it might take ten hours. Because everyone on the council needed to have their say. When we would sit, to begin with, it was always the introduction. They would go through their history. I mean, generations back. They would explain their clans and their lineage, is basically what it was, and how certain things in their history had affected them. Going all the way back to the Russian periods. And that takes time.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Yeah.

Tomie Lee: And so many people couldn’t understand and didn’t have the patience to just sit and listen—

Lilli Tichinin: To take the time.

Tomie Lee: And truly listen. Being from, you know, from the reservation, my experience, and then also working at Glen Canyon, and working at being, having cross-deputized with the tribe, dealing with situations, and getting my brains scrambled by a Navajo – but these things, it helped so much when it was time to go and work with the Tlingit.

Tomie Lee: One of the elders, and that’s a matriarchal society.

Lilli Tichinin: Right, right.

Tomie Lee: One of the elders, when she passed away, her daughter, Mary Rudolph, adopted me. But I went through the channels to make sure that it was legal, legitimate—

Lilli Tichinin: And appropriate.

Tomie Lee: Yes, and appropriate. It was ethical. I went through the regional office. They went through Washington, DC. And came back and said, “Yes. Do it.”

- Tomie Lee: So, I did. And I was adopted. I was given a Tlingit name. Things kind of fell into place. I had been very hesitant, because I wasn't sure that that was ethical at all. I had to explain to the clan that, and to the Huna tribal government and the people in Huna, that by doing that, I accepted my personal responsibility, but not my professional. That I still had to run the park according to rules and regulations. And that if they asked me to do something that, as a superintendent, I might not be able to do it, that we were going to have to follow all the rules and regulations. If it was something I could do personally that did not affect the job or the park, then it was the same as if I was not a Park Service employee.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. That's incredible.
- Tomie Lee: And it was hard, I think, for them to kind of get their mind around that at first.
- Lilli Tichinin: Around separating those two things.
- Tomie Lee: But it was, I really didn't have any real major problems like that. I was asked a couple of things and I said, "Well, I can't do that. I simply cannot do that."
- Tomie Lee: But one of the great things that Jim Brady had done, the two years he was there, he had asked the tribe what are the, I think he said the ten most important things that are problems with the park and the Park Service. They were not allowed to collect gull eggs. Well, that wasn't necessarily our regulation; it was US Fish and Wildlife. And it's a law! Okay?
- Tomie Lee: The other thing was, that was number one. Number two is that they had no physical presence in the park, and they weren't allowed to collect certain grasses for their baskets. They weren't allowed to do – well, Jim listened, bless his heart, and left notes, so that when I got there, we were able to take a look at these things.
- Tomie Lee: The first big project was a gull egg collecting. What we were able to do was actually we brought in researchers and they looked at predation on gulls and gull eggs, and did a study. They laid out how we could allow some human predation. While these studies were going on and we were trying to get legislation to allow this—
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Tomie Lee: Because it had to be legislated. You know, to make sure that we were following the law. So we didn't start something that a few years down the line, the park just stopped again. That we had—
- Lilli Tichinin: Right. You wanted something in place.
- Tomie Lee: Yes. And so, but while we were doing that, every year we would get a grant and we would take one of our patrol boats out and pick up two or three elders and two or three younger people and take them out, because we did get a permit from US Fish & Wildlife to take them outside of park waters to another little island where

they could actually get out and collect the gull eggs, according to their tradition. And then we were able to take them back. And this was a big deal.

Tomie Lee: Well, when I retired, we still were waiting for the legislation. And while Cherry Paine was there, she was there when the legislation was passed and when the program got started. So, I mean, it was one of those things that started with Jim Brady, went through nine years with me, and then into Cherry Paine's time.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Wow.

Tomie Lee: So, it takes time to do these things. We also got started with an area in Bartlett Cove where the area had already been impacted years before, and the building had been torn down, right there in Bartlett Cove. That's where we decided that a tribal house could be built. But we had again to make sure that all the regulations were followed, and to find the money.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Tomie Lee: So, what we did in the interim when all this was trying to get, we got people started drawing the plans. We also found money where we could hire master carvers who came in to teach in the high school shop, to teach the kids over in Huna how to carve the totems, the house screens, and the ladles and the bowls and the things they used in the tribal houses, the long houses.

Lilli Tichinin: That's before.

Tomie Lee: We also found money to hire master speakers, because the language was disappearing. It's a very complicated language. We had master speakers in Huna and in Yakutat, which was just north, and just outside park boundaries. But what we did is we were really involved in trying to make sure that the indigenous people had that connection to their homeland physically. They already had it emotionally and mentally. But it needed to be physical for them. And anything that we were able to legally allow them to collect. Berries. We had berry picking every year. We chartered a boat and would take a number of the elders, and some younger people. We would go up bay, where soapberries were ready to be picked, and do these kind of things. And make it, you know, just a day excursion. We'd pick them up in Huna, we'd do that all day and then take them home. And they got to keep their berries.

Tomie Lee: We did gumboots. And those are [critans?]. Yuck! (laughter) But we went out and helped them gather those. We did these things, and it made the difference.

Tomie Lee: When our elected delegation at the time, particularly Frank Murkowski, and even Ted Stevens and Don Young, when, and it was mostly Senator Murkowski. Not Lisa, she's a fantastic stateswoman. But Frank, when he was trying to basically take away the park, I mean, he was wanting to do all kinds of ugly things to us. They were ugly. Trying to turn over the management of the park to Sea Alaska,

which incidentally is a corporation. It's not a tribe. It's not a clan. It is a corporation. A native corporation. But it would be like—

Lilli Tichinin: But it's still a corporation.

Tomie Lee: But it would be like, like Cherry said, it would be like General Electric or Coors or whatever. They had no standing. But they were really pushing it. Senator Frank Murkowski. Don Young, who was our only congressperson. And Huna, Huna Indian Association, which is their tribal government, stepped up and culturally forced Sea Alaska to take a step back, and kept Senator Murkowski, Frank Murkowski, from being able to bring his legislation in front of Congress. And that's because of what Jim Brady had started and what we were able to carry on.

Tomie Lee: Cherry said she had had Sea Alaska trying to take, trying to get co-management. She took the same arguments that we had to DC and said, "Hey, look. This is a corporation. This is not a tribe."

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Tomie Lee: You know, if it was a tribal government, it might be possible. But not a corporation.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Tomie Lee: So, it's not one of those things that's solved forever.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Tomie Lee: But it's, you know, we were able to mend these relationships. When you're able to get something like that accomplished, it's really very satisfying. It makes those sleepless nights worthwhile. (laughs) And there were some.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Oh, I'm sure.

Tomie Lee: Six months into that assignment, we were also closing down commercial fishing in the bay.

Lilli Tichinin: Oh, wow.

Tomie Lee: Which was tremendously politically explosive. I got accused by commercial fishermen of "genocide." Wow. Anyway, it was really ugly. And Ted Stevens, Senator Stevens at the time, was a very, very super powerful man. When the Republicans were in the majority, you know, he held the purse strings. When it was the Democrats, it was Senator Byrd. But Byrd and Stevens took care of each other. So, when Stevens was in power, he took care of Byrd, and vice versa.

Lilli Tichinin: And vice versa. Yeah.

- Tomie Lee: And Senator Stevens could send fear down almost everybody's spine. I was there about six months and there were some issues that had come up. I was on the phone with the regional director, Bob Barbee, someone from the secretary's office, from our directorate in DC, Senator Stevens and one of his staffers. And things got, I mean, it really got tense.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah, I'm sure.
- Tomie Lee: So once the conversation was over, and it was about a two-hour teleconference, I called Bob Barbee back and I said, "Bob, this didn't sound good." And he said, "No, it doesn't." And we had a discussion. I said, "Well, am I going to get kicked out of Alaska?" Because there had been other superintendents, and even regional directors, who had been forced to leave by Senator Stevens. He says, "We won't know until Monday." And this was Friday.
- Tomie Lee: So, I went home and I told Pat, my husband, that come Monday that I might be given 48 hours to get out of Alaska. Because it had happened to others before. And that he would be responsible for getting things packed and make, move.
- Lilli Tichinin: Getting everything together. Yeah.
- Tomie Lee: And I said, the Park Service will find me someplace, but I have no idea where.
- Tomie Lee: Monday I went to work. I waited all day for the phone to ring. And finally that evening I called, or actually afternoon, I called and said, "Well, Bob, do I have a job?" He says, "I think we're safe."
- Tomie Lee: So, it was that kind of a political atmosphere.
- Lilli Tichinin: Environment, yeah.
- Tomie Lee: Oh! It was a humdinger. But it was still great. I guess I'm a glutton for punishment or something. But it was still, every day was challenging. And that's what I needed.
- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Tomie Lee: I had decided, along with my newest regional director, Marcia Blaszak, that we would both retire in June of 2009. But early 2007, Pat came to me and said, "You know, I'm going to be 70 years old then." He said, "We have all these things we've been talking about wanting to do. Let's do it while we can."
- Tomie Lee: So, he had never asked me for anything before. So I called Marcia and I said, "Marcia, I'm going to retire this year in September." I had a conference with Canadian counterparts and some of the other park superintendents. And every other year it would be in Alaska. The other, it would be in Canada. But anyway, it was scheduled for September. No, August. And that I would retire after that was

done. She said that was fine, but we wouldn't say anything until 30 days before I was to leave, because so much was still going on.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Tomie Lee: So, I remember going to work after that conversation. That was, I think, in January or February. And we were sitting around, having to discuss some concession issues. Cruise ships. Oh, lord. What a, what a hot potato, political hot potato.

Lilli Tichinin: Uh huh. Yeah. (laughs)

Tomie Lee: So, we were discussing this. And I realized all of a sudden, and I guess, I don't know how long it had been going on, but my division chiefs were all agreeing with me. It was like, wait a minute, what's happened to their voices? I've been here too long. They're all agreeing with me, and I'm not that smart. You know? It sounds stupid, Lil, but I wasn't getting that pushback or that—

Lilli Tichinin: Honest feedback.

Tomie Lee: Yeah. All that feedback. I'd been there long enough, I think, that we were all too comfortable, and everybody was, "Well...

Lilli Tichinin: Sure.

Tomie Lee: "...yeah, whatever." And that wasn't healthy for the park. It was time for me to either retire or go to another park. And the only other park I would have even wanted to go to happened to be Grand Canyon, and there was already a superintendent there. (laughter)

Lilli Tichinin: So that decision was easy.

Tomie Lee: Yes. It was.

Lilli Tichinin: Well, that's a very, I think, a very difficult realization, but important one. Like you said, realizing that it wasn't good for the park. That takes—

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Lilli Tichinin: —quite a level of self-reflection.

Tomie Lee: Yeah. When you've had all this wonderful, wonderful input. And there were times when it's like, [makes argumentative noises] it would have been easier if I could have sat back and made all the decisions and had everybody go, "Oh, yeah. Yeah." But the park would have suffered. But having all that really good feedback and then suddenly it wasn't there anymore.

- Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.
- Tomie Lee: I'm hoping I would have been wise enough to have seen it without having already considered retirement.
- Lilli Tichinin: Right.
- Tomie Lee: But I think deciding on retirement, it just gave me, maybe a new perspective. All of a sudden it was, oh, yeah, it's time I go. And I haven't regretted it, you know? But I'll admit, again, a few months after I had retired and we moved to Arizona – and I do miss Alaska – my husband looked at me one day and he said, "Tomie, you know the Lee household doesn't have a superintendent and doesn't need one." And I said, "Oh, am I being bossy?" He said, "A little." (laughter) So there was an adjustment. I'd like to say there was no adjustment, it was all piece of cake. But there was an adjustment.
- Lilli Tichinin: It was all, yeah, I'm sure. I'm sure. Well I think that's kind of a natural place to sort of wrap up. But I have one last question which is just, you know, thinking back on your career, and thinking forward to the Park Service, as you said, you've never been one to shy away from some of the—
- Tomie Lee: Controversies. (laughs)
- Lilli Tichinin: Controversies or criticisms or weaknesses.
- Tomie Lee: No. (laughs) No.
- Lilli Tichinin: But you know, you also have a deep love for the Park Service.
- Tomie Lee: I do.
- Lilli Tichinin: And I'm wondering, just very briefly, kind of what you hope for the future for the Park Service.
- Tomie Lee: I would like to see the Park Service employees feel more like – I don't want to say belonging, because that's not what I mean. But more deeply, maybe, about a future with the National Park Service. There's nothing wrong with people coming in and going out and then coming back. At one time, that hardly ever happened. Even when people wanted to come back, they weren't rehired. We don't have that so much anymore. And I understand that anymore it's not like you have to have, I had a 32-year career in the Park Service. There are opportunities for people to have Park Service, something else, and Park Service again. Or whatever. So it's not so much that sense of belonging, but a better understanding of their functions and how it fits in the big picture, whether they're administration, maintenance, and when I say administration, I'm talking budget, HR, you know, the whole gamut. Right. For everyone to understand where their function fits in the broader picture that the Park Service becomes more flexible to work with our new generations. To be able to say it's okay to have a life outside of the Park Service.

That it doesn't have to be 100 percent Park Service every waking moment, which it was for me – and for people, most of them my age and generation. It doesn't have to be that way. In fact, one of the things I taught at FLETC was stress, and how you needed a life outside of law enforcement. You needed life outside of your job.

Lilli Tichinin: Balance.

Tomie Lee: Yes. That you needed – instead of saying, “Well, who are you?” “Well, I’m a park ranger,” you say, “I’m Tomie Lee. I’m a park ranger.” Not, “Park ranger Tomie Lee.” You know? That may seem like kind of a minor thing, but it’s not. You have to have a sense of yourself outside of your job. So, I was teaching that at FLETC to law enforcement people.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah.

Tomie Lee: And then coming back into the Park Service, it’s like, wait a minute. There’s a disconnect here. Because we were still, in most instances, not everyone, but in most instances, we were still expecting people to be Park Service family, friends, outside interests over here.

Lilli Tichinin: Park first, and then those others after.

Tomie Lee: It was one of those things that it wasn't balanced. And so, the Park Service is going to have to do that, or we're not going to get the bright, wonderful, dedicated people. And you can be dedicated and still have a balance.

Lilli Tichinin: Right.

Tomie Lee: In fact, I think you'll have a healthier level of dedication and understanding. But that's what I hope, that we are more flexible, that people like me understand that we had a wonderful career, we loved the Park Service and we want it to continue forever. We want it to be a vital organization. We want our people happy. You know, and satisfied. And if that means working for a while and go and do something else, well hopefully they're going to come back with even more experience. But if they don't, they will still hopefully leave the Park Service with a love for the agency and the mission, and spread that out there. Because no matter what you do in a park, you can go into a park that's all screwed up and get it straightened out, and then you leave, and then things can get all screwed up again. But where you really make the impact are the people. You can, you know, that's where the investment really has to be made, I think, over the next decade or so, are in the people. And I'm sure you hear we've always thought we did such a good job at it. Everything, yes, we love our people. You'll never hear a supervisor who says, (makes griping noises). But the investment really needs to be there. And that's what I'm hoping. That we remain or become more vital. Renewed. Invigorated. That it doesn't get to be the same as working at Wal-Mart or at Target. Or, and there's nothing wrong with working there, too. But I would like

for people to still feel that deep love and be able to express it and show it. Because that's important. We have to stay relevant.

Lilli Tichinin: Absolutely.

Tomie Lee: And I keep hearing that. But we're not going to be if our people don't believe it.

Lilli Tichinin: Yeah. Absolutely.

Tomie Lee: That's me.

Lilli Tichinin: That's wonderful.

Tomie Lee: Well, I don't know.

Lilli Tichinin: We can hope.

Tomie Lee: I am so glad I'm retired! (laughter) I really am.

Lilli Tichinin: And now you can watch.

Tomie Lee: Yes. I can. And God help me if I should ever sit back and go, "Well, I think they ought to do this." Because six months after you retire – and there are a lot of people who haven't learned this yet – but six months, because the Park Service life is changing so fast, six months after you retire, you are really behind the curve. You haven't kept up day to day. And so yes, my experiences are my experiences. But they're back here. And this is the future. Not back there where I was. And for me to try to tell another superintendent how to run their park – oh, give me a break. So, I'll get off my soapbox. (Lilli Tichinin laughs)

[END OF TRACK 4]

[END OF INTERVIEW]