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Rick Mossman
October 24 & 26, 2014

Interview conducted by Brenna Lissoway
Transcribed by Teresa Bergen
Digitized by Marissa Lindsey

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ANPR Oral History Project

Rick Mossman

24 October 2014

Interview conducted by
Brenna Lissoway

Transcribed by
Teresa Bergen

The narrator has reviewed and corrected this transcript.

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[START OF TRACK 1]

Brenna Lissoway: Another thing I will warn you is this is a really sensitive microphone. So, if you touch the table, it's going to make a sound.

Rick Mossman: Okay.

Brenna Lissoway: So, this is Brenna Lissoway interviewing Rick Mossman. Today is Friday, October the 24th, 2014. We are at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado. And Rick, if you could just start by stating your name, your full name, date of birth and where you were born.

Rick Mossman: Okay. Rick L. Mossman. Date of birth is 4/30/55. Born in Topeka, Kansas.

Brenna Lissoway: Okay, great. So, I want to start the interview with just having you talk a little bit about your childhood.

Rock Mossman: Okay.

Brenna Lissoway: What sort of place was Topeka? And a little bit about your family.

Rick Mossman: All right. My father was a public-school teacher, and my mother was a homemaker. I had an older brother. Basically, our home growing up revolved around school and church. My father was a coach, so we went to all the sporting events. I mean, in Topeka, Kansas, there's not a lot of outdoor recreation, even though I was always fascinated by reading *Outdoor Life* magazine and that sort of stuff. My dad was not a hunter, so I didn't grow up hunting. But I did grow up fishing. My dad loved to fish, and we'd fish all the time and that was kind of our only outdoor pursuit. But again, growing up always revolved around school and sports.

Rick Mossman: The one thing we did every year, what I considered the only luxury we had growing up, was we always went on a family vacation for two weeks in August, and it was always to national parks, for the most part. I can remember being in Yellowstone when I was seven years old and said, "I'm going to be a park ranger." I told my parents that was my plan. I was going to be a park ranger. At the age of seven.

Brenna Lissoway: What was it about a park ranger that attracted you at that point?

Rick Mossman: Uh, the hat. (laughs) The lifestyle. Living in such incredible places with all the wildlife and the mountains. I was just enthralled by mountains at the time, even though I'd lived in the flatlands. I looked forward every time we got to go to Colorado or anywhere. But yeah, no, the idea of being that ranger out there, and getting to be in wild, and the wilderness, and getting to talk to people about it and so forth, that just really inspired me.

Brenna Lissoway: Did you have a favorite park growing up?

Rick Mossman: Hmm. That's a trick question. (laughs) I would have to say the most impressionable was probably Yellowstone.

Brenna Lissoway: So, what other activities did you do, then, while you were in school? You were mentioning sports and you said something else. Fishing?

Rick Mossman: Oh, yeah.

Brenna Lissoway: And other things that you were involved, certain studies that you were interested in?

Rick Mossman: Oh, right. Well, so, you know, in high school I was actually, I always was fascinated with the park service. I started reading history of the park service books when I was younger. When I was in high school, there was a big push at that time to create a Tall Grass Prairie National Park, and I got involved with that in high school. My brother and I used to joke we were probably the only two card-carrying members of the Sierra Club in Topeka, Kansas. We were both members since we were in high school. And anyway, we started working when we were in high school on this Tall Grass Prairie National Park. And we joined this group out of Kansas City that was pushing it. Then we both went off to college. He went to a small private college in Kansas called Ottawa, and he was head of the Save the Tall Grass Prairie there. And I was head of the Save the Tall Grass Prairie when I went on to Kansas State University. So, we were real involved in that way of trying to create a new park in Kansas, which we kind of have now, but it's not the park we had originally envisioned.

Rick Mossman: But then other things, again, a lot of sports. A lot of fishing with my dad. Because, again, in Kansas at the time there was less public land per capita than any other state in the country. So there really wasn't any place to go recreate. There were very few state parks. Really, the only place people went were the Corps of Engineers reservoirs, and that was about it. So again, my exposure to the outdoors was mainly in national parks, really, growing up.

Rick Mossman: Also, when I was 10 years old, they used to have the old National Geographic specials on TV. They had one on the Craighead brothers doing this cutting-edge research on putting these newfangled radio collars on grizzly bears. And I said, "That's what I want to do, and be a park ranger doing that." So I decided I had to get a degree in wildlife biology, which is when I went on to college and got a degree in wildlife biology at Kansas State, with the full intent of trying to get a job with the National Park Service as a wildlife biologist.

Brenna Lissoway: Wow. So, you were really targeting the park service that early.

Rick Mossman: Absolutely. Absolutely. My backup plan, I'd come from a family of schoolteachers. Three of my grandparents were schoolteachers, my father was a schoolteacher, my brother's a schoolteacher. My backup plan was to be a schoolteacher. Because there was even a few folks in Topeka, two people that actually were teachers that worked in the summertime at parks as seasonals. Back in those days, there were a lot of seasonals that had fulltime teaching jobs around the country. And they'd go be seasonals

because it just went from Memorial Day to Labor Day, that was it, back then, was all the seasonals worked.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah. Right.

Rick Mossman: So, I was aware of that, and I was looking at that as a possibility, too. But my goal was to get on permanent with the park service.

Brenna Lissoway: So how did you get your first park service job?

Rick Mossman: So back in those days, there were no limitations on how many jobs you could apply for. But you had to fill out the old Federal 171 form, and back in those days, they would not let you make Xerox copies of it. So, at Christmas break, my sophomore year in college, I sat there for four weeks. And on my dad's old manual typewriter, I typed out 105 of those 171 forms. I sent them to every national park in the country and every national park unit in every state surrounding Kansas and Kansas. And I didn't hear back from any of them, anything after that, after I sent all those applications in. They had to be in by January first.

Rick Mossman: But then during spring break, my college roommate and I went canoeing on the Buffalo River. Buffalo River had just been created two, three years before by Congress. This was 1975. It was created in '72, I believe. Park service had just kind of gotten there to kind of start running it. My roommate and I were on this canoe trip and it turned out to be cold and snowy and it wasn't real pleasant. We dumped the canoe late the first day, and we decided to bail out. So, we were only on the river two days, not five like we'd planned.

Rick Mossman: So, as we left, we're driving up towards Harrison. I told my roommate, "Drive faster, because I want to get to headquarters before they close at five o'clock to talk to the chief ranger, because I applied for summer work here."

Rick Mossman: We get just as the secretary's locking the door. And I said, "I'd like to talk to the chief ranger." She was very nice, and she let me in. Met the chief ranger, Harry Graff, who was a super nice guy. They were happening to have a district ranger meeting. And I got to meet the three district rangers who were Rob Arnberger, Francis Koshes, and Mark Mosely. But in any case, I got to meet them. The chief ranger was so gracious. Harry showed me around. Maps and pictures of the park, and he told me they had just kind of converted all, they were only working in the two old state parks that the state had turned over to the park service. And they were just kind of hiring all the seasonal staff for those two state parks.

Rick Mossman: But he said he was going to have one seasonal campground job that summer at Buffalo Point, the old Buffalo River State Park. I said, "Well, I'd be very interested." Then he showed me the stack of applications, of 600 applications he had for this one job. People with master's degrees and this and that. Far better qualified than me. So, I didn't think I had a chance.

Rick Mossman: So, I left there. Then about three weeks later, Harry called me up and offered me that job. And that's how I got my start. It was unbelievable, and just one of those, that the stars aligned. (laughs)

Brenna Lissoway: So how was that first season there?

Rick Mossman: It was fantastic. I can remember when they sent me my uniform order, and they said that I had to order all these items. So, I was quickly doing that. I was so excited. They mentioned the straw hat. And I had only ever seen the beaver felt hat, the flat hat. So, I thought maybe the straw what was a cowboy hat or something, I didn't know. And I'll never forget when I got down there, and even my mother remembers, she said something to the effect I turned around and said, "Mom, that's the hat I get to wear!" (laughs) But my parents took me down there. I'll never forget that. Because I didn't have a car then.

Rick Mossman: But anyway, I was so excited. That summer, I could not believe, like you hear from a lot of folks, I could not believe I was being paid to do that work. We put in a lot more than 40 hours a week, but you know, I got to canoe the river and just do things like pick up trash, but just to be out on the river canoeing, and being paid for it was just unbelievable. Then I had all the campground fee collection duties. That was my main job. Did that and you know, it was a great staff. And just had fun. I mean, I had so much fun that summer.

Rick Mossman: Then I went back the second summer. And the second summer they actually, this was before seasonal commissions and seasonal academies and so forth. So, I did, I worked in the campground again, but I did protection. So, I actually got to write citations and they gave us a little bit of training. So, kind of enforced all the rules mainly in the campground area, picnic areas and things like that.

Brenna Lissoway: What kind of training did they give you to do that? (Rick Mossman laughs) Did you carry a weapon?

Rick Mossman: No. They did not give us guns. We had handcuffs, though. I can remember one night having Rob Arnberger teaching us how to handcuff people. He was enjoying that, handcuffing each of us. (laughs) And then teaching us how to do it, up in the bunkhouse, the seasonal bunkhouse. So, training like that. It wasn't a whole lot. (Laughs) Then they kind of gave you a ticket book and said, "Go forth and do good." And that was about it.

Rick Mossman: So, I did that the second summer there, while I was still in college. And again, had a ball. Worked night shifts some of the time, which was really fun, because a lot more wildlife and things like that were out, and so forth. And again, did a lot of canoeing. I was always proud to say by the end of the third summer I was there, I had canoed every inch of the river from way above Boxley, which you can only canoe during flood stage, which a couple of us did canoe during flood stage once. All the way down to

Ponca. But canoed the entire river over the three summers I was there. Did a lot of fishing, and just had a ball.

Rick Mossman: After I graduated from college, I went back down to Buffalo for my third summer. I worked, instead of Buffalo Point, I got the ranger position seven miles downstream in a little ghost town called Rush, which is an old mining town. There was a retired couple there, lived about half mile away from me. My closest neighbors. It was the main takeout for everybody putting in canoes there at Buffalo Point. So, it was very busy in the afternoon. But the rest of the time it was pretty quiet. It was a ball.

Rick Mossman: I built a campground there. Literally came up with the design and built this campground which Rob Arnberger, I'll never forget, just loved, and still used that as a model as he went through his career for a primitive type of campground. It was basically for canoeists. But we did have a parking area you could drive and then go walk in camp. It was very simple, but it was very effective, and it protected the resource, and it provided a good opportunity for the public. So, I was very proud of that. That was my first one big project success I had in the park service.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah. Yeah. Were there any challenges any of those summers that you felt like you were, that were difficult? Or things that were not expected?

Rick Mossman: Yeah, I probably tried to block those out. (laughs) Because I just remember all the fun stuff, I have to admit. Yeah, you know, fortunately I was never, you know, those three summers I was obviously never a supervisor in any way. So, I didn't have to worry about that. Boy, I should have thought about that. Yeah, I really can't think of too many. I mean, probably the biggest thing was as a seasonal watching and listening to all the others and knowing how hard it is to get a permanent job, that was always in the back of my mind. Trying to figure out how do I get a permanent job, where do I go from here? And so forth.

Brenna Lissoway: So, what were you starting to think about? What was your strategy?

Rick Mossman: Well, basically, at that time, to get a permanent job, I knew other folks were joining other federal agencies to get status. So, then they could apply for the permanent jobs. And then at that time, there was what was called the old park technician series. It wasn't the park ranger series. What you had to do was learn how the civil service system worked. What I figured out through a lot of postcards and letters was that there was 105 civil service offices in the country. And keep in mind, I was willing to go anywhere. I got that narrowed down to like 52, if I remember right, offices that covered the entire country. You had to contact them about every three months and ask them if the park technician register was open, and if it was, you'd send off a resume. And then you'd get on the cert they had, the long cert. I never did have to take a civil service test that I remember. But in any case, and some would never open. Like the Denver office, which covered Colorado and Wyoming, their park technician series was so long, their cert, they'd never open that register.

Rick Mossman: So, I had postcards that I had like a rubber stamp made up and I had postcards. I had a rubber stamp made up with my address and my questions, is the park technician register open? I'd stamp these postcards, send them off every three months. Slowly I was getting on all these certs all over the country for the park technician series. I was doing that all summer after I graduated, all fall. Then after my season was over at Buffalo River, I went to travel, because I wanted to go travel to the Southwest. I wanted to hike to the bottom of the Grand Canyon. I'd always wanted to do that. So, I went and did that.

Rick Mossman: As I'm traveling through the parks, I'm stopping and introducing myself and that sort of thing. I was out in Los Angeles, staying with an uncle out there visiting and seeing L.A. And I got a call from Petrified Forest, that they had a winter seasonal job open, interp job, fee collection mainly, but it was interp. Fee collection at that time was under interp at that park. They said, and the two parks, I have to throw this in – the two parks I really wanted to work at, I wanted to work winter season at Everglades, and I wanted to work a summer season at Mount Rainier, because there was a summer back country job at Mount Rainier and a winter season – those were my two goals, were those two parks, because I thought those would be so fascinating because of the resources, and Mount Rainier is just an incredible mountain, one of my favorite mountains. On a family vacation, again when I was in high school, we went to Mount Rainier. I said, "I'm going to come back and climb this someday." And I finally did, five years ago. (laughs)

Rick Mossman: But in any case, so I got this winter seasonal job which, back then, there were very few winter seasonal jobs. So, I was very happy with that. So, I cut my trip short, I think, went back home, drove out to Petrified Forest. Again, I'm still trying to get on all the registers all over the country and that sort of thing. Worked at Petrified Forest. Great winter there. Neat park. Incredible resource that a lot of people don't realize. So, I get to Petrified Forest. I am there five days. Everglades calls me and offers me a job at Everglades. I'm like no, I'm too ethical, there's no way, I'm already here, I've started, I'm not going to bail out and go to another park after I've made a commitment here to Petrified Forest. So, I didn't take that job at Everglades.

Brenna Lissoway: That had to have been a heartbreaker.

Rick Mossman: Oh, yeah. It was a heartbreaker. It was a heartbreaker. So, then I worked there all winter. Along about May, all of a sudden one day I get a call from Bob Dodson, who at the time was the senior park technician supervisor at Ford's Theater National Historic Site in Washington, DC. I might add that at that time, it had gotten to the point I had figured out that either you went to another federal agency and hoped to get back to the park service, and that would work if you had a lot of good skills that had been seasonal, but if you didn't, it would be hard to get in. Or the other four places that you'd always see jobs open, they would hire off the street, so to speak, were the

Statue of Liberty, Philadelphia-Independence Hall, Boston National Historic Park and Washington, DC. So, I got on those certs and you know, I really, to be honest, I said I never wanted to live or move east of the Mississippi River. But of those four cities I said well, if I had to work at one of them, Washington, DC would be my first choice.

Rick Mossman: So anyway, along about May, I get this call from Bob Dodson and he said, "Well, I'm hiring some. Permanent job. We're converting our seasonal position; they're subject to furlough. This is what I have, a GS-4, 10-month position, are you interested?"

Rick Mossman: I said yeah. The funniest thing was, he goes, "I see you have quite a wildlife background here and a degree." He says, "The only wildlife we have here is rats and cockroaches." (laughter)

Rick Mossman: I said, "I can deal with that."

Rick Mossman: He offered me a job, and it was my—

Brenna Lissoway: So, he was more interested in the fact that you had some park service experience?

Rick Mossman: Yes, he was. Definitely.

Brenna Lissoway: Interesting.

Rick Mossman: He told me later that I was near the top of the cert, along with a few other people. And actually, it was myself and one other guy, he was working seasonal at the Statue of Liberty, who were the only two they hired that were not previous seasonals there at Ford's Theater. All the others were seasonals that were already working at Ford's Theater. They got on the register, they hired them, and they hired two more from outside there, and I was one of those two.

Rick Mossman: And so then here was the next heartbreaker—

Brenna Lissoway: And this was a permanent position?

Rick Mossman: This was a permanent park; I mean subject to furlough—

Brenna Lissoway: Subject to furlough.

Rick Mossman: Yeah, it was full, permanent park service employee. Federal employee now. I am so excited and this and that because I was going to stay there at Petrified Forest, they wanted me through the summer. And four days – four days – after I accepted that permanent job, Mount Rainier calls me and offers me a back-country ranger position for the summer. (laughs) I sat there thinking, oh, my other dream job. You know? And it's like, I cannot turn down permanent status. I can't do it. I cannot turn down permanent status. I was still on my parents' health insurance, and I was going to go off that within a couple of months. I'm thinking all those kind of life things you have to think about, and I go I can't turn this down, but oh, I want to go to Mount Rainier! (laughs) But I turned down the Mount Rainier seasonal job and moved back to Washington, D.C.

Rick Mossman: As I like to say, for a kid from Kansas going to DC and never having been to too many cities, I was scared to death. I had no idea where I was going to live or anything like that. I just showed up there with about 200 dollars in my pocket. (laughs) I started, you know, I just drove straight down to Ford's Theater. Met Bob there. Bob had grown up in Washington, DC, so he kind of knew the area and this and that. So, he was trying to give me some hints. We were going through the classifieds, trying to find a place to live and this and that. All these places were, of course, very expensive, being in DC. They wanted rent a month up front and a month on the end, and I didn't have that kind of money.

Rick Mossman: After about two days – where was I staying? – oh, Bob invited me to come stay with him, he and his wife. I went and stayed with them out in Northern Virginia for a couple of days. Actually, it was like a week. And after about a week, they had just had a child, and they offered, they had kind of a tri-level house. So, they had kind of a downstairs, finished downstairs. They offered to let me stay there if I wanted to live there. But they lived about an hour out, commuting and I didn't want to live that far out of DC.

Rick Mossman: Anyway, ultimately, I was able to, he saw an ad at the Survey Lodge, which was the headquarters for the mall rangers. Guys were looking for a roommate, lived right there in Arlington about a mile above the Pentagon, and I got into a shared house with three other guys there, two of whom were seasonal rangers, also. So that worked out well. And you know, I had a great time in DC. I was an interpreter at Ford's Theater. The biggest challenge was we would, at the time, I think still today, it's the second smallest site in the National Park Service.

Brenna Lissoway: Small in terms of—

Rick Mossman: Size.

Brenna Lissoway: Physical size?

Rick Mossman: Yeah. A quarter of an acre in size. We would have up to 10,000 visitors a day. We were only open from nine to five. Basically, we had about six stations around the area. One person was the greeter. Another person was in the museum in the basement, just standing, answering questions. Each hour on the half hour, somebody would go give the talk, the 15-minute interpretative talk, about the assassination. So, we each did that.

Brenna Lissoway: Did you each individually develop your 15-minute talk? Or was it a canned—

Rick Mossman: No, we each individually had to develop. We actually had that talk, and then on the top of the hour we had another program. Some of the seasonals were singers, and they would do things like old Civil War songs and period dress and living history type stuff, things like that. Probably one of the neatest things I did while I was there, I was trying to learn everything I could, take advantage of all the training opportunities at the regional office

and things like that. I took a sign language class. And I think one of the neatest things I ever did – and I could never do it again, I only did it once – but I gave my entire 15-minute talk in sign language to the Gallaudet College students. I had about 200 students here. And Gallaudet's the national deaf college. And I gave my whole talk in sign language, which was very hard to learn and do. But I was very proud of that. (laughs)

Brenna Lissoway: Did you use the sign language, going forward in your career at times?

Rick Mossman: Occasionally, but very seldom. I just never had the need for it much after that. And I never was, I've always had a hard time learning foreign languages. So, I never was, or any other language. So, I never was real good at it. That's why I felt very good that I was able to give my talk once in sign language. It was kind of an abbreviated version. It wasn't the whole thing.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah. Yeah.

Rick Mossman: But I had a blast living in DC. One of the other things I did when I first started out in 1975 was, I said, you know, I had a bird list. Because I had my life bird list. But then I also had my life park list. I set out the goal to visit every national park unit in the country in 1975. That was another life goal I had. And I'm still working on it. But I'm up to 375 now, out of 401.

Rick Mossman: So while I was in DC, once I'd got settled and gotten the routine, after about two weeks, I said, you know, I don't plan on being here very long, I want to get back out west, so I want to take advantage and see everything I can in Washington. So, I sat down and wrote down everything I could do in an afternoon or morning, everything I could do in one day, everything I could do in a weekend. The way our schedules were set up, every six or seven weeks you had a three-day weekend, everything I could do in a three-day weekend. I wrote down this entire list. Then every chance I had an afternoon or morning off, or a day off or a weekend, I'd look at my list and I'd go off and do one of those things. So, in the time, in the 13 months I was there, I went to Boston, I went to New York City, I went to Philadelphia. I visited every park unit in Virginia and DC and Maryland. During my furlough, I took a trip down the coast of Florida, hitting all the sights along the coastal states. Went to Maine because I thought I may never have this opportunity, living here, again. I went to every museum in DC. All that. I never—

Brenna Lissoway: So, let me ask you this. Growing up in the Midwest and it sounds like spending most of your growing up years in your sort of, and part of the reason why you wanted to become a ranger was looking at some of those big western national parks.

Rick Mossman: Mm hmm. True.

Brenna Lissoway: How did your impression of the park service change then after spending all that time on the east coast and seeing some of the historic sites and other kinds of sites?

Rick Mossman: Well, you know, it really showed me that we have the best of the best in the park service. What was really interesting growing up in the Midwest which, you know, obviously there was little, no Revolutionary War activity, very little Civil War activity, there was some, but you know, you'd read about those battlefields and this and that. It really struck me going back and being in those places to see what they really meant, and that the park service was protecting them, and how important they were to this country. It really brought into me that the National Park Service was everything of national significance. Not just the natural that I was used to out west, but the historical and cultural significance of this country the park service is in charge of. Which I thought was pretty cool.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah. Yeah. Definitely. So then how did you move on to your next position?

Rick Mossman: Okay. So, it was interesting. While I was in Washington, there were other job opportunities there in Washington. Because I was a GS-4, 10-month, subject to furlough. I was actually offered some other jobs at a higher grade. But one thing I noticed, because I was trying to figure all this hiring stuff out, was that people could move up in DC very fast, but they would never leave. There was a number of us that were hired around that time. I got to thinking, even if I move up grade wise here, I won't be as competitive to go back out west. So, I declined, turned down a number of jobs there in DC, because I wanted to stay competitive to move back out west.

Rick Mossman: Also, I was applying for permanent jobs in the US Fish and Wildlife Service at the time, because I thought as a backup, if I can't get in the park service, I'll go work for Fish and Wildlife, since that's what my degree's in.

Rick Mossman: So, I was applying for jobs all over the country now that I had the eligibility to apply. Finally, I got an offer at Bandelier. I have to be very honest and say I got the offer at Bandelier because one of the bosses I'd had at Buffalo River was the hiring official there at Bandelier.

Brenna Lissoway: Who was that?

Rick Mossman: That was Bob Beldon. And he had, so I'd worked for him one summer at Buffalo River. He knew me, and so he hired me there in that job at Bandelier. So, let's see. I was in Washington, DC for 13 months. And I got hired on about August first. And instead of actually moving to the park they sent me straight to FLETC [Federal Law Enforcement Training Center]. It was kind of interesting. FLETC had just moved, this was 1979. FLETC had just moved from Washington to Georgia two years earlier. When I got down there, the class, they announced to the 24 of us, there were 12 park service, six forest service, three Fish and Wildlife Service, and one from the Tennessee Valley Authority. It was the first time they had taken land management agency people, put them together in one class instead of being with all the other federal law enforcement. They said you

guys, we're going to call you a land management class. You're the first one. We were the first land management class to go through FLETC as a land management class.

Rick Mossman: It was funny because the instructors, they all had their canned talks. So, they were trying to adapt it. I'll never forget, some guy from FBI or ATF came in to talk about arson. He said, "Well, you guys are the land management. So, I guess instead of talking about arsons on buildings, I'm going to have to talk about arson and wildfires. Which I know nothing about, but I'll attempt to tell you." (laughter) So they tried to teach us arson and wild land fire versus in a building, trying to adapt to land management. So, it was a major learning curve for FLETC. But you know, it's after 35, 40 years now, it's become really well.

Brenna Lissoway: Is there anything in particular that you felt like you learned there that served you well, going forward?

Rick Mossman: Well, just general law enforcement. I mean, I have to be very honest. I had never fired a pistol before I went to FLETC.

Brenna Lissoway: Wow.

Rick Mossman: The firearms instructors were like yeah; we like you because you don't have problems and bad habits, we have to break you from. (laughs)

Brenna Lissoway: You're a clean slate.

Rick Mossman: Yeah, exactly. But all that law enforcement, I think one of the most interesting things for me was, and I have to say, I'll be upfront about it, I didn't join the park service to do law enforcement. I'm one of the old dinosaur rangers in the sense that I have a resource background. I think every law enforcement ranger has to have a resource background, also, and still needs that. You know, I don't want to see us go to 100% law enforcement. That's what I try to instill in my academy cadets now. But in any case, you know, I had not, I personally could never be a city cop. I never had any desire to do anything like that. Or a highway patrolman or anything. But you know, law enforcement for the park service, and at that time, to be basically a ranger—

Rick Mossman: I'll backtrack a minute. When I was at Buffalo River, one of the most impressionable things that got me was about a week after I was there, my first summer, they had this big rescue. I got to be involved in this rescue and literally save a bunch of lives. And I go, this is really cool. I want to do search and rescue. So that was one of the main impetuses for me to be a ranger was search and rescue. Well, in protection ranger at that time, law enforcement was just becoming required. So, I had to go into that.

Rick Mossman: At FLETC, the biggest thing I can remember, and it was a lot of fun, and I couldn't believe they were paying us to go have all this fun at FLETC. But the thing I came away that I remember the most, the two things that really fascinated me about what we learned was, number one, constitutional law. I mean, I sat there and said, if I had it all to do over again, it would be fun

to go to law school. (laughs) Because I really enjoyed constitutional law. The other thing was the CSI, the crime scene investigation. We had this old instructor who had been the CSI guy for San Francisco Police Department in the '50s and '60s. He was kind of this old professor looking guy that had this voice, and he had this name like Rotsky or something like that, I can't remember. But he just made it so fascinating talking about fingerprinting and evidence and trace evidence. I thought what a fascinating science, and so forth.

Brenna Lissoway: What was it like being in the class with all the different other land management agency folks with different missions?

Rick Mossman: Right. You know, that was never an issue in the sense that we were all there for law enforcement. What was funny is that the 24 of us in that class, nobody had any kind of law enforcement background except the TVA guy. And the TVA guy had been, about seven or eight years earlier, had been the youngest sheriff in the United States. When he was 18 years old, he ran for sheriff in some county in Tennessee and won. And he was an 18 year-old sheriff. Then after a term or two, I guess, he thought better of it and joined the Tennessee Valley Authority and became a federal officer. But nobody else had any law enforcement background, so it was all new to all of us.

Brenna Lissoway: Were there any women in your class?

Rick Mossman: We had one.

Brenna Lissoway: One.

Rick Mossman: Yeah. We had one woman, whose name I cannot remember at this point. I don't know whatever happened with her. She worked somewhere up in the northeast. But you know, we would talk about – I don't remember us ever really talking about the different missions that much between forest service and, we were all just trying to make sure we all got through FLETC and what we were doing. So, we were really trying to work as a team to get through all that and so forth.

Rick Mossman: You know, there were some folks, especially from some of the other agencies that did not want to be there. They were forced to go by their agency. A couple of the forest service folks, who really didn't want to go, but forest service was trying to get their law enforcement numbers up, and they were required to go. There were a few Vietnam vets in that class, who used to rumble about some of the physical training and things like that because they felt like they were back at boot camp and they didn't want to be there. (laughs) But, you know, for a lot of folks, including me, to be there on the Atlantic beach and just all the things around there were kind of a lot of fun. We're getting out and doing things. I mean, you know, to go out on the Okefenokee Swamp and see alligators was new for a lot of folks there. We just had a ball on the weekends, going and seeing things.

Brenna Lissoway: So, then you arrived at Bandelier after FLETC. And this was, I mean, you hadn't been to the park yet.

Rick Mossman: No, uh. So that was bizarre. I was at FLETC for nine or ten weeks. Then I go back to Washington DC, gather up all my goods in my little Subaru. Drive to New Mexico, stop and visit my folks in Topeka and grab a few other items at home. Drive to New Mexico, drive into Bandelier. It was early mid-October. I get there at eight o'clock in the morning, and at one o'clock that afternoon, they had me up investigating an elk poaching up in the high country there at Bandelier. I thought, well this is really cool, I mean, I just went through law enforcement school, and here I am, looking for a poacher now. (laughs) We never did catch that particular poacher. But that was really neat. So, it was fun meeting all the staff. And it was just bizarre in the sense that I'd been employed for two months but hadn't been there yet. But it was—

Brenna Lissoway: And were you a general ranger? Was that your position?

Rick Mossman: I was still park technician at that time.

Brenna Lissoway: You were a park technician. Okay.

Rick Mossman: Yeah, I was a subject-to-furlough park technician. And yeah, I have to think about, I was a GS-4. And I actually supervised the seasonal law enforcement person the following summer as a GS-4 law enforcement. Just a general ranger. So they kind of put me in charge of the search and rescue, which I had a ball with, because that's what I really wanted to do, and because we had a small staff, there was only three permanent commissioned rangers on the staff at the time. So, we didn't have real good coverage. But in the fall, we had a lot of hunting problems and poaching problems in the high country, so we were really busy with that, doing solo night patrols and so forth, up in the high country, trying to prevent our elk from getting poached. And getting out in the back country occasionally. Not a lot of search and rescue, but we did some and we were faithful about our training, to keep up on it. We got involved with the local community and so forth with search and rescue training, that sort of thing. What else?

Rick Mossman: Not too many issues. You know, the occasional campground issues, the dogs off leash and too many tents in a site and that sort of thing. Traffic violations on the road. We only had three miles of road from the entrance station down to headquarters was about it. So really not too many traffic violations. But, you know, you had those occasional weird things where the drunk guy drives down to the park at midnight and doesn't turn into the parking lot and goes straight into the trees on the island there in the middle of the parking lot. I can remember that particular one – I threw on, I had blue jeans and a white V-neck t-shirt that I'd wear under my uniform shirt. And threw on my flat hat. So here I am in a white t-shirt and blue jeans running out there. But everybody knew that was the ranger trying to deal with this. So. (laughs)

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah. Yeah. And so, you lived in the park.

Rick Mossman: I lived in the park the whole time I was there.

Brenna Lissoway: Talk a little bit about the park community. What was it like living, because that was really your first park living in, other than Buffalo River.

Rick Mossman: It was. Other than Buffalo River, you're right. What was neat, being a permanent and being in a small to medium-sized park, the permanent staff, I think, was around 40 at that time. They were very close. We had lots of, lots of potluck dinners and parties and things like that. It was a very tightknit community. Everybody knew each other really well. That was back in the days where we'd help each other out working-wise. I mean, one of the maintenance guys who started the same day I did who's Mark Seton, who retired a couple of years ago as a facility manager at Great Sand Dunes, who was the best man at my wedding, you know. I used to go with him and help plow the road. We'd have him come help us with search and rescue and this and that. So, we all really, the divisions there really helped each other out.

Rick Mossman: One of the most memorable things I remember was we started a program, we the ranger division, we went to the interp division and said we would like one night a week to give the evening campfire program. We said, to give you guys a break, so you guys have a break one night a week, and we would like to talk about ranger stuff at these programs. So, we worked it out with the chief of interp, Ed Green. And between Bob Beldon and Ed Green, we worked it all out. And I can remember at the time, Fred Patton was giving a program, he'd give his interpretive program on search and rescue. I gave mine on the history of the park service. I want to say your dad, John Lissoway, gave one on fire management in the park service. I'm trying to think who else. But anyway, so we all had our programs. Every Wednesday night, we'd just take turns. One of us would do the campfire program, which we all had a ball with.

Rick Mossman: It was funny. The interpretive division liked having one night off. It was funny, from Bandelier I moved to Grand Canyon and I suggested that in a meeting one day. And the chief of interp at Grand Canyon said something to the effect of, "There will never, ever, as long as I live, ever be anybody but an interpreter give an evening campfire program in my park." (laughs) When I made the suggestion that rangers could help out giving programs. (laughs) That did not go well over at Grand Canyon.

Rick Mossman: But in any case, the park community was wonderful. I got to live in a little tiny cabin; it was old cabins built by the CCC in the '30s. The park service at some point had converted the cabins. They took every two cabins and made them a little residence. It was only about 250 square feet total. But flagstone floors, and you know, a little adobe corner fireplace in each room. The latia viga roofs and so forth, where the, you know, at night when you were sleeping, you'd feel the gravel from above as the mice were running around dropping on you as you were sleeping. Of course,

many years later they discovered hanta virus and that. We didn't know about that at the time. (laughter)

Rick Mossman: What was really interesting is in these cabins was all the old CCC hand tin-stamped, hand done light fixtures, lamps. The beds and all the furniture was historic furniture built by the CCC with the turkey symbol. I didn't have any furniture, so that was fine with me. But later I had to say, I'm questioning the reason you were not allowed to have your own furniture, because they had no place to store this historic furniture. So, they kept it in these cabins, and we had to use it. I don't know if I ever really raised the question, but I always wondered why I had to pay rent to live on historic furniture that the park service wouldn't take out of there because they had no place else to store it. (laughs) So we were actually doing them a favor by using that furniture. (laughter) I tried to be as gentle as I could with all that furniture because it was historic. But it's kind of fun looking back on that. I understand now most of that stuff's in storage down at the Western Archaeological Center is what I heard.

Brenna Lissoway: Any other challenges or accomplishments at Bandelier? Or particular things that you felt like were important in your career that happened there?

Rick Mossman: Well, like I said, I really got into search and rescue. I got to go to a NASAR class in Albuquerque.

Brenna Lissoway: What is NASAR?

Rick Mossman: National Association of Search and Rescue. Their first, or their lost person, what was it called then? It was called Managing the Search Function. Now it's called Managing the Lost Person Incident. I was in that class with the park rangers from Lake Meredith, and Paul Anderson from Grand Canyon, and a couple other park service people and a bunch of folks from Colorado and New Mexico. Search managers, private and so forth. It was really kind of fun. One of the guys that was there in his first search class, I cannot remember his name, but he was with the Vail Search and Rescue in Colorado. Thirty plus years later, when I was in charge of the search for Jeff Christianson, Rocky Mountain National Park, he came over to help me. It was the first time we'd seen each other since that search class back in 1980, I think it was. And he helped tremendously on that search.

Rick Mossman: But I really got into search and rescue. I guess one of the neatest things that happened that made me really feel good was in 19, I want to say 1982, we'd had the old famous tracker Ab Taylor put on a search tracking seminar at the park. He had been teaching a class nearby. We got him to come to the park and put on a man tracking course – which is what it was called back then – a man tracking seminar. And a few weeks after that, we had a report of a potential suicide victim in the Tsankawi unit of the park. Tsankawi's a separate unit from the main part of the park that we'd go patrol a couple of times a week. A ruin up on the mesa there; we had some Indian ruins up on the mesa.

Rick Mossman: In any case, we met this state trooper at the main highway along the park boundary there. And Bob Beldon and Ed Green and I had just been through this tracking seminar. The highway patrolman explains what's going on, this woman had left notes that she's going to go and commit suicide, and he has this girl's roommate with her. She is just like, "We've got to go, we've got to go, I know where she's at. I know where she's at. We've come up here many times." And so forth and so on. I learned many things about search and rescue on that particular mission that I still teach today. Because we took her along with us, which was a mistake, looking back on it. Because the whole time, we decided – Ed and Bob and I decided – we're going to track this person. Kind of a sandy pinon juniper forest. It was kind of a sandy clay, easy to track, to follow her. And this roommate kept yelling at us, "Well, I know where she's at. Let's just go straight there." We decided to actually track her through the methods we'd just learned a few weeks, a month earlier. It took us a few hours, and we probably tracked for a mile and a half up on the mesa. We get to this one Indian ruin and I look in and there's this body.

Rick Mossman: I have to admit another thing that I learned on that search was we were assuming that we were looking for a dead person. I learned from that search, never, never, ever assume. And in all the searches I've done all over the country in my entire career, I always told everybody, we are not searching for a dead body; we're searching for a person. A live person. Until we find them, they are not dead. And we assumed we were searching; I was young and learning.

Rick Mossman: I get there, I'll never forget, I looked in this one little kind of cave, it was part of the Indian ruins there, and I saw this body and I turned around and yelled at Ed and Bob, "I found her!" All of a sudden, I heard this snore. She was still alive. She had overdosed on a bunch of pills. We found a bunch of pill bottles on her. So, in any case, we got the Los Alamos Search and Rescue up there with a litter and so forth. We got her to the hospital. She was in a coma for about three days and came out of the coma. You know, we actually saved somebody. The doctor said it had been another four or five hours, she probably would have died because of all the drugs she'd taken on board.

Rick Mossman: But what was interesting is this roommate, this is not where she thought she was going to be. And if we had followed that roommate to where she wanted to take us, we would never have found her. And she would have died. And ultimately, they would have found this body up there at some point later.

Brenna Lissoway: So just to kind of follow up, how does it change a search, in your experience, to just assume that someone is still alive, instead of assuming that they're dead?

Rick Mossman: It changes everything. It changes the entire morale of every searcher out there. That they know they have the opportunity that they're going to save

somebody's life. That's the big thing. It gives you a sense of speed, a sense of purpose, and makes you want to work that much harder. Because if people think they're only looking for a dead body, they're not as efficient, they're not as effective, they're not as quick, everything else. But if you know you're searching for a live person, you bust your butt to do it.

Rick Mossman: And then Bob and Ed and I won the first ever Exemplary Act Award for the National Park Service.

Brenna Lissoway: For that effort?

Rick Mossman: For that rescue. I'm pretty proud of that, even though the award is signed by James Watt. (laughs)

Brenna Lissoway: So, your next assignment was Grand Canyon?

Rick Mossman: Yeah. So—

Brenna Lissoway: So how did you decide to leave and move on?

Rick Mossman: While I was at Bandelier, actually after about a year, they promoted me to a GS-5 because HR told the superintendent I could not be in law enforcement as a GS-4 and be a supervisor as a GS-4. So, they made me a GS-5. Then about a year and a half after I was there, the GS-6 ranger, kind of my partner, he left, and I took over his duties. At that point, I was also over the fee collection operation. So, I ran the entrance station and hired all the seasonals for that, which was a lot of fun. And still doing all the other general duties, search and rescue and so forth.

Rick Mossman: Then I started applying for jobs at some of the bigger parks, Yosemite, Yellowstone, Grand Tetons, Everglades. Still applied for some permanent jobs. I honestly can't remember how many, the last year or so at Bandelier, how many jobs. I bet I applied for 20 or 30 jobs, at least.

Rick Mossman: I applied for this back-country supervisor job at Grand Canyon. It was the back-country patrol operation supervisor. I got a call one day from Chuck Lundy, who was the back-country sub district ranger, who was over that position and he offered me the job. I took it and moved over to Grand Canyon in December 1983. Really excited because I think, when I tell people this every day, everywhere I go, all my travels, Grand Canyon is the greatest site on the face of the globe. I've had the opportunity to travel on five continents, and I still say the Grand Canyon's the greatest site on the face of the globe. As Theodore Roosevelt said, "the one great sight which every American should see." I still contend personally that we ought to have one overlook that you don't have to pay to go look at the Grand Canyon. But that's just my personal philosophy. (laughs)

Rick Mossman: In any case, I went to Grand Canyon. The way they had it set up, they had just finished a new back country management plan that Paul Anderson and others had been working on the previous three or four years and got it through. We built a new back country reservations office and this whole new back country reservations system. So, we had a back-country

reservations office supervisor, and then the back-country patrol supervisor, which was me. Then all the seasonals – and I think at that time we had all seasonals – they all worked for the two of us. And they worked half to two-thirds their time in the reservations office, and the other time they were working for me out on patrol on the trails.

Rick Mossman: The corridor was a separate sub district, the main Kaibab and Bright Angel Trail, which of course is what 90% of the visitors that go below the rim use. But we had everything outside the corridor. So, we were very busy in the fall and the spring with back country reservations and with all those outer areas people went to. But in the summer, when all the springs dried up and so forth, very few people went outside the corridor. So, in summertime, I got to be the search and rescue coordinator. Which was just a blast because when I left Grand Canyon, we had, in park service lingo, a major SAR is any SAR that goes over 500 dollars. Because then, I probably shouldn't say this, but then the money comes out of region or Washington, it doesn't come out of the park budget. So, we had a lot of $550 SARs. (laughs) But when I left, I think we were averaging almost 325 to 350 quote "major SARs" a year. So almost every day.

Rick Mossman: Now a lot of that was just helicopter rescues, because every time we'd turn the key on the helicopter, we'd go over $500. Fly down and pick somebody up with a broken leg or whatever it might be. So, there were a lot of those very quick rescues. But we had a number of major searches while I was there, which were just great, I've always been fascinated by wilderness search, searching for people lost in the wilderness, and the whole science behind that.

Brenna Lissoway: Do you want to talk about any of those particular – the ones that stick out in your mind?

Rick Mossman: Yeah, probably the most interesting was in 1984. And I cannot remember the lady's name. I still use it as a case history when I teach Managing the Lost Person Incident. The incident commander, I want to say, was Kurt Sauer and Joe Evans, I believe. I know it was Kurt. I'm not sure about Joe. In any case, what I remember, and I was just a ground pounder on that search. The funny thing was, they called us about ten o'clock the night before and said, "We have a lady missing down at Phantom Ranch. She's supposed to be at Indian Gardens and didn't show up, so she's like a day or two overdue." It was the week of Thanksgiving. And this was on a – I may have these dates a little off, but I think it was on a Tuesday, they called us on Monday night. "So, Tuesday morning, we're going to fly a bunch of you down and you're going to go hike and search for her down along the, from Phantom Ranch going up the North Kaibab Trail and so forth. So be at the helicopter ready to be out for 24 hours, at six a.m."

Rick Mossman: So, we all go over there at six a.m. We're there, and they start flying us in, and one of the things I remember is they just said, once you get on the ground there, start searching. You've got this little valley, whatever it was.

I remember flying in the helicopter, I go, I wonder if we should be watching for her right now. Nobody gave us those instructions. We were supposed to start once we got down there.

Rick Mossman: What was funny is, we were out there for four days. And it was miserable weather. It was hypothermia weather. It was raining, it was about 40 degrees. Four of us were working up near the Cottonwood Ranger Station in some side canyons there, I'll never forget this. What was interesting is they told us to go out for 24 hours, they were going to helicopter food into us at the various ranger stations. Well, on Tuesday night, rainstorm came in and the helicopter never flew again.

Rick Mossman: So, we were all stuck at these places and we didn't have food. We didn't have food other than what we brought with us or what we could find at the ranger station.

Rick Mossman: So, I'll never forget, we're sitting there on Thursday morning, Thanksgiving, pouring down rain, getting ready to go out in the rain. We're searching for MREs [Meal Ready to Eat] and old C-Rats. And we find all these MREs that are turkey, and we say, this is appropriate, it's Thanksgiving. (laughs) We had turkey MREs for Thanksgiving dinner that day as we were searching.

Rick Mossman: In any case, the lady walked out on her own on Friday of that week. That search I still use, like I said, I still have the video from the debriefing we did with her and so forth. Just absolutely fascinating. It was the greatest, one of the classic cases of the wilderness survival I've ever had to deal with. Because she had no back-country experience, no real camping experience. She'd hiked down and stayed at one of the bunkhouses down there. Went for a day hike and got lost.

Rick Mossman: What was interesting is during the investigation the investigative rangers were doing, she worked for a software firm in Southern California. All her workmates kept telling him, "She'll figure it out. She'll survive because she's very analytical and she'll figure out what to do." Even though she has no experience and she's dressed in blue jeans and a t-shirt and a cotton sweatshirt. That's all she, that's what she was dressed in, in this classic hypothermia weather.

Rick Mossman: So, you know, we went, most of that search, the attitude was she's still alive, she's still alive. I know there were people that thought she's dead. I heard people say that there's no way she could be alive, so forth and so on. Like I said, she ended up walking out on her own and was found by some illegal campers, which is kind of funny. And they called everybody in, they did this debriefing with her.

Rick Mossman: It was really interesting during the debriefing. She talks about, by the second day, she determined two things. She says, "I don't know how long you can live without food and water and stuff, but I knew I needed water. I don't know why, so I had to get to water." Number two, she said, "I was

about ready to give up hope when it started raining." I said, "You know, I'm not going to die today. Today is not my day to die." And she walked out on her own. It was pretty neat.

Rick Mossman: But in any case, the other thing from the debriefing that was really cool is as we're talking to her, I wasn't one of the interviewers, but I just have the tape. But she said that, she said on that Tuesday, she said, "I was up there, on the plateau, and this helicopter kept flying back and forth. I'm sitting there with this stick with my coat on it waving at this helicopter that kept flying right over me, back and forth. (laughs) And they would never see me." It was us being flown in and out of the canyon. We had not been told, you know, look for somebody on the way down. We had not been instructed that. I mean, some of us were just doing that intuitively and obviously didn't see her. (laughs) I thought that was hysterical. But there were a lot of things that I learned from that search that I've been teaching since for 40 years. So.

Brenna Lissoway: Wow. So, can you talk a little bit about, so this is a new back country management plan for Grand Canyon?

Rick Mossman: Right.

Brenna Lissoway: So, people were being required to have permits for the first time? What was so different about that?

Rick Mossman: Well, it was very controversial because it basically – and I could be wrong on some of this – I think they had to have permits before. But this basically made the whole park into zones, and within the zones they would only allow so many people a day to be in each zone. Or if you're in the corridor you had to be at a campground. It also set a date when you can make reservations. Because we had problems with certain large groups like Boy Scouts would come in and try to block all the reservations at the prime times in March and April, which is the prime hiking season. So, the system basically set up, you know, you can make a reservation starting like October fifteenth. We were just starting to use computers. It was a whole new computer system, and it had never been done before. So, it was all going to be done on this new computer system they had set up. Again, this was 1983, and again, it was going to limit the use in a lot of areas. The idea was to try to spread out use in the back country and put limits on it.

Rick Mossman: So, there was a lot of controversy about a lot of that. About making the reservation, especially. Because everybody wanted to come in March and April. Especially during Easter week. That was the high point of the year back then.

Brenna Lissoway: So how did you handle that controversy, being the person on the front line? I mean because you really were.

Rick Mossman: Oh, yeah Oh, yeah. It was interesting. We did public meetings. I can remember going to a public meeting in Phoenix with the superintendent, Chuck Lundy, my boss, and the district ranger, and being peppered by the

public about questions and controversy about the permit system. And just having to try to explain why we were trying to protect the canyon. And the desert is very, as Dave Cole, who was doing a lot of our research for us at the time on back country resources, said, the desert's very resilient, but it's not very – oh, what was the other "R" word, I can't remember, it can't rehab itself very easily. So, we were looking at having to do rehab at a lot of these campsites. We were trying to distribute use where if a couple of people camped in a particular area each week, you would never see that impact, versus all of them camping in one spot. That was part of the whole thing. Or in a few areas, we had designated spots. We wanted to avoid that because we really wanted to strive for that wilderness experience.

Rick Mossman: When we were going through that management plan, I advocated – this is, again, just my personal philosophy – I advocated we ought to have a couple of zones where nobody was permitted to go into. I said, we ought to have a couple of areas that nobody can go in. Just leave them alone. Public's not allowed. Nobody can go in there. And man will not go.

Rick Mossman: That idea didn't get very far. As a couple of people pointed out, that's going to be the most popular place to go, because everybody's going to think it's the new Area 51 or whatever. (laughs) So that never went over well. But we were trying to distribute use, and there was just a tremendous amount of people wanted to come hike the Grand Canyon and so forth.

Rick Mossman: We were really working on trying to keep the back country pure, in a sense. There was a lot of controversy about building more trails, putting more trail signs. We were like, no, these areas outside, we already have that in the corridor and the Hermit Loop. In the back country, we should leave it alone. Have routes so people know where they can get through breaks in the red wall. But we don't need signs out there. We don't need maintained trails. And let people have that true wilderness experience. So that's what that plan was all about.

Rick Mossman: It worked well. The biggest controversy was the reservations. Trying to get reservations. Because the prime dates would get blocked up. But the reality of it was, if you showed up when the office opened at eight o'clock on any morning, you could probably get a permit to go hiking somewhere. Just everybody usually wanted to hike the corridor. Bright Angel, Phantom Ranch, Indian Gardens, that sort of thing. What was interesting is – I'll wait on that. But, yeah, so it was controversial. But yeah, it worked, and it spread the use out. And nobody had any problems with how we were managing the back country. It was just the reservations and stuff; a lot of people didn't like that.

Brenna Lissoway: Right. Right. So, there's something that you want to go to next?

Rick Mossman: Well, I was in that position for three years while I was there. And of course, doing all the search and rescue, which was a blast. I'd occasionally help the South Rim patrol rangers out on stuff. One of the things I was going to say about Grand Canyon and forgot to say is the first day I got

there, went down to Chuck Lundy and he took me right over to meet the superintendent, Dick Marks. I walked in and met Dick Marks. I'd heard stories about him before, but I'd never met him. The first thing he said to me was, "You have the best job in the park." I thought he was, to be honest, blowing smoke. And then it turned out later, everybody else said the same thing! (laughs) And what he said was, "You have the best job in the park. And the park begins over there." As he pointed toward where the rim was. Because even Dick Marks, at the time, he felt the park started at the rim and went down in there.

Rick Mossman: And to his credit, I know he was somewhat controversial, but he would get out there and hike down the park and this and that. He was the first superintendent that, I love this about, he told me, because we had to abide by the uniform policy, and hiking in the back country there, the uniform we had then was not real conducive to hiking in the Grand Canyon. He said to me, "I don't care what footwear you guys wear when you're hiking in the back country, because you've got to protect your feet. It's tough because they take a beating. I don't care what kind of footwear you guys wear, as long as it's earth tone and no florescent shoelaces." (laughs) No red, green or orange shoelaces. But just, I don't care what you wear, as long as it's earth tone. And that was the first time I ever heard a superintendent say you can deviate from the uniform system, because he knew what it's like. Because he'd been down there, and he hiked, and he knew how hard it was.

Brenna Lissoway: Can you talk about what the uniform was like at that point?

Rick Mossman: Yeah. We also deviated a couple other ways that you probably weren't supposed to. I know we weren't supposed to. The shorts they had at the time were very, very bad. The uniform shorts. At that time, we had a deal worked out with Patagonia where we could get, and Patagonia had an old short, it was called the stand-up short. It was cotton duck material. It came in kind of this forest loden green, which just about matched the uniform pants. And that was what everybody wore. Bought them on your own. Didn't have a uniform allowance to pay for them. But we got a discount at Patagonia at the time, and that was a standard thing that we all wore. They were the most comfortable pants, and I wish they still made them. They don't. But they were the most comfortable hiking pants I'd ever worn. And that's what we had.

Rick Mossman: We usually wore, then we all wore the summer gray uniform shirt. Then we had whatever footwear. At that time, another interesting story, at that time, most of us were wearing the first commercial, what was known as approach shoes. And Nike had invented these two shoes. They had a high top called, I think it was called the Approach, and a short-top boot called the Lava Dome. We were all wearing those because they were kind of like a running shoe/hiking boot combination. They were just very comfortable. That's what we all wore there to the point that the corridor district ranger at the time, Joe Quiroz wrote Nike and tried to get a discount for us.

Ultimately Nike had us test some of their later Approach boots. They would send them to us. We would wear them for three to six months, send them back to Nike and they would look at them, do whatever research they do, and send them back and we got to keep them. I know there was one particular boot that came out that we tested that were pieces of crap, and they never came out commercially with that particular boot.

Brenna Lissoway: Interesting.

Rick Mossman: And they told us that it was the best testing they ever had on their boots was what we did there in the back country of Grand Canyon. No other research they'd done compared to what we were doing there at Grand Canyon with their shoes and boots. So that was kind of interesting.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah. So, what was that community like, living at Grand Canyon?

Rick Mossman: It was great. Being a single guy at the time, and actually being in a community where there was like, in the summertime, in the wintertime there was 3,000 permanent residents, and in the summer, about 4,000. So, there were a lot of single women around, and so it was wonderful. (laughs) So anyway, that's where I met my now wife. She had started out as an SCA there, and then worked for the river unit of the park. We started dating about a year before I left. Julie Jackson. Ultimately, when I left Grand Canyon and moved to Alaska, she moved up to Alaska and we got married shortly thereafter.

Rick Mossman: But funny story on her side, her degree is in zoology, from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She went out as an SCA intern in Grand Canyon. And she walked in on her first day into the trailer up at Resource Management Division. She walked in to say I'm here, you know, I'm an SCA. And one of the other resource folks, before they said anything else to her, they said, "Here. Hold this peregrine falcon for a minute." All of a sudden, they handed this live peregrine falcon, that had a broken wing or something. She's like, I love the park service. (laughs) So here she is, they haven't introduced themselves yet, and she's sitting there holding this peregrine falcon that they're trying to figure out what to do with or something. So, she was hooked at that, her first second in the park service. (laughs) But anyway.

Rick Mossman: So, the community was interesting. It was interesting, probably one of the funniest things, I thought, from living there, was the district ranger at the time, whose name I don't know if I should use, but he had a policy that whenever there was a traffic accident of any type, somebody got a ticket. Period. I know of rangers there who had a few minor fender benders with their patrol cars, who wrote their own investigation and wrote themselves a ticket and then had the district ranger sign the ticket. (laughs) Which was hysterical. And I can remember the superintendent receiving a ticket from the district ranger there once for a fender bender he had. But that was kind of the policy.

Rick Mossman: The other thing, of course, the classic, the employee pets were a constant problem. If you lived there in the village and you got a ticket, you had to go to court. You couldn't just pay the fine. So, you'd have to take two hours off and go to court. I know my boss, many others, you know, their dog or cat got off leash and ended up with a ticket for pet off leash. (laughs) That was a common thing there at the village, you know. You'd have to go see the magistrate and pay your $25 fine or whatever it was. That was kind of funny.

Rick Mossman: One of the other running jokes we had there, the ranger operations building, where all our ranger offices were, next to it was a parking lot where we had the magistrate's office, we had our own magistrate. And the next building over on that same parking lot was the then, not Xanterra but Fred Harvey hiring office. And we'd take people to court to the magistrate. They'd end up getting, you know, sent to jail, or get a fine. We used to joke to these guys after we'd take them out of court and kick them out of the front door, and we'd say, "If you want to go get a job, walk across the parking lot and they'll probably hire you." We literally had, people would walk after being fined in the magistrate's office, walk across the parking lot and get hired by Fred Harvey. (laughs) That was the constant running joke. That was hysterical.

Brenna Lissoway: That's interesting. I mean, that was a very large concession operation at the Grand Canyon.

Rick Mossman: Huge. Yeah. Of those 3,000 people there in the winter and the 4,000 in the summer, the majority of those were the concession people, not the park service people.

Brenna Lissoway: Now what kind of interactions did you have with concessions?

Rick Mossman: At my level, not a whole lot, to be honest. I know like the South Rim patrol rangers; they obviously had a close relationship because they were having to deal with all the bar fights and the things like that. One of the most memorable incidents occurred while I was there. A poor visitor walked up in the El Tovar Bar, which was a kind of somewhat elegant bar there, the nicest bar of all the bars there at the South Rim. And walked up to one of the concession muleskinners who was sitting there, drinking beer and asked this muleskinner how do I sign up for a mule ride or whatever. And the muleskinner looked up at him and said, "I don't like you." Pulled out a .357 and shot and killed him. Right there in a bar with all these people in the bar. Turned out the guy was going through some major personal issues. Then he just laid down the .357 on the table, waited for the rangers to come arrest him and he got sent away, for life, for murder.

Rick Mossman: So, yeah, the South Rim patrol rangers, they had to deal with things like that. I mean, we didn't have too many murders, obviously. But a lot of concession employee issues. Statistics bear out that in Yosemite and Yellowstone and there at Grand Canyon, 40 to 50 percent of all the arrests are concession employees, and a lot of the tickets. What I remember was a

lot of our search and rescues were concession employees. College age kids who get out to this environment they're not used to and do stupid things and fall off cliffs and things like that. So, we started having to be involved much more in the concession training, just to teach them about the environment and how to be safe and not have to be rescued by us and that sort of thing.

Brenna Lissoway: That's interesting.

Rick Mossman: We started a program with that. Some of the other, more interesting things, is we had, there at the Grand Canyon, we used to call it the upside-down mountain, the way I used to describe it. Because you get these people at the trailhead in June. It's a pleasant 60 degrees there at eight o'clock in the morning. Everybody's all excited about their trip to the bottom. They're carrying a 30 or 40 or 50-pound pack they're not used to carrying. They start going downhill to Phantom Ranch. They're all excited, they're going fast. And of course, going downhill is much harder on your body than going uphill.

Rick Mossman: They get down to Phantom Ranch. Their bones hurt; their joints hurt. They've been carrying this pack. But they don't realize they also started at 7,000 feet. And then they don't want to leave Phantom Ranch. They come up with excuses of how to get a helicopter ride out if they can.

Rick Mossman: And then they start hiking out. And on the way out, they just, they don't think they can make it, because they're going back. They don't realize they're going back up in altitude. Their joints and bones hurt from the day before, so forth. At Grand Canyon we had the mile and a half rest house and the three-mile rest house where we had water and we had an emergency phone there that rang straight into dispatch. So, every day, somebody at, we got no overtime pay or anything for this, but every night, somebody from five o'clock to six a.m. the next morning was on SAR duty. What that meant was you couldn't leave the village, even though you weren't getting paid or anything. You couldn't go have alcoholic beverages. You had to have your radio with you and be near a phone. Every time dispatch would get these phone calls, they would patch them in to you and you would sit there on the phone and convince this person they were not going to die, they could make it on up the trail. There was a lot of psychology and so forth.

Rick Mossman: So, then what we did was we decided to create a new position, or just a new part of the job there. And every afternoon about three o'clock, we'd have a ranger on patrol from two or three in the afternoon till about ten at night. All they would do is patrol that top three miles, giving out water and gluconate, which was what we mixed the water, the electrolyte replacement, and things like that. We used to call that the Wimp Patrol. That was the code for it. And Code W was the official radio term. Every time you'd deal with somebody on the trail, and they were just a wimp, you'd call dispatch, and you'd say, "I have a Code W," which meant you

had a wimp you were dealing with. No major emergency, just a wimp. (laughter)

Brenna Lissoway: So, no helicopters were sent.

Rick Mossman: No. No. At the time of Grand Canyon, when I was there, was when we were undergoing the whole overflight issue. Trying to cut down the number of airplanes and helicopters that were flying. As part of that, we had to cut down on the use of the park helicopter. At the time, we were flying the park helicopter like 500 to 700 hours a year. A lot of it was for, within a year, we were able to cut that in half. Mainly maintenance type flights, and things like that. But we became very sensitive to it.

Rick Mossman: But for search and rescue, we were also very sensitive to that. Unless somebody really needed it, we weren't going to call a helicopter. It was an easy way out to take care of somebody. But just the danger, I mean, people don't realize how dangerous helicopters are. The first year I was at Grand Canyon, five helicopters crashed there at the Grand Canyon. The first year I was there. Mostly scenic flights. But one was a USGS [US Geological Survey] flight that was doing work down at the Colorado River. One person died in that one. But there were five helicopter crashes that first year I was there, and a few years later we had the helicopter/airplane crash that killed 26 people.

Rick Mossman: We became very careful about just calling the helicopter willy nilly. I remember a number of times where I sent people up the trail from Phantom Ranch or elsewhere that I refused to get a helicopter for them. I was sweating bullets all night, hoping they made it to the top (laughs) Because I felt responsible.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah. Right. Right.

Rick Mossman: But it just didn't merit the danger of getting a helicopter out there. Those are the kinds of decisions you're sitting there making as a 29-year-old kid trying to figure out do, we need to get the helicopter for this guy or not. So those are some big decisions you had to make out in the field on a lot of those rescues and so forth.

Rick Mossman: So anyway, the first three years, like I said, I was a SAR coordinator and back country patrol supervisor. The last year I was there, I went down to Phantom Ranch, and worked out of Phantom Ranch. You lived down at Phantom Ranch. It was a nine days on, five days off. First day you hiked down and then the last day you hiked back out. It was wonderful being down at Phantom Ranch. I didn't like it in summer because it was so hot down there. When it got to 119, then I just couldn't bear that.

Rick Mossman: One thing I might add, just for the record, when I was a back-country ranger, all my back-country staff, you know, I was never rigid about when they worked. I mean, they had a schedule, they'd go on a patrol. But while they were on that patrol, I always told them as long as you put in eight hours of work, whatever needs to be done out there, that's all I care about.

Because you couldn't work in the middle of the day. Sometimes you'd start at four in the morning and work until ten, and then not start again until four in the evening, or whatever. But that's what I always told my people, as long as you get your eight hours in, I don't care when it is. Unless they're on some specific project or something they had to do. To some degree it was like that in Phantom. We had a pretty good routine down there of checking the campground morning or evening and so forth. Just dealing with all the folks down there. Phantom was a fascinating place to be because you had the ranger staff, the concessions staff, you had the campground, you had the lodging, the concession lodging. All the folks on the mule trip would come down on the mules, stay overnight at the lodge then go out the next day. So, you had the muleskinners there. You also had hikers who would stay at the cabins they would have there instead of the campground.

Brenna Lissoway: How about rafters?

Rick Mossman: No, rafters didn't stay at Phantom Ranch. They would stop there occasionally to get supplies. People bringing them down on the trails. But they did not, there was no rafter camping there at Phantom Ranch at that time.

Rick Mossman: But every night you had quite a mix. They had a family style meal every night, hiker stew, for the people staying in the lodges there. Then about eight o'clock in the evening they'd have beer hall there. And that always turned out interesting, because all of a sudden you had the muleskinners, the visitors, people from the campground all come up there to have a beer. Interesting things happened. One of my favorites was every year the vice squad from Los Angeles PD would come out on a backpacking trip. And every time they came, they'd get into some kind of trouble. We knew when they were coming, we'd go, oh, crap. We're going to have to deal with them this week somehow.

Rick Mossman: I was down there at the River Ranger Station where I lived at Phantom Ranch about nine o'clock at night. There's this knock on the door and it's one of the rangers from up there, one of the interpreters. She goes, "You need to go up to the beer hall because there's some people there and they've got a couple of muleskinners down in headlocks down on the ground." And I'm going, oh, crap. (laughs) I knew exactly who it was. And sure enough, I get up there and here's the LA Vice Squad guys. They've got two guys down in headlocks down on the ground. And all these other people just kind of watching them. And I'm like, okay, what's going on? The long and the short of it was, there were these two attractive foreign women there that a couple of muleskinners apparently, it appeared to some people were hitting on these girls. The vice squad guys took offense at that. And so, they decided to get into it with the muleskinners. Of course, being vice squad and knowing tactical advantage, they had gotten these guys in headlocks. (laughs) So I'll never forget, that was one of the times where I handcuffed one of the muleskinners, and he was

pretty well drunk. I handcuffed him and said, "Okay, we'll take care of this from here." And the vice squad guys were very happy. We went walking off toward where the muleskinners were and we went around the bend and I said to the other muleskinners like okay, guys, I'm taking the handcuffs off. Put him to bed. Make sure he doesn't come back out tonight. (laughs) You know, because it was just one of those things that didn't warrant any arrest or anything like that. But the police guys went away happy. They had saved the honor of these women and so forth and so on. It was just hysterical. (laughs) Things like that.

Rick Mossman: One of my other favorite things that happened down there was we had about 28 campsites. The limiting factor was we allowed, I think it was around 35 or 40 people a night, or the 28 campsites. Whatever filled first. So, every night, there was a lot of empty campsites, because we had already hit the 35-person limit. Everything there at the bottom, we had a tertiary sewer system down there. So, everything was based, the number of people, on how many people a night that sewer system could handle. That's what the numbers were all based on. Because that was a major issue. It's probably the most remote tertiary sewer system in the world. At least at that time, it was.

Rick Mossman: Anyway. So, one night, again, at 10:30 at night, somebody walks on my door and says, "There's somebody who has a campfire up in the campground." No campfires were allowed down there.

Rick Mossman: So, I go wandering up there. And I get to this one campsite that was supposed to be empty because we'd already hit the person limit. Here are these six Deadheads in their tie-dye shirts laying around this campfire. They were all older teenagers, college age. And I was not in a very good mood, because I had been sound asleep. I woke these guys all up. They had this big campfire going, and said, "What's going on?" They had just left L.A. from a Deadhead concert and were on their way to the next Grateful Dead concert in Phoenix a couple of days later. So, they decided to come over to the Grand Canyon. And they got to the top and said, "Well, this looks like fun. Let's go hike to the bottom." And of course, they had no idea what it was going to be like. They get to the bottom. It's dark. They're tired. So, they see this empty campsite, so they build a campfire to get warm and go to sleep. And of course, they didn't have a permit or anything else.

Rick Mossman: And so, I'm kind of figuring all this out. And again, I'm not in a real good mood. So, I said, I'm trying to figure out the best way to do this. Because we wouldn't allow people to stay there. We'd make them start hiking out whenever we dealt with this. All the time. I mean, every night you'd deal with this, almost. We'd tell them they had to hike out to the rim. Because there was no place for them to camp. There was no camping space available. They didn't have a permit.

Brenna Lissoway: Were you concerned about safety?

Rick Mossman: Oh, sure we were! But we kept at the ranger station, right next to the door I had a big cache of flashlights, water bottles and something else. We would hand those out to people. "There's two water bottles. Let me fill it up for you. Here's a headlamp or a flashlight, and when you get to the top, take it over and drop it in the barrel in front of the back-country reservations office." You know. And so, we were prepared for that to at least give them water and flashlights so they could hike back out.

Rick Mossman: So anyway, these guys, like I said, there were six of them. So, I made them put out the fire. I got a bucket and I had them go down to the Phantom, by Bright Angel Creek right there and put out this fire. Stir it with a stick. Had this big muddy mess.

Rick Mossman: Then I took garbage bags. I made them put all this mud into the garbage bags. It ended up being about 30 pounds of mud in a couple of garbage bags. Then I said, "I'm going to give you guys all a break. I'm only going to cite your spokesperson here." There was one guy who was kind of the leader. Gave him a ticket for, I can't remember if it was littering or, I mean, not littering, but no campfire or no permit. I can't remember. I wrote him a ticket. I said, "Here's the deal. You guys have to walk out. Here's some flashlights. Here's some water bottles. You guys have to hike out. You've got to hike to the rim. Here's the deal. When you get to the rim – and you're not going to get there until tomorrow morning – you have to go to the back-country office. And you have to take this mud over there and turn it in. If you guys don't do that, I'm going to send all of you tickets for no permit and for this campfire. It's going to cost you each," whatever it was going to be.

Rick Mossman: So, I knew what was going to happen, of course. They were going to go a mile up the trail, dump the mud, and go to sleep. (laughs) About 8:01 the next morning, I get this phone call. We had phones down there. "Mossman! What the hell are you doing? These guys just came in with 30 pounds of mud and turned it in to us here at the back-country reservations office!" Oh, I couldn't stop laughing. I could not believe these guys actually did it!

Brenna Lissoway: Oh my gosh.

Rick Mossman: And they carried all this kind of mud all the way up, all night long! (laughs)

Brenna Lissoway: Wow. That's quite a story.

Rick Mossman: Oh, it was funny. It was funny.

Brenna Lissoway: So, what would you say was your sort of general philosophy about approaching visitors and trying to, you know, in these difficult law enforcement situations, often?

Rick Mossman: Right. I need to go to the restroom.

Brenna Lissoway: Yes, let's take a break.

[END OF TRACK 1]

[START OF TRACK 2]

Brenna Lissoway: Okay. We're back on. Continuing with Rick Mossman. I was just asking you, Rick, if you had, during your career, kind of developed a philosophy about the way you approached difficult situations. Like you just didn't know how people were going to react.

Rick Mossman: Right. Right. It was interesting, of course. When I went through FLETC, a little different than it is today. We were taught to use the lowest level law enforcement necessary to seek compliance. That was kind of philosophy. I'll be very honest; I don't think we had as much emphasis on officer safety then that we do now. And maybe it's more necessary now. It's obviously necessary now, maybe more so than it was back then. But you know, you learn, especially in back country situations, that you knew you didn't have backup. You knew you had to deal with it yourself. So, there were probably a number of times when I would have liked to arrest somebody or written a ticket, but because of the situation, I just didn't feel it was the right thing to do.

Rick Mossman: Again, you know, I'm big into resource education. Which if you look at a park ranger job description, it says we're 51% resource education. And that's important. I always give the example to my students and so forth, and all the rangers that have ever worked for me. Think about what you're doing and what the long-term effect is. The classic example I gave, a kid's fishing on the Lewis Lake Dock in Yellowstone National Park with his dad. Beautiful evening in Yellowstone. And he's got worms on his hook, which is illegal. Legally, I can cite that kid, or I can give the dad a citation. But if you were to do that, what's that kid going to go away from that park with? I said, you sit there and talk to them and you explain why you don't use bait. We don't want to kill the fish, and so other people can come catch them, and all that kind of stuff. I said, we don't write a citation. I never want to see somebody write a citation for that. Because I want that kid going away from that park with a positive experience from a ranger, and not with a negative experience that he's going to remember for the rest of his life. So, education is much more important than the actual citation or arrest. Obviously, we have to do that in a lot of cases. But the education is the most important thing, especially for us as park rangers.

Rick Mossman: You learn to be creative and figure things out. Another interesting law enforcement experience I had at Grand Canyon was my boss, Chuck Lundy, called me about 10:30 one night and said, we have a situation. We had a visitor down at the Indian Gardens Ranger Station who was in the ranger station. There was a female ranger there at the time. He wouldn't leave. She was in fear, a little bit of fear. She was calling for help. And the guy wasn't doing anything. But she was very scared. She was a fairly new law enforcement seasonal ranger. And it turned out this guy had just got out of prison and so forth.

Rick Mossman: Chuck and I literally ran down the trail to the Indian Gardens Ranger Station. And we ended up talking to this guy. And he was pretty cooperative and so forth. He was very lonely. Like I said, just got out of prison. So, we arrested him for trespass. Then we had to hike him out three miles back up to the rim. Which is going to take most of the night. I remember Chuck and I trying to figure out how are we going to do this? Because this guy, he was obviously on the verge of suicide. And the last thing we wanted was to have this guy in handcuffs and then bail off the cliffs somewhere along, hiking up there.

Rick Mossman: So, Chuck and I, we handcuffed him in front. And then we rigged up, we took some one-inch webbing from the SAR cache. And we rigged him up, I tied the webbing to his handcuffs in front. And I tied his feet together enough that he could walk, with the webbing. Then I ran the webbing from the handcuffs down underneath the feet. And I sat there, and I had this, coming out from behind I was holding the back of him. And I told the guy, I said, "Okay, here's the deal. If you try to run or jump or do anything, all I have to do is go like this and you fall flat on your face right there, just like you just did." (laughs) We walked the guy out that way for the next few hours to get back up to the rim. But you had to be innovative and figure things out. Definitely, when you're in those kind of situations. So that was always fun to try to figure out.

Brenna Lissoway: Mm hmm. Yeah. Yeah. Other challenges at Grand Canyon? Or other projects that you participated in that you want to talk about?

Rick Mossman: Well, you know, from a park service perspective, I think the biggest thing that I had a hard time with was the walls between the divisions. As I mentioned earlier, I made a suggestion at some staff meeting that maybe we could help give interpretive programs at night. I explained what we had done at Bandelier. And that just was like, no way! Interpreters don't talk to protection rangers. That was kind of the attitude. There was this major rift in the divisions there. And I had been told by people been around, said this is typical of a big park. It's just that way. Each division chief has their fiefdom, and you don't cross over and help the other. Which I found very, you know because I was big on, we all work together here. We have to help each other out to accomplish our mission. And we're all mission oriented. That's why we joined this agency. But we've got to work together to do it. So that always bothered me from, you know, my whole career, when I would see those kind of rifts. It's true that I would see them more in big parks than I ever did in the small or medium parks.

Brenna Lissoway: And what do you think is the impact of that?

Rick Mossman: The impact is, I don't think we're as successful and I don't think we're as efficient. I think it creates a lot of personnel friction between folks. You know, we've all heard the interpreters call the law enforcement guys, says these cops out there are just harassing the people. We've heard the law

enforcement guys calling the interps all kinds of names and this and that, that they don't have real ranger jobs, all that kind of stuff. I was always one of those people, my philosophy through the entire park service is anybody in the uniform is a park ranger. We just have different jobs, you know?

Rick Mossman: When I got to Wind Cave, the sign on the office said, "Law Enforcement Division." And I immediately removed that sign. And I said, no, we are the Division of Resource and Visitor Protection. I said, that is our title. Because they would always say that. I, more than once, have had an interpreter or a resource person say, you know, I hear them on the radio, or I've heard them say, "Well, call a ranger." I've looked at them and said, "What are you?" You know because I want to remind them, they're rangers, too. I hate it when they say, "We're going to call a ranger." Call a protection ranger, that's fine.

Rick Mossman: Personally, I don't like the term "law enforcement ranger." I like the term "protection ranger." Again, because we're in charge of protecting the resource as much or more so than protecting the people. You know, that's our mission. It's not just law enforcement. We do all kinds of other things, obviously. All the emergency services. So.

Brenna Lissoway: Have you seen the protection ranger sort of skill set or attitude change over your career?

Rick Mossman: I have. I'll be the first to admit I'm one of the old dinosaurs that was a general ranger coming through the ranks. Part of it is our own fault, and part of it is, unfortunately, necessary. We have professionalized law enforcement much more so, just because of the culture of the world, the way it's changed. The way things have changed with FLETC, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, the way we have to train. I mean, you know, we have a terrible record as far as the number of rangers that have been killed in the line of duty. Five in the last 25 years, I believe, that have been murdered. I mean that per capita, that's the highest of any federal agency, I believe. It's easy for people out there to get complacent. And the park visitor is not like maybe it was 50 years ago, that we have crime in the parks. So, we have to deal with it. We have to be just as professional as every other law enforcement agency out there, and know officer safety, and know what we're dealing with, and expect the unexpected. But then again, we also know we're dealing with people on vacation that are usually pretty good. But we still have to be prepared. So, there's been a lot more emphasis on law enforcement and all those tools and techniques we need to learn and so forth, which is important. But as a result, so many other things have become of lesser importance, I think, in a lot of people's minds. Search and rescue, EMS, etcetera.

Rick Mossman: When I was at Yellowstone, I hired a seasonal one summer. Good young man. It was a new position I'd created where kind of doing evening patrol. Part of his job was to basically make sure nothing happened at the

entrance station, but to patrol the road in a patrol vehicle and then also to check the various trailheads each evening, and to check fishermen along Lewis Lake there, for fishing licenses and things like that. And the first night, he went out and wrote 30 speeding tickets. Which was more than the three permanent combined rangers there had written in a year, I believe. (laughs) So I had to talk to him about that. And he would not get out at the trailheads or talk to fishermen. Because his goal was to be a Montana highway patrol. That was his career aspiration. Which was wonderful. I said, "You'll be great at it. That's a good thing." But I said, "You're a ranger here, and this is what you need to do. You're not just staying in the air-conditioned patrol car and writing speeding tickets. That's not the job. That's part of it, but that's not the majority of it." He just could not understand that concept.

Rick Mossman: I finally asked him one day, why did you apply for this kind of job? He said, because it's the only seasonal job you can find where you get to carry a gun. And that's what he wanted to do. He wanted to carry a gun, and ultimately be a highway patrolman. And I don't know what's happened to him. I hope he's a Montana highway patrolman. He would have done a very good job at it. But being a park ranger was just not his fit.

Rick Mossman: But I see more and more people like that. That they're solely focused on law enforcement. We do need some of those in certain parks, there's no question. But they've kind of forgotten about all the other skills, or don't want to be involved. I mean, when I've had people tell me, "I don't want to do search and rescue," or, "I don't want to do EMS," that's very heartbreaking to me that they don't want to do that. Because that's a major responsibility of rangers.

Brenna Lissoway: Mm hmm. So, Rick, who in your career did you look to as a mentor? Or a ranger who you really looked up to? Or multiple rangers?

Rick Mossman: Yeah, a number of them. One thing I forgot to mention about Grand Canyon. I got there, the first day I got there, went in and met my boss, Chuck Lundy. The next person who walked all the way from upstairs, came up, came in and introduced himself, I had heard of before, I had seen before at a Ranger Rendezvous, I'd never met him, I'd heard all kinds of stories – some negative, some positive – was Butch Farrabee. Butch walked up the stairs, introduced himself to me, and I was so, a guy of his stature, of his stature in the park service, at least all the stories I had heard, for him to come up, take the time to come up and talk to me, I was really moved by it. We became fast friends, and ultimately, we've traveled all over the world together.

Rick Mossman: One instance I remember, I mean, he's always been one of my main mentors. I've learned a lot from him over the years. I still learn from him. But I can remember he asked me to go help him take a guy down the Little Colorado River to go diving in the springs down there on the Little Colorado River. Nobody had ever dove in the springs back there. And a

famous cave diver, probably one of the world's best cave divers at the time, a guy by the name of Sheck Exley, was coming out, and he wanted to dive in these springs. Butch was a diver, so he asked me to go along, just mainly, as it turned out, to be a Sherpa, to carry all the gear. (laughs)

Rick Mossman: So, we go out, and it was like a four-wheel drive, two-hour trip from Desert View out on the mesa there. And then we had to hike down in the canyon, carrying this scuba gear and so forth. Very small scuba gear, not full tanks. I'll never forget at one point, there's one place on this trail where you have to do about a 15-foot rappel to get down, and then you have to up-climb when you go back up.

Rick Mossman: So, we get all our gear. We do this little rappel. Sheck had never rappelled, so Butch gets him all rigged up. We get him down. We're sitting there, taking a little break, and Butch turns to me and says, "So, Rick, what are you going to do, what would you do if one of us broke our leg right now? How would you effect the rescue?"

Rick Mossman: I'm like, I had never even thought of that. He was teaching me that as we're out – and I still teach this in the academy, whether it's search and rescue, EMS or law enforcement – think of the what ifs. When you're out on patrol, whether you're in the back country, in your patrol car or whatever, if I see a poacher right now, what am I going to do? What am I going to do? Think it through my mind. If I was in this position right here, and somebody broke their leg, how would I effect the rescue? Would I bring a helicopter? Would I bring a ground crew in here? Where would the litter go?

Rick Mossman: That changed my mind. From that point on, in my entire career, I'd always think about the what ifs, and it made you so much more prepared for when it finally did happen. You knew, I'm going to do this, this and this, and you took care of it, instead of having the emergency, having the panic, and thinking, what do I do now? And Butch taught me that. You know, from those little instances where he'd say, "What would you do? How would you effect this rescue now?"

Rick Mossman: So, in any case, he has always, I've always looked up to him as far as all the things he's done for the park service and so forth. He was a true field ranger's ranger. So that was one.

Rick Mossman: When I worked at Wrangell Saint Elias and Glacier Bay, which we haven't really got to yet, my two bosses there were two of the best bosses I ever had. Jay Wells and Randy King. Jay's retired now, and Randy's the superintendent of Mount Rainier. Both still good friends and you know, Jay was the kind of guy, he had the same kind of law enforcement philosophy that I do. I'll never forget him saying once, at a seasonal training to all of us, the permanents were there, also, he said, "If you can't explain to a visitor why you're giving them a ticket, then you shouldn't be giving them that ticket." You know, just because we can, doesn't mean we

should. You've got to be able to articulate why they're getting this ticket and the impact that has on the resource or the park or whatever it is.

Rick Mossman: So, I always took that philosophy and used that. I always tell my rangers, "If you stop and write a speeding ticket, don't be a trooper and just go up and say, 'You were doing 65 in a 45, here's your ticket, you can mail it in, blah, blah, blah.'" I would walk up to them and say, "You know, you're in a national park. We have lots of wildlife. Last week we had a grizzly cub killed by a car that was speeding. We're here to protect the resource. We don't want you to hit an elk or a deer." You know, then give them the ticket, if you need to. But again, it goes back to educate the visitor. Use it as a positive spin, if you can, on what their violation is impacting the resource. Not just that they've broken the law, you know, because people just break the law and get a ticket, they don't like it. But if they understand why that law exists, they can accept it a lot easier. I think we have the opportunity to do that in the park service. Especially when it comes to resource – but you can take a lot of the stuff in parks and say, "This hurts our resource and we want this park to be here forever, so that's why we have this rule here." People understand that. I've never had people not really understand that, for the most part. So, anyway.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah. So, when you were at Grand Canyon, at this point what were you kind of thinking about your career? Because you're mid, you're sort of almost, you're early, early kind of starting to get into mid, maybe?

Rick Mossman: Yeah, I was a GS7 there at the time, and I wanted to get a GS9. Though I have to say, kind of go back a little bit, another one of my philosophies on life, my father, the best advice he ever gave my brother and I, I'll never forget this, I'll never forget the day he told us this, I can't remember what the date was. But I was probably 12 or 13 years old. Maybe middle school. But he told us, we were having this talk on a Sunday afternoon, watching football. We were talking about jobs and work and careers. And he said, "Don't ever worry about the money. Do something you want to do." And he supported us all the way on that. He said, "Do something you want to do. I will never question that. Don't ever worry about the money."

Rick Mossman: It was funny, when I was in Washington, I can remember talking to people, asking about being park rangers. This one lady came up to me and her son or nephew wanted to be a park ranger. And she was asking the pay. And then she goes, "Oh, so it really can't be a career."

Rick Mossman: I go, I told her, "Well, I hope so, because it's what I plan on doing." (laughs)

Rick Mossman: I can remember having an uncle, being home at Christmas when I was about 30 years old, and one of my uncles asked me, "Well, what are you going to do when you grow up? What are you really going to do for a career?" Because I had aunts and uncles that did not believe you could be a career ranger, and that I was actually going to keep doing it. (laughs) For the pay and so forth.

Rick Mossman: But anyway, at that point, I still wanted to work in Alaska. That was like one of my top goals. The other thing I wanted to say about my personal philosophy is, you know, my dad telling me never to worry about the money. I never worried about the grade. I never took a position – I personally made a commitment to myself I never would go work in an area I did not want to be at, just because the job was a higher grade or a higher position or whatever, I would not go and do that. And over the years, I had a number of job offers that were higher grades, higher positions, that I turned down because I didn't want to work at that particular park or whatever.

Brenna Lissoway: Right.

Rick Mossman: I don't regret any of that. I don't regret it because every park, other than Ford's Theater, where I went to get my permanent status, every park I worked at is because I really wanted to work at that park. So, and that was always my philosophy.

Rick Mossman: I wanted to work in Alaska. So, while I was at Grand Canyon, a job came up in Alaska. It was the district ranger. I worked for both Wrangell-Saint Elias National Park, which had just been created in 1980. This was 1988. And then it also worked for the new ANILCA addition, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, addition to Glacier Bay National Park. So, the new area of Glacier Bay. It was the district ranger over those two areas.

Rick Mossman: So, I applied for the job. And it was administered out of Wrangell-Saint Elias. Dick Martin was the superintendent. Jay Wells was the chief ranger. The late Dave Spirtes was the Glacier Bay chief ranger at the time. So, they both kind of worked on all the applications. And I got the job offer. I'll never forget when Jay called me to interview me, he said, you know, Yakutat is a really remote place. There's about 500 people that live there. The only way in and out is on the Alaska Airlines 737 that comes in and out every day, unless you have a big ocean-going boat. But there was no commercial transport of any type, other than that jet. There were no roads coming in and out of Yakutat. He says, it's a tough place to work. We've never had a permanent ranger down there year-round. They've only been there in the summertime. So, you're going to be breaking a lot of new ground. He says, I also noticed that you have a personal library of like 3,000 books, which is going to come in handy in the wintertime down there. (laughs) He thought that was quite funny. Because I do collect books.

Rick Mossman: Anyway, so I took the job. There was a lot of trepidation about going to this. And I'll be honest, I had people tell me you'll kill your career if you go to Alaska, you know, you don't get any experience up there. People said that to me. You'll ruin your career. Think twice about it. Things like that. I said no, I said, you know, if I retire and never work in Alaska, I will always regret it. I want to work in Alaska.

Rick Mossman: So, I moved up there and did the district ranger job there in Alaska. I might also mention, like all my jobs so far, it was subject to furlough, too. I liked subject to furlough, because that was like you had two to four weeks of unpaid vacation, plus you had your paid vacation. And I liked to travel. So, I was taking advantage of that.

Rick Mossman: So, I moved up there, became the district ranger. It was a tough place. Dave Spirtes my, I went up and lived with Jay at Glenallen headquarters for about a month. Middle of January. The day I got to Anchorage; it was 20 below zero. Got out to Glenallen, it was almost 40 below zero. That was my welcome to Alaska, middle of January. Lived with Jay for about a month. And I wanted to get down, but my stuff was still in Seattle waiting for the barge to bring it up that came up every two months. And Dave [Spurnees?], and I'll never forget this. We flew into Yakutat; we get in about 5:30 in the afternoon. It was dark. We go over to the house, which supposedly it was an old FAA house by the airport that the park, Dick Martin had got through, it was being gotten rid of by the FAA. So, the park service picked it up. It was supposed to have been all fixed up and ready for me to move in.

Rick Mossman: As we're walking, we have a rental car, as we're walking over these snow mounds, they had a huge amount of snow, trying to get to the house, Dave's going, "Well, we have a government pick up here somewhere." And then we realize we were standing on top of the government pickup. It was underneath the snow. Totally covered.

Rick Mossman: We get into the house and it was all frozen in there. The thermometer wouldn't work. There was no heat. It had not been cleaned out. Dave's like, "Oh, this is embarrassing." So, we went and stayed in a hotel for a couple of days as we tried to clean up this house. One of the funny things that happened at the time was as we're cleaning out this house and all this old furniture, under one of the beds in the bedroom I found a dead cat that was totally frozen. I called my now-wife Julie, every night I was calling her saying, "I'm ready to get on the jet and come back." I told her I'd found this dead cat that was frozen. Looked like a cartoon character. About a week later I get this book that I still have on my desk at work. I've kept it on my desk at work for 30-some years. Even at the academy I have it. The book is called *101 Uses of a Dead Cat.* And everybody at Grand Canyon had a little note in there. Julie had gone around, got everybody to write a little note somewhere on one of the cartoons and sent it to me. (laughs) It was so funny.

Brenna Lissoway: Wow, Rick, so just a whole new world.

Rick Mossman: Oh, gosh, yes. As Randy King once said to me, "You spend half your time up here just trying to survive. Then you can do your job."

Rick Mossman: On the phone there, I was all excited, because there was a message on the phone when I first got there. So, I figured out how to get the message and I listened to the message. And the message was, "New ranger. Welcome to

Yakutat. You'll be dead within a week." (laughs) That was my locals' welcome to Yakutat. (laughs) That was not the first death threat I got while I was there. The park service was hated in Alaska.

Brenna Lissoway: Right. This was recently after all the new parks had been—

Rick Mossman: This was 1989.

Brenna Lissoway: Okay. So, okay.

Rick Mossman: Yeah. So, it had been nine years. But still, yeah, they weren't very well liked. We weren't well liked. We had a little ranger station in a doublewide trailer downtown. And what I realized right off the bat was that I was going to be doing a lot of public relations. In all honesty, I think, I felt, I spent seven years doing more public relations than anything else. Besides all the field work I was doing for both parks as a ranger. Patrolling and everything else. We had boats, we had airplanes, we patrolled. But a lot of what I was doing, it got to the point where every city council meeting, I had to go to every week because if I didn't go, all they would do was bash the park service. And I had to get the information out there to people of what we were all about.

Rick Mossman: I'm really proud of some of the accomplishments I did in the seven years I was there. We built a new ranger station. And one of the problems in the city there was that there was no place to have meetings. There was a school auditorium, but there were restrictions. The city council was not allowed to use the school auditorium. I don't know why. There were some politics involved.

Rick Mossman: So, when I built the new ranger station, I had built into it a little auditorium that held about 40 chairs. I opened it up to the local Native association called the [Yat tat kwan?], the city and anybody else. I said anybody that wants to come in here and have meetings, you're more than welcome to use this facility. I also started putting on programs in there of various types. And my objective was, we had the visitor center, it was mainly our ranger station, we had a big open space. So, we put up a big map of the districts of the two, well, maps of the parks. I had some old climbing equipment from the heritage of climbing there. We had other stuff we put up. I actually had an outlet for the Alaska History Association to sell books. Because my goal was, every person I could in that community to walk through those front doors and find out what we were really about was going to be a win.

Rick Mossman: To the point where I can remember the first March I was there, I'd been there two months. Dick Martin and Jay Wells came down for a public meeting. And Dick was up there on a panel. I can remember this young Native American there. The Yakutat was half Tlingit Indian and half Anglo, and mostly Anglo that had lived there for generations. Sourdoughs there in Alaska, as they call them. This one young Native American who was up and coming in the tribal government there, literally screaming at

Dick Martin about something with the park service. I can't remember what it was. But just screaming. How much he hated the park service, and he wanted the park service out. The same individual, when he became president of the [Yak Tat Kwan?] held a meeting, this was about two years later, on how we're going to kick all the government agencies out of Yakutat, government employees not welcome. They had these posters all over. All these townspeople met on how they're going to get rid of the government and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Rick Mossman: The day I left Yakutat, seven years later, that same guy walked into my office and said, "How soon are they going to fill your position, because we cannot afford not to have somebody here." Because over the years, he came 180 degrees. Came to our meetings. He actually facilitated, we helped, through the regional office, we helped repatriate a bunch of their stuff from the Juneau State Museum, including this huge board artwork. I can't remember what it's called, but it's a part of their spiritual and cultural artistry, and a couple very spiritual staffs and so forth. They came to us and said, "Could you display those in your visitor center?" Because they had no place else in town to display those. So, we gladly took those. We had this big ceremony. And those things are on permanent loan—they still belong to the tribe, obviously—but they're still there in the visitor center. We had this big ceremony. And we had this young Native American, and a lot of others came to the ceremony and so forth, and they now love the park.

Rick Mossman: For him to walk in, I'll just never forget that. When he sat there and said, "We've got to have whoever's in your position here, because we need the park service here." From seven years earlier, where he was screaming at Dick Martin how bad the park service was and he's going to drive them out of town and everything else. (laughs)

Brenna Lissoway: What do you attribute that to?

Rick Mossman: You know, basically changing the face of the park service there.

Brenna Lissoway: As an individual.

Rick Mossman: As an individual. Because you know, as my wife used to say, you're on duty 24 hours a day here. You can't do anything wrong. I mean, you would get yelled at and screamed at and talked to. Everywhere I went, I was the park ranger. Didn't matter if I was in or out of uniform. You know, and I joined the local volunteer fire department and the local EMS squad, because you know, when I first got there, people called me a jack-booted thug. And I said, I've got to be part of the community.

Rick Mossman: When Julie moved up there about six months after I got there, she went to work at the school. So, I started volunteering at the school. I refed the middle school basketball games, and I helped as the bookkeeper for the high school basketball games. I worked with a lot of the school district there doing programs at the school. Like I said, we built the ranger station

and opened that up for the local community to use. We worked with local commercial fishermen. We were still doing all the ranger stuff, patrolling and enforcing what we could. But we were very careful. Because at that time, anything we did could set a precedent in Alaska. It still does to this day. So, there were a lot of violations that we just didn't even, because it was a situation where if we lost in court, it would set a bad precedent. It wasn't worth the battle at that time. But we were still, you know, it was education.

Rick Mossman: I mean, the last year I was there, we started bringing in some small cruise ships there. I put on a week-long class, an interpretive class, for the locals there that owned some of the hotels and boats that wanted to start dealing with traditional visitors, because they'd never had traditional visitors in this community before and trying to explain to them the opportunities and what they could do and putting lectures on glaciers and mountains and wildlife and all this kind of stuff. When I first moved there, the people, two of my favorite quotes I heard I had an elderly native woman come up to me and say, "You know, we can shoot everything that flies and walks and cut every tree because we will never run out. There's an infinite resource here." That was still the attitude, this pioneer attitude there.

Rick Mossman: I had another gentleman once come up to me and say, "Just because you guys screwed everything up in the Lower 48 does not give you the right to come up here and not let us screw it up up here."

Rick Mossman: I go, "What?!" (laughs) You know, because he said, it's our right to come up here and shoot everything and kill everything and cut everything. That's our American right. I mean, that was kind of the attitude.

Rick Mossman: I can remember the Tlingit tribe under the Alaska Native Settlement Claims Act, the tribes were given land and money as part of the settlement. So there, around Yakutat, you know, the parks weren't right there. I had to fly to get to both the parks. But it was Tongass National Forest and native land. The natives were not under the same restrictions for timber cutting. So, they sold their raw logs straight to Japan. Every month the Japanese log ship would come in, fill up all the logs, go back to Japan. Because like all others had to keep them here in America for the mills here. I remember, I watched the last log ship leave, because they had clear cut every bit of the native land there. There was not a single tree left. All of a sudden, all these people were out of work with no future. Because there's not going to be any more trees to cut for another three or four hundred years.

Rick Mossman: And they asked me to come talk to them about putting together a wild land fire crew and what that involved and so forth, because they thought that would be a way to employ a lot of these young men. They heard what the pay was, and that was the end of it. Because they couldn't believe that. Because when they were cutting all these trees and selling them to Japan,

they were making big bucks as laborers. I mean, 50 to 100 dollars an hour to do that, and that was their concept of what it was. Which is kind of sad.

Rick Mossman: But anyway, so a lot of what I was doing was public relations on basic sustainability and resource protection and so forth.

Brenna Lissoway: Did you have issues around, what's the term I'm looking for, native use of—

Rick Mossman: Subsistence?

Brenna Lissoway: Of subsistence. Thank you.

Rick Mossman: Yes, very much so. Because the parks, you know, you had subsistence use. And then you also, in the preserves of the park areas, there was, of course, sport use. So, we had sport hunting that we oversaw in the preserve areas, and we had the subsistence use.

Rick Mossman: What was interesting, the way it worked up there, is it was based on the villages, traditional uses of villages. So technically, the day I became a resident of Yakutat, I, as a guy from the Lower 48, was eligible to subsistence hunt and fish. Which I didn't think was right. And ethically and morally, I could not do that. I just could not go out and say okay, I can subsistence hunt and fish, so I'm going to go shoot a moose now because I can, because I live here. I had no traditional right to do that, I felt. So, you know, I would just buy a sport license when I wanted to go hunt or fish or whatever. I would never subsistence hunt or fish in the parks. I just ethically personally could not do that, even though I was eligible. But we dealt with that all the time.

Rick Mossman: Probably the biggest thing I saw that bothered me was the abuse of subsistence. It wasn't common. And there were definitely, everybody there that had lived there very long, both Tlingit and Anglo, took advantage of subsistence. It was their tradition and way of life. And we encouraged that in that park. We did not try to discourage it. Unfortunately, in a lot of the parks, there was a lot of abuse of subsistence rights. Up in Glenallen and Wrangells, there was a lot of people out of Anchorage who would buy a post office box in Glenallen to claim residency there to give them the right to go sport hunt in the park itself under the guise of subsistence hunting. That was a major issue.

Rick Mossman: We never really had it to that point there in Yakutat, I didn't have too much of that. It was mostly true subsistence use. But you know, there were some people that they wanted to get a bigger set of moose antlers, or a bigger grizzly bear or whatever in the park, and because they could go hunt in the park, they would, knowing nobody else was allowed to do that. But you know, we obviously supported in every way we could.

Rick Mossman: Again, a lot of my job was getting information out there. There was so much misinformation. People didn't understand the rules. And you know, I would say yeah, you can go hunt or fish in the park. You're a subsistence

user, go do it. You know, there's some basic restrictions, but you can go do it. We're not stopping you from doing it by any means.

Rick Mossman: One of the other things I was really happy about, it took a couple of years, but I finally got to the point where I was able to get, every once a month, I think, we did it. We would have a luncheon at one of the local lodges. I would have the mayor, the school superintendent, the head state biologist there, the forest service district ranger, myself, the president of the [Yak Tat Kwan?], the city manager, we had a city manager, that's right. Kind of the leaders of the community if you will. There was about 7 to 10 of us. And I finally got them to where we'd meet for lunch every Wednesday once a month, just to pass on information. We had no radio station. We had no newspaper. All the information was just rumors that went around town. That's all, that's how information got out. So, there was so much bad information.

Rick Mossman: By having that meeting once a month and just talking about, "Hey, what's going on with the forest service right now, what are you guys doing?"

Rick Mossman: "Well, we're doing this and that and so forth."

Rick Mossman: "What's the city doing right now?"

Rick Mossman: "Well, we're getting ready for spring. We're going to do an art thing," or whatever. "Oh, we're going to put a new dock in down at the city dock." We'd have the big fish plant there, we'd have the manager of that come up. "Well, we're going to hire 50 seasonals this summer to work at the fish plant." Just to share information so we all knew what the facts were, instead of all rumors that went around. That went a long way in helping stop a lot of the bad information and making a positive image. Especially to the park service.

Rick Mossman: Some other things, and we were in the middle of a lot of hot things that were going on at the time. The Alsek-Tatshenshini River was a major river that comes out of the Yukon through Kluane National Park and through British Columbia. It hits the border, the U.S. border, at what's now Glacier Bay National Preserve. And forest service wanders down and comes out and the takeout in Glacier Bay National Preserve.

Rick Mossman: We needed to do a river management plan. So, I was kind of put in charge of that and wrote the river management plan there. We used some new concepts based on my having worked at Grand Canyon and knowing a little bit about the plan there. Marv Jenson, the superintendent, had worked on the river unit at Grand Canyon years earlier. He was the superintendent for Glacier Bay. And Kevin [Apgar?], who was the concession specialist, was very involved in the river management. We were working with both the Kluane National Park wardens in Canada, the Canadian government, the British Columbian government, the commercial river rafting companies in both Canada and the U.S., trying to come up with this plan that we could all agree to.

Rick Mossman: Marv and I did not want to happen there what happened at Grand Canyon, where 92% of the permits went to commercial companies. Then we of course had the U.S. and Canada. Of course, the politicians on both sides wanted as many companies as possible on their side. Ultimately, we, through a lot of planning and meetings, we worked out a system where 50% of the permits were commercial, 50% were private. And of the commercial, half were Canadian companies and half were U.S. companies. Ultimately it became a win/win for everybody. I mean, it was amazing. It took a few years.

Rick Mossman: The other kind of concept we had – it's an incredible wilderness trip. It takes 7 to 13 days to do that trip. I mean, there's one put-in and there's one take-out and that's it. And it's all wilderness in between. It's an incredible trip. But logistically, it's fairly easy. It's not like going way up in northern Alaska or northern Canada. You can drive to the put-in, and you can take-out at Dry Bay with an airplane, and there's companies that will do that. You can do it yourself and it's not super expensive.

Rick Mossman: But we wanted to figure out a way to keep the wilderness experience and not have, you know, just the whitewater experience like at Grand Canyon or whatever. We wanted the wilderness experience. We didn't want to limit, tell people, you could only go for X number of days. So, we came up with the idea that I think is neat to this day, where you got a permit, and you got a take-out day. There was one take-out allowed each day. So, there was one group at the take-out taken out each day. But you could put in whenever you wanted. You could put in 30 days ahead of your take-out day. As long as you took out on that one day, that was the only restriction. You could put in the day before – you couldn't physically do that – but you could put in a week before, you could put in a month before, you could put in a year before and be on the river for a year, as long as you took out on the day your permit told you that you would take out.

Rick Mossman: It worked out really great because it spread the use out. Yeah, I'm sure there were days where two different groups put in on the same day, but only one ever took out, and you had that wilderness experience, where you never saw many other rafters on any trip you went on.

Rick Mossman: The other thing that was involved in all that, that we were peripherally involved with, because of the attention the Alsek-Tatshenshini River were getting, the British Columbian government created a park called the Alsek-Tatshenshini Provincial Park, which is a four million acre park that includes all that river now. That was part of this whole emphasis on the Tatshenshini and Alsek Rive, so it's this huge provincial park there. You have Kluane National Park already. And then you have Glacier Bay, and then you have the Tongass National Forest. Then there was a Canadian gold company wanted to build a mine between the two rivers in this area that was with a 150-mile road through all this wilderness to get to this gold mine. It was going to be the biggest gold mine in Canada. And they were going to use acid leaching. And it was going to potentially – potentially –

destroy the entire ecosystem of both rivers that are now protected in two different national parks, a provincial park, forest service.

Rick Mossman: There was some public outcry. But again, because it's Alaska and remote, there's not a lot of publicity about this. But in the United Nations has a committee called the Joint Water Commission, I believe. There's four or five representatives, and anytime a water project on either side of the border can potentially affect the other side, this joint committee of the United Nations has to look at it and determine whether it should go ahead or not.

Rick Mossman: We got to take down on a river trip two of the members of that committee. Dan Kimball, who at the time was the head of the park service's Water Resources Division, and some other folks, we took them down the river to show them this incredible resource and what could potentially happen. What was really interesting is you know; we were basically as a park service coming out against this mine in a foreign country. [And the chorus was?] Kluane National Park and the British Columbian government, to a degree. All of a sudden, I'm presenting this to the locals there in Yakutat saying your commercial salmon fishing is at risk there at Dry Bay. All of a sudden, we got all the locals were with us. All of a sudden, we're all marching to the same drumbeat to stop this gold mine from destroying our parks or destroying our careers or whatever. It was really neat.

Rick Mossman: We worked for a couple of years on that. And ultimately, that's when British Columbia decided to create the park on their side. They stopped; the Canadian government decided not to go forward with the goldmine. We basically won and it was a big victory for everybody up there. All these people that hated the park service, but we were actually kind of the ones spearheading this to try and stop this goldmine and that gained us a lot of publicity. You know, when we were sitting there basically trying to protect all these local people's livelihoods that they'd been doing for hundreds of years.

Brenna Lissoway: Wow. That's truly remarkable.

Rick Mossman: Yeah.

Brenna Lissoway: So, you were really working independently. I mean, how much contact did you have with other park service people? (Rick Mossman laughs) I mean, it sounds like you were really up there by yourself.

Rick Mossman: I was. I was. As the superintendent said when I left Wrangells, when I went to my going away party, the superintendent was Jon Jarvis. And as Jon Jarvis said at my going away party, no, actually it was Mike Finley that said that. I think it was Mike Finely that actually said it now that I think about it. But it was like some of these places, we throw these people out there like the English army guys back in the 1200s. And they were out there on this outpost by themselves. Hated by everybody. Trying to enforce the laws and so forth and manage for the English government.

Rick Mossman: Anyway, I don't like that analogy, personally, because my heritage is Scottish, and Scotland needs to be independent, because we were all hanged and quartered before we came to the U.S. by the English. But that's another story. (laughs) Anyway, yeah. We were out there, and you were by yourself. I talked to Jay or Randy, the chief rangers, while I was there. You know, I talked to them, I won't say every day, but probably pretty close. I went up to headquarters at Wrangells maybe once every three to four months for things, or I went down to Glacier Bay, or to the headquarters, maybe two or three times a year because it involved an all-day, 737 flight to Anchorage, and then renting a car and driving for five hours to get to headquarters. Or going to Glacier Bay, getting on the jet and going south to Juneau, and then getting on a small plane and flying over to Gustavus and drive over to Glacier Bay headquarters. So, there's a lot of money involved, so we didn't do it very often. So yeah, you were out there by yourself.

Brenna Lissoway: How did you handle that professional isolation?

Rick Mossman: You know, I had some seasonals there working for both parks in the summertime. In the winter, I was on the phone a lot, no question about it. What I really liked about Alaska at that time, was that unlike all the other parks I worked at where you were not allowed to call, as a field ranger, you were not allowed to call the regional office. Only the superintendent did that. You didn't know what was going on in the regional office. You didn't have contact with them because you worked for this park.

Rick Mossman: Alaska at that time was like one big park. I can remember going to the first law enforcement refresher when I got there and there was about 25 of us. We were the entire commissioned rangers for all the parks in Alaska, all 17 parks. There were 17 at the time, yeah. There were 25 of us. We kind of figured it out and we each had about five million acres we were responsible for. My district in Wrangells was twice as big as Yellowstone, I like to tell the Yellowstone folks. What was neat, it was like one big park. And the regional office was like park headquarters. As a field ranger, you dealt with people at the regional office not every day, but all the time. Not just through park headquarters, but you dealt with the regional office—

Brenna Lissoway: So that chain of command kind of broke down a little.

Rick Mossman: Well, I wouldn't say it broke; it didn't break down. But it was like authorized, let me put it that way. The chief ranger and the superintendent expected you, if you had subsistence issues, you talked to the subsistence specialist in the regional office, if you needed clarification on stuff. If you had boundary issues, call the lands people in the regional office and figure it out. So, you were not verboten to call the regional office and ask for advice on this and that and stuff. And to call the law enforcement specialist up there on stuff. The solicitor. That's the only time in my entire career where I spent so much time on the phone with the solicitor saying,

"This is a potential case we have. Do we want to take this forward to court? What do you think?" He would do all the research, the legal research on it and so forth.

Rick Mossman: Then also, we used to share, because some of us didn't get very big seasonal certs. So, we would share, we got authorization to share certs to do our seasonal hiring between parks. And of course, we would go to other parks to help them out. Like during the oil spill, I was there when the Exxon *Valdez* hit. I have never gone to an Exxon station since. (laughs) You know, we were helping on all those issues, at Katmai and Kenai Fjords. We'd share as much as we could, but the travel up there was so expensive. That's what prohibited more of that. We were on the phone to each other all the time. I mean, you call Yukon Charlie and ask him up there, hey, how are you dealing with this? and stuff like that. Sharing information and so forth. So, in that sense, it was like one big park. You knew all the other rangers in the whole state at all the other parks. You knew them personally. And you were all trying to work together to solve these incredible issues that you didn't have in the Lower 48.

Rick Mossman: I really appreciated – and I hate to say this, when I was trying to get out of there, I was trying to move, we just had had a child. Actually, we were expecting our second. So, we were trying to move to the Lower 48. And I had a superintendent at a park I applied to say, tell me, "You guys in Alaska really don't get any good experience so, you know, I'm not really interested in you for this job." Which just infuriated me. Unlike Dick Martin who went out of his way when he moved back to the Lower 48 to try to hire people who'd worked in Alaska because he knew how tough it was. The stuff we had to deal with that you'd never get exposed to in the Lower 48, and how hard it was and the fine line we had to deal with working with the public and deciding on law enforcement issues whether we were going to take action or not. I like to point out the ANILCA law is 149 pages long. We had to know that thing inside and out to be able to enforce the law there. You had to know the rules. One of the biggest complaints up there from the politicians was that so many people in the field didn't know the rules and weren't interpreting them correctly to the locals. So, you really had to learn that all the rules and regulations of these new parks, because they were so different than all our traditional rules. You know, we have a whole separate section of the CFR for the Alaska parks that takes precedence over the rest of the CFR. Unless you've worked in Alaska, you don't know that.

Brenna Lissoway: Right. Sounds like, you mentioned earlier that you had an interest in law. So, it sounds like you had a good dose of being—

Rick Mossman: Oh, yeah.

Brenna Lissoway: —working very closely with that when you were in Alaska.

Rick Mossman: Absolutely. Absolutely. Because you had to know every little paragraph and so forth of the ANILCA law, and then what was codified into the

regulations of the CFR and understand it. Because we were dealing with cabin permits and just so much stuff that you don't deal with in the Lower 48 and commercial fishing, the whole subsistence issue, which obviously you don't have anywhere in the Lower 48, all those kind of things. If you were a traditional ranger, having worked wherever, it was a whole new ballgame. You had to throw everything out the window and start over. I shouldn't say it like that. But you had to learn all this new stuff that was much more complex than anything in the Lower 48.

Brenna Lissoway: That's interesting. You mentioned the fact that, so Julie had come up to join you in Yakutat.

Rick Mossman: Mm hmm. Uh huh.

Brenna Lissoway: And that one of the reasons why you were looking to leave Alaska was because you had a family?

Rick Mossman: Yes.

Brenna Lissoway: Can you talk a little bit about, you know, yeah, kind of, starting a family in a career with the park service?

Rick Mossman: Sure. Yeah. Julie moved up. She had just got her permanent status with the park service there in Grand Canyon as a clerk typist in the ranger operations building. So, it was very hard because she was going to have to give that up, because she obviously couldn't work for me in the park service since I was the district ranger. And there were no jobs available – well, she wasn't going to move up unless she had a job. Which made sense. We had agreed on that. As I got to know the school superintendent and did volunteer work at the school, he had a position open there. When I told him that I had this friend moving up that had a college degree and he says, "I'll hire her."

Rick Mossman: I said, "Do you want me to have her send you a resume?"

Rick Mossman: He goes, "No. I'll hire her right now." (laughs) Because he didn't want to hire another local because all the issues, he'd have with that and previous hirings.

Rick Mossman: So anyway, they talked on the phone and he offered her this job. So, she moved up and this was about, I'd been there about six or seven months when she moved up. She went to work there at the school. And we both became, she just jumped into the community, volunteering. She was the head of the Ducks Unlimited banquet there. Trying to do all of her typical giving more of herself than she ever expects from anybody else. And volunteering this and that.

Rick Mossman: Then about a year later, she was hired as, they call it the system support secretary, I think. Kind of the AO for the district of the forest service there. So, she got her career status back. Basically, we talked about we wanted to have a family. We talked about her and her career, which career we should follow. Julie's a lot smarter than me, would have been a lot

better than me in a career. But we wanted to have a family and she wanted to raise the kids. We both grew up in families where our mothers were the classic homemaker. We kind of wanted that for our children. So, we kind of worked it out. It was all planned that she got her three years of government service in, so she'd have lifetime reinstatement rights. And she quit about two months before we had our first baby. So, we planned it out fairly well.

Rick Mossman: She stayed home with Thomas, our oldest. And let's see, I have to think about this. He was there for about two years. And it actually was very interesting, I have to say. It opened up our lives in the exposure as a family with a baby more so in the community than just me as a park ranger being there. A lot of other folks could associate now, you know, this baby and so forth born here in the community and that sort of thing. So that actually helped socially in a lot of ways.

Rick Mossman: It was intriguing having an infant – I can remember two years old going trick or treating with him and the daughter of one of my seasonal rangers there at the time. Which was kind of interesting. (laughs) You know, but we tried to do as traditional things as we could.

Rick Mossman: So, we started thinking about moving back to the Lower 48. Let's see, Thomas was two. We had our second one on the way. And so ultimately, we worked out and we actually worked out a three-way swap between employees of Yellowstone and Alaska there. I moved back down, we moved to the south entrance of Yellowstone. I actually took a downgrade to come back down to Yellowstone because I just couldn't seem to find a job out there again. I was running into roadblocks. People did not think that rangers in Alaska really did that much. They didn't do all the typical writing a zillion tickets and things like that. So, they, in their minds, didn't have the experience. So, I was apparently not competitive with a lot of folks.

Rick Mossman: So anyway, we came down to the south entrance of Yellowstone with our new baby. We flew to Seattle and drove across the country with our second, who was only about two or three weeks old at the time – yeah, Jackson – and moved to the south entrance of Yellowstone, where they called it, the sub district ranger back then, the Snake River sub district ranger, now it's known as the south district ranger, though the job hasn't changed. I had the entire southern back country of Yellowstone. The entrance station, which took in over a million dollars a year there, so we had a large fee collection staff. Mostly a back-country district, with the exception of [Lewis?] Lake, which had a campground on it, a drive-in campground and so forth. And then, of course, about 25 miles of roadway going up to Grant Village.

Rick Mossman: We had a horse and mule operation. Most of the rangers there were folks, three of the employees I had there were born and raised in Yellowstone and are still working in Yellowstone as fulltime rangers. The Ross family.

Like I said, it was a back-country operation, for the most part. Horse patrol, which was a blast. I wasn't a big horsemanship person. I'm still not. But I did do a lot of riding and learned how to pack, which was fun. But mainly for me it was just kind of managing the whole operation. Then also I was involved there at Yellowstone, I was in charge of the technical rescue team for a while, and I taught search classes since I was now teaching for NASAR. So, I taught search classes for the rest of the staff and managed a number of the searches we had there.

Rick Mossman: It was a very active place. Right before I got there, or right after I got there, we had had five employee fatalities within about a three-year period. Two months after I got there, an employee and a volunteer were killed in my sub-district by an avalanche. So, we did a major paradigm shift there to try and change the safety culture at Yellowstone. The superintendent partnered with OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration], and we worked with OSHA for a number of months looking at all the problems and this and that. It was fun for me and a lot of hard work being on the, we set up an avalanche awareness program for employees. We set up a snowmobile training program for employees. All these things that employees had died from. A water safety program. To teach employees. Because it's a very harsh environment up there. That's why employees were dying. To change that whole safety culture.

Rick Mossman: Yellowstone has a lot of people there that have been there for a long time. Some folks there, it's the Yellowstone way or the highway. That was the attitude of a lot of folks there.

Rick Mossman: I came in with about 15 or 20 other people that came from the outside, to bring some new blood into Yellowstone, as I was told by higher-ups. It was actually, I have to admit at first it was kind of tough, because outsiders were not real welcome in Yellowstone. Especially trying to make changes. Because Yellowstone, at that time, had its own way of doing things. Mike Finley was the new superintendent at the time, and he was trying to change that whole culture and so forth that Yellowstone is part of the whole park system and so forth and so on.

Brenna Lissoway: So, what were some of the specific tactics that were used to try and change the culture?

Rick Mossman: Well, for Mike Finley to bring in outside people. My understanding is he told the division chiefs, as they started getting positions, he said, "I want somebody from outside Yellowstone hired for this position, this position, this position. I don't want somebody from within Yellowstone hired for it."

Rick Mossman: So, he started doing that. From the, you know, those of us that came in, a lot of things, we just started trying to follow protocol. I mean, I'm like, I got there, and I said well, you know, we need to follow on fee collection NPS22. We need to follow this protocol. This is the rules that we have to follow.

Rick Mossman: I mean, some of the issues were somewhat funny. Yellowstone rangers had a very strong tradition of wearing the felt hat year-round. A district ranger at the time was very much in favor of that. I know it was a huge battle with the superintendent to force the rangers to wear summer straw hats in the summertime, because none of the rangers liked the straw hats there at Yellowstone. They wanted that traditional – and I'm not totally against that. But you know, we did have a uniform policy we were supposed to abide by.

Brenna Lissoway: Right.

Rick Mossman: So that's what a lot of it was. Changing the culture. My predecessor, who had been there for over 20 years, is a legend there. His philosophy was that you work for the National Park Service 24 hours a day. And you sacrifice for the National Park Service 24 hours a day. I had to try to instill in some of the long-time permanents that yes, we work, we're only paid for eight hours a day and we're going to do stuff on government time. And if there's stuff we can't get done in government time, then we're going to reevaluate what we're trying to accomplish here. Like they would send out the seasonal employees were assigned to shovel the manure at the horse barns every morning and evening after work. They had to do it on their own time. They were required to do that. I said no. I said, they're going to get paid to do that because that's a necessary government job that needs to be done, and people need to be paid to do that. So, they will do that on their eight-hour shift. So just a lot of things like that, that Yellowstone had never been following.

Rick Mossman: Boy, don't get me wrong. I mean, the Yellowstone rangers are some of the best rangers around. Some of the best field rangers I've ever worked with. They know their stuff. I would trust most of those guys in the back country more than a lot of people I've ever worked with. They know their stuff. But, and a lot of it's very traditional there. It's the most traditional park I've ever worked at. And I love the park service tradition, there's no question. But we did have to change some things around.

Rick Mossman: I mean, just to give you an idea of the attitude, I love this. When I first got there, one of my employees said to me, "Well Grand Teton's not really a national park."

Rick Mossman: And I'm like, I was taken aback, and I said, "Grand Teton is the picture postcard of a national park."

Rick Mossman: And they go, "No, it's not. It shouldn't be a national park."

Rick Mossman: And I go, "Why do you think Grand Tetons should not be a national park?"

Rick Mossman: And they go, "Well, they have grazing permits," there were still a few grazing permits at the time, "they allow waterskiing on Jackson Lake," which of course we did not allow waterskiing on Yellowstone Lake,

because it was not a traditional use, "there's a dam in the park," because there's a dam on the Snake River down by Moran Junction.

Brenna Lissoway: There's an airport.

Rick Mossman: There's an airport in the park, that's right. That was one of them.

Brenna Lissoway: There's hunting.

Rick Mossman: And there's hunting. There is a supervised hunting that was part of the politics and enabling legislation. And so, it shouldn't be a national park. You know, it's funny. I spent much of my seven years there at Yellowstone educating my permanent and seasonal employees about the park service in general, our history and traditions, and that we're all a little different, the parks, and the enabling legislation, the politics. Just because a park inherited this stuff before it became a park, that's okay. You know, ultimately some of those things would get phased out. I don't think there's grazing permits anymore in Grand Teton, and so forth. So, you know, those things just take time.

Brenna Lissoway: So, Rick, did you go to Ranger Skills? Did you do the Albright training?

Rick Mossman: Yes, I did. Yes, I did.

Brenna Lissoway: Can you talk, I know this is backing up a bit, I'm assuming.

Rick Mossman: Yes.

Brenna Lissoway: Can you talk a little bit about that experience?

Rick Mossman: Sure. I would love to. So, I was at Bandelier. And I had been putting in for Ranger Skills for a year or two. I went to ranger skills and it was probably one of the most amazing things I've ever been to. Of the 24 of us in this class, we have all, a few of them have died since, but all of us have pretty much kept in contact since then. Two of them are still working for the park service. The rest of us have retired. We've all kept in touch to some degree. I mean, I just saw somebody yesterday here at the Rendezvous, Rebecca Harriet, who she and I went to Ranger Skills together. And we have not seen each other, I don't think, since ranger skills. (laughs) We may have, but I don't remember when. So, it's been almost 40 years since then.

Rick Mossman: What I remember about that program was, what I loved about that program, and I think what's a tragedy that the park service got rid of it, I don't think what we have now nearly encompasses or provides what ranger skills did. Because what it did is it took 24 people from different divisions and different parks and put you together. At that time, you spent one week doing protection. Those of us who were in protection, we knew what was going on, and we would kind of help mentor the others. But the other folks, the interpreters and the maintenance folks, they got into learning how to handcuff and all that kind of stuff, and then rappelling of a rope. Then we had a week of interp, and the rest of us had to come up with an interpretive program and some various interpretive things. And we had

a blast doing that and learning how to do it. Learning not only from our instructors, but also the interpreters that were in our class. And then we spent a week doing resource management activities and maintenance activities.

Rick Mossman: What it really did for me was show me what the other divisions do, and those other divisions learned what we all do. And we don't have that anymore, which is really sad. That again gets back to those walls of division between divisions, especially in big parks. And that they don't work together or talk to each other, to some degree.

Rick Mossman: The other thing was, that because you were at Grand Canyon, I mean, what a better place to have a training school, you were trapped in the sense was there was no night activity. There was no town to go to. So, the 24 of you spent your time together doing stuff. Hiking, watching sunsets or whatever. Which is what, you know, part of ranger skills was all about.

Rick Mossman: There was a move in the mid '80s, when we took over the Presidio in California, Gateway, to move Ranger Skills to the Presidio. And they asked for comments. I remember writing a big long letter to the director when they asked for comments saying don't do it. Because if you move Ranger Skills to the Presidio, you're going to lose that cohesiveness of those 24 people being together and hiking and working together and eating together and all that kind of stuff.

Rick Mossman: Then Ranger Skills got dropped, and I think that's very unfortunate. I know they have the new program, but it's just not the same, you know? And I've sent employees to the new program. They come back and they've liked it. But let's be honest, it's not the same.

Brenna Lissoway: I'm just curious because you've got such a holistic view about how to manage parks. And I was just wondering how influential something like that was for you.

Rick Mossman: Very much so.

Brenna Lissoway: It sounds like it was, yeah.

Rick Mossman: To open up the other divisions and what they do, and to realize, you know, these people joined the park service for the mission. You know, I have lots of friends in all the other divisions. They joined the park service for the same passion I did. Just in a different realm of what their skill set was. But we have the same mission, and it's just a different way we carry it out. We need to work together on that, and unfortunately, we don't all the time. So.

Brenna Lissoway: So back to Yellowstone.

Rick Mossman: Okay.

Brenna Lissoway: Did you have any culture shock coming back down to the Lower 48?

Rick Mossman: Well, yes. It was funny. My wife and I, whenever I would go to Anchorage or the headquarters, I'd go to Anchorage and the way we'd

shop, we had a little grocery store there in our town. But again, think about this. This was in the early 1990s. A gallon of milk was eight dollars. A case of beer was 28 dollars. Hamburger was four dollars a pound. That's what it is now, but that's what it was there back then. So, whenever I'd have to go to Anchorage, I would go to the grocery store. They're set up there where you buy all your groceries, they have boxes there, you'd box it all up. The post office at the airport's open 24 hours. You'd take your boxes out to the airport, to the post office. And the mail in Alaska is subsidized if you live in a bush community. So, I could send a 70-pound box, which was the weight limit, back to Yakutat, for $5.58. So, I'd fill seven or eight boxes of food, take them to the airport, put them in the mail, and they'd be there the next day. Or sometimes they'd come on the jet I was coming back on. All our food. So that's how we did a lot of our shopping.

Rick Mossman: What was interesting was we had a little, in Alaska you have usually a mudroom, which is kind of a room you first walk into where you hang your wet coats and your muddy boots. It's kind of your pantry where you have all your food. And then you walk into your house. So, we always had plenty of food, because we didn't know the next time, we'd be into town.

Rick Mossman: When we moved to Yellowstone, we'd go to the grocery store in Jackson, Wyoming. All of a sudden, we'd be buying three of this and four of this and we'd look at each other and we'd go, we're not in Alaska. We don't have to buy three bottles of pancake syrup right now. (laughs) And that was a real culture shock. It was like wow; this gallon of milk is only $2.22. (laughs) So that was a big culture shock.

Rick Mossman: The other thing that was funny was the Yellowstone employees, very rightfully were very proud of the wildness of Yellowstone, which was just wonderful. Not statutory wilderness, but just the wilderness there. I would sometimes snicker, and I would tell them, I'd say, you know, it is incredible wilderness here in Yellowstone, but I'll tell you what. I do not have the feeling I'm in wilderness here like I did when I was in Alaska. When you're in Alaska, you're in the wilderness. Yellowstone, it's just not the same as being in the wilderness in Alaska. (laughs) It was very true. You know, you were out there on the edge there in Alaska. I have to admit, the closest I've ever come to buying it a few times was in Alaska, you know, some of the things we did up there.

Brenna Lissoway: Do you care to share any of those stories?

Rick Mossman: Not really! (laughs) There were a few mistakes I made and a few things where I was probably taking chances that I shouldn't have. A lot of it was just flying. We had very tight restrictions. There in Alaska, one of the most frustrating things for me was we had very tight office aircraft service regulations we had to abide by. I knew a local person that was hunting a moose over in the preserve one day. I knew exactly where he was. He was guiding a guy illegally. I knew, I had information from people who were

telling me he was over there, just across the bay there, about six miles across the bay. But the weather was such that under the rules, I couldn't fly over there. All day I just sat there, frustrated, that this guy is hunting a moose, he's illegally guiding a guy hunting a moose. Illegally, in my preserve, and there's nothing I can do about it. And I'll never be able to prove it after the fact.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah.

Rick Mossman: And I can't go over there and get him, because I can't fly under the rules and regulations. We have those rules and regulations for a good reason, because we've lost a number of good park employees in aircraft accidents. But it was just frustrating having to deal with that sometimes.

Brenna Lissoway: Did you get your pilot's license then?

Rick Mossman: I did. I just got my private license. I didn't fly for the government. But while I was in Alaska, I got my private license so I could fly planes up there, because that's a big part of Alaska. If I had stayed longer, I would have tried to go into the, I was planning on going into the ranger pilot program.

Brenna Lissoway: Oh, okay. Before we leave Alaska, you mentioned that you were involved in the Exxon Valdez spill.

Rick Mossman: Yeah.

Brenna Lissoway: Can you talk a little bit about that and what it was like to be a park service employee involved in that?

Rick Mossman: Yeah. And let me say up front, I actually didn't go over and do any of the beach stuff like a lot of the rangers did at Katmai or Kenia Fjords. My, because I had just gotten there. It happened in March; I had just gotten there in late January. I had just moved to Yakutat in the middle of February. I'd only been there literally two or three weeks before it hit the rocks. But what I was involved with was that this district, again, nobody had ever lived there year-round for the park service. And there was still a lot of baseline data we didn't have. So, I was asked by the resource folks, and the resource folks also sent people down, and we would go up and do flights counting sea lion colonies, doing bird counts, getting the baseline data of, at that time, we still didn't know which way the oil was going to go. We didn't know if it was going to back around and come into Yakutat Bay there, or Icy Bay, which is Wrangells-Saint Elias. So, we were flying around doing all kinds of, and fortunately, because of my degree, and I'd done wildlife surveys before, you know, I was able to do a lot of wildlife surveys. We were doing bald eagle nest counts, counting eggs in bald eagle nests. We were counting sea lions in all the rookeries. Just getting all this baseline data that we would have in case of a spill, and then we could show some degradation afterwards and say, well this is what it was like before the oil hit. Fortunately, the oil never came that way. It all went

down along the coast to the southwest. So that was kind of our main involvement.

Rick Mossman: The one thing I did get involved with, not directly related to the oil spill, but maybe you could say one of the periphery things that came out of all the publicity over it, over in Wrangells, the year before I got there, a seasonal employee had found an area where it was bare of vegetation. Nothing growing. It didn't look right. They discovered a shack, or the remains of an old shack. There had been oil exploration down in the late '50s, early '60s. They did some testing and discovered that inside the shack had been all these bags of drilling mud for when they were doing test drills. And the drilling mud contains barium and radium, I believe, which are highly toxic metal compounds. What happened was, these bags, because of the weather up there, leached out and, you know, killed everything around it. It was a toxic waste site, basically.

Rick Mossman: So, they did a lot of research, the regional office and the park staff, and discovered that this, the drilling had been done by some company called the Colorado Oil and Gas Company, that was now defunct. The only company that had some interest in it back in the '60s was BP. So basically, the park service went to BP and said, you need to come clean this up. You're responsible.

Rick Mossman: BP immediately said no, it's not our responsibility, that was 30 years ago or whatever. I wasn't involved with the higher up politics of that. But the park service basically, my understanding is, said look, either you can come in and clean this up and get lots of free publicity, which you could really use right now after this oil spill. Or we're going to get into litigation and we're going to fight you to get it cleaned up.

Rick Mossman: So, BP basically said okay. They spent five million dollars is what it cost. Because they had to go over there, and they had to use ships and helicopters. Fly this dirt out. Put it in a barge that had to take it to a toxic waste site in Seattle, they couldn't dump it in Alaska. So, it was this huge operation. It cost five million dollars for the clean-up. And they had these companies. I was kind of the park service representative because I was there, just kind of overseeing it to make sure they were following the contract, all that kind of stuff. Then they did try to get publicity out of it, you know, they took out full-page ads in the Anchorage paper and so forth. But you know, I don't think, if the park service hadn't pushed them and said we're going to fight you over this, you either do it and get good publicity that you're doing it and say that you wanted to come help and so forth, or we're just going to fight you over it. After the oil spill, the oil industry was looking for any pro help they could get. So anyway, we got that taken care of, which was kind of nice.

Rick Mossman: But it was interesting there in Alaska, and I'll be very honest with you. The oil industry, I sat there, being an Alaska resident and watching the national commercials on TV, I felt Exxon basically bought off the state.

The senator, one of the senior senators at the time didn't come back to the state for six months after the oil spill because Exxon was his biggest contributor, or one of his biggest contributors. I sat there and watched them basically, they had all these commercials on TV that weren't true. Because I knew rangers that were going down and digging six inches in the beach there, you could still find oil. You still can today. There are still certain fisheries that have not come back. The herring egg fishery has never come back in there. They did incredible publicity to whitewash the whole thing. And they also, Alaskans are addicted to oil. That's what supports the state. Everybody gets a check every year for the, I forgot what it's called now. Because you live there. It's oil royalties, is where that money comes from. Basically, Exxon said anybody that wants to come work here, we'll pay you 25 dollars an hour to scrub rocks on the beach. If you have a boat, we don't care what size it is. Come here, we'll pay you a thousand dollars a day for the use of your boat to help ferry people, whatever. I knew people that went there with their boats and tied up to the dock in Valdez and were being paid a thousand dollars a day for the use of their boat, and their boat never was used. I'll be honest. Exxon was just buying them off. They had to sign a waiver that they would never say anything against the oil companies and all that kind of stuff. I mean any, nobody saw that in the Lower 48. If you lived in Alaska and actually sat there and saw it, you saw what was going on. But the rest of the public really didn't see that.

Rick Mossman: But we were basically trying to protect the parks and so forth. I can remember the late Boyd Evison telling a great story. He was regional director at the time. There was a meeting of the Coast Guard down around Seward. Two seasonal rangers – if I get the story right, I may not have it exactly right – the Coast Guard and BP was saying well the oil's never going to get here. And two seasonal rangers or volunteers, I'm not sure, got up in this meeting and said, "There is oil in the bay right now along Kenai Fjords [unclear]."

Rick Mossman: The Coast Guard and BP tried to tell them you're liars, that's not true. The superintendent, you know, was very upset and called the regional director. The regional director says, "Is it true?"

Rick Mossman: And she goes, "Yes, it is true."

Rick Mossman: He goes, "Don't worry about it. Don't worry about it. We'll deal with it. Because we have the proof." And we did have the proof.

Rick Mossman: Even then, Exxon, I didn't mean BP, I meant Exxon, sorry, it was Exxon. And even then, Exxon tried to say, "Prove that's our oil." (laughs) Fortunately there's markers and stuff that were able to prove that. But for the park service, it was heart wrenching knowing what potential was going to happen to the beaches. Because we ended up with oil on the beaches at Kenai Fjords, all the way down to Katmai and so forth. So, everything, the

whole focus of the park service there for quite a while was dealing with the oil spill and how we deal with it.

Brenna Lissoway: Right. Right. So, do you want to talk about any other accomplishments or challenges that you had at Yellowstone? Other things come to mind?

Rick Mossman: One thing I do want to talk about, though, that's very important to me that actually kind of is from Yellowstone, and that's ICS, Incident Command System. I don't know how much, Brenna, you know about the history of it over there, because your father was very involved with it. But you know, ICS was set up for wild land fire in California back in the '70s. Rick Gale was the person, he was the highest ranking, if I remember right in wild land fire as a ranger at the time. He said we can use ICS in all risk management. Search and rescues, you know, whatever. Not just fire. He brought that concept to the park service.

Rick Mossman: I can remember at Grand Canyon; we were using ICS in 1983. Nobody else was outside the wild land fire world. To me, it made so much sense. And I really got into using ICS. We taught it for search and rescue. We used it in all our other big incidents there in Grand Canyon and so forth. I went to Wrangell-Saint Elias and in the early '90, Rick Gale formed the Type One National Incident Management Team. Then they wanted to create them in regions. And I got on the team there in Alaska. It was really exciting because I got to be the IC, one of my first deployments was the IC when we had a cruise ship ground there in Glacier Bay National Park. I got to be the IC to oversee that thing and so forth. And there were a lot of other people that did a lot more work than I did. But it worked. The incident command system is so incredible to manage emergency incidents. And for me, it just seemed like a natural, of all the things I've done in my career, it was something that I felt easy to do and I understood it and I could do it and carry it out very professionally.

Rick Mossman: Then when I moved to the Lower 48, I applied for what was then called the Central Incident Management Team, which was the inter-mountain region and the Midwest region combined. And when I was in Yellowstone, I get a call one day from Denny [Zeman?], who was the incident commander for that team. I had met Denny before, he worked in Alaska for a short time. And we're in Yellowstone, and my parents are coming to visit two days later. And Julie had always known that I really like this ICS, I'd been trying to get on a team when we moved to Yellowstone. And Denny [Zeman?] calls me up at six in the evening and says, "Rick, so you applied to be on the incident management team. Are you still interested?"

Rick Mossman: And I said, "Yeah, very much so."

Rick Mossman: He goes, "So, can you be in Los Alamos by five o'clock tomorrow?" (laughs)

Rick Mossman: I go, "Huh?"

Rick Mossman: He goes, "Well, we're down here taking care of the follow-up on the Cerro Grande fire. I need another operations chief, and we want you to be on the team."

Rick Mossman: I looked at Julie and Julie's like whispering at me, "You've got to go. You've got to go."

Rick Mossman: I go, "But my mom and dad are going to be here tomorrow." She goes, "You've got to go."

Rick Mossman: So, I got on a plane and flew down to Los Alamos. This was late June, and you know, the fire was in May. So, although the fire had not been declared out yet, it was out. Since the park service was part of that whole thing to begin with, they pulled out all the fire teams. They wanted the park service to take over managing all the rehab and so forth that was going on.

Rick Mossman: So, they brought in that Incident Management Team. We spent two or three weeks there just coordinating all the fire crews that were still there. Just mainly doing rehab and planning and that sort of thing. So that was my introduction to the Incident Management Team. And that was—

Brenna Lissoway: 2000?

Rick Mossman: 2000. Yeah. That was June of 2000. Then in January, January of 2001, Denny calls me up and says, "So, we're going to run the park service involvement in the winter Olympics in Salt Lake City."

Rick Mossman: And I go, "Oh. Cool. What's that going to include?"

Rick Mossman: Basically, the Secret Service, through a presidential proclamation after the Atlanta games in '96 had declared that any sporting event that met certain international parameters, the federal government would take over security. So, the long and the short of it, then the president put the Secret Service in charge. Don't know why that ever happened. So, the Secret Service said we want a hundred law enforcement officers, type one law enforcement officers, from every federal agency to help us with the security for the winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.

Rick Mossman: We started planning a little over a year in advance. I started going to meetings in Salt Lake and meeting the FBI and the Secret Service. And the park service's role was that winter Olympics, it was an emphasis on America's public lands was the theme. The park service, we were tasked, the Incident Management Team, with about three different roles: To support 100 rangers working for the Secret Service in a law enforcement security capacity; to run a downtown public lands information visitor center; and to help all the parks within what was called the Olympic theater for the Olympics, because there's 22 park units within a day's drive to Salt Lake, and to coordinate all those activities. As an example, as we all know, the way we used to do film permits, every park had a different cost, a different way they did their permit. We were tasked with coming up with one permit that all 22 parks would use, because you had media coming from every country in the world, practically. And they

didn't want to have to get a different, and they were a lot of the focus and all their take-home stories was Grand Canyon and Yellowstone and things like that. And for them to have to get a different permit at every park – so we wanted to streamline that.

Rick Mossman: We were tasked with that. We were also tasked with helping the 23 parks that the torch was going to go through over the year beforehand. So, it was a huge job. And we all had our normal jobs. But we were meeting in Salt Lake about once a month, planning this for the year leading up to it.

Rick Mossman: What was interesting as it progressed, the Secret Service really liked us because they quickly discovered that we were the only federal agency that had the capability of snowshoeing, downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, standing at 10,000 feet at midnight and not freezing to death. That we knew how to do that. No other federal law enforcement knew how to do that. (laughs) So they gave us the plum assignments. Basically, we got the job, we did the perimeter security at the three venues in Park City, which was Utah Olympic Park, where the jumping and the bobsled and luge. We had the Deer Valley, where they had the moguls, the slalom and the aerials. And we had the Park City Ski Area where they had this, the giant slalom and the super giant slalom, Super G, and the half pipe.

Rick Mossman: We had perimeter security. Which meant our guys had to ski all the time, or snowmobile or whatever. We worked out shifts. Secret Service just said, "We just want you to do perimeter security. You figure out how to do it. Tell us what equipment you want, and we'll write the check." (laughs) Even to the point where they offered us a helicopter at one point for our use.

Rick Mossman: It was amazing, the planning that went into that, obviously. And the international scope of that, dealing with the International Olympic Committee, and the U.S. Olympic Committee, and the Salt Lake organizing committee. Long and the short of it was Denny [Zeman?] is the incident commander, Sherrie Collins is the plans chief and I as ops chief and the other folks we had working there. We had things so well organized, planning the year ahead of time, we had planned a transportation system for us all. We had a dispatch center out at Yellowstone and Shenandoah in case Salt Lake became a smoking hole. Because this was right after 9/11. That everybody knew where we were at the time, you know, if a bomb went off. We were planning for everything from a nuclear attack, dirty bomb, to you name it. As were all the other agencies.

Rick Mossman: But we, our team had put together, because we're going to have not only the 100 law enforcement rangers, we were going to have all these interpreters in there working at the media centers, at the visitor center downtown and the media center up in Park City.

Rick Mossman: So, the long and the short of it was what then happened, we were so well organized, because incident command worked so well, that the Fish & Wildlife Service, the BLM, Utah State Parks, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Forest Service all came to us and said, "Can we be part of your team? Part of your organization, so we can streamline this." So, we brought them on board. By the end of it, we had about 600 people from all these agencies working under our incident command umbrella as part of our whole system that we were taking care of everybody for transportation, for emergencies if anything happened and all that kind of stuff. It worked beautifully.

Brenna Lissoway: Did you have any incidents?

Rick Mossman: Yes. And we had a couple of great incidents. You know, it's funny. I still get phone calls to this day from rangers, both still working and retired, saying thank, because one of my biggest jobs was to hire those hundred rangers. I put out a nationwide application system for applications. And I had to go through all the applications. We had to pick who we wanted. We actually only got about 110 to 120 applications for 100 jobs. Then we had to match them up with their skills to the right place at these four venues. And then I had to do the background on each one of them for the Secret Service, which is the most extensive background I've ever had to do for anybody on anything. I mean, I used to joke with these hundred guys, you know, "I know the names of all your firstborn kids. I know everything about you guys." (laughs) But I still get calls today thanking me for getting selected. Because they go, "You know, I got to downhill ski for 12 straight hours and I was being paid for it, every day for three weeks." (laughs) So it was an incredible – I have to say, if you talk to anybody that was on that incident management team, and they'll say that was probably one of the highlights of their career. And it was. It was just phenomenal.

Rick Mossman: I mean, it was very hard work because a lot of the different things that happened, a lot of our workers just supporting the people we had working there because of issues with traffic and vehicles and transportation and food. Things as basic as the housing the Secret Service had for our rangers – they didn't write he contract right because they weren't used to it. So, we ended up, I remember going to the Salvation Army in Salt Lake City and buying plates and forks and coffee makers for the rangers living in condos up in Park City and stuff so they'd have a way to cook and make coffee and that sort of stuff.

Rick Mossman: But we had some interesting incidents. The most fun one that I remember was I got a complaint one day from the Salt Lake organizing committee. I got a call and I had to go talk to these people. They said, "Your rangers are skiing too fast."

Rick Mossman: And I go, "What? What do you mean?"

Rick Mossman: They go, "Well up at Deer Valley, a visitor without a ticket breached the snow fence," because they just had snow fences in areas to keep people

out that didn't have a ticket to get in. They go, "A visitor breached the fence. And the word got to the rangers up on top," because there was always rangers on top ready to ski down to deal with anything." They skied down there, and they were skiing way too fast. They got to the guy in less than a minute and tackled him and handcuffed him. And they were skiing way too fast and endangering other people."

Rick Mossman: I go, "I'm very proud of them. They did it in less than a minute and they caught the guy and tackled him and handcuffed him? That's just great! I'm going to put them in for an award!" (laughs) Which the Salt Lake organizing, they didn't think that was very funny. But I said, "They're just doing their job! You should be proud of them!"

Rick Mossman: One of the other interesting things we did was we had, of all things, we had counterfeit National Park Service Olympic pins we found out about. Pin trading is a big thing at the winter Olympics. The park service had, we had a fulltime, the park service had a fulltime park service coordinator for three years there. Bob [Vambell?] was his name. He had made up three different Olympic pins, park service pins. When everybody showed up, they each got 10 of those pins that they could give out or trade or whatever. They were really cool pins. You're very fortunate if you have those pins.

Rick Mossman: But in any case, during the Olympics, somebody reports, says, "There's counterfeit pins being sold."

Rick Mossman: So, I had to go down to this shop downtown. There's all these shops that have sprung up selling all the Olympic stuff. I walked in and sure enough, here were these counterfeit pins. And they were just like one of our pins, but one color was different on them. Instead of a green banner, it had a yellow banner.

Rick Mossman: So, I bought a couple, so I'd have evidence, because counterfeiting was a big deal there. The U.S. Customs, no, it wouldn't have been customs, another federal law enforcement agency had a whole task force just there dealing with counterfeit merchandise. T-shirts and the whole nine yards.

Rick Mossman: So, we called them up and said, "What should we do about this? How do we deal with this?"

Rick Mossman: They go, "Listen. When the Olympics is over, nobody's going to care. So, go back to that store. Confiscate everything they have. Tell them that in lieu of making charges, if they're willing to make a donation to whoever you think would be appropriate."

Rick Mossman: We said, well, we have a National Park Foundation. For the value of the pins that he's already sold, that we will forego any criminal charges, and we checked with the U.S. attorney and they said fine with that.

Rick Mossman: So, we marched in the next day, another ranger and I, in uniform this time. We found the owner of the store, and we said, "We want to talk to you about this basket of park service pins. They're counterfeit."

Rick Mossman: He kind of looked at us, and his eyes got big. Then we started saying, well you're facing criminal charges. It could include this kind of fine, this kind of jail time. The guy just literally started shaking. (laughs) He told us he had a thousand. It turned out he'd worked for the pin company, and they had made a run of a thousand of those pins and they'd put the wrong color on it. And Bob Vanbell had said, no, they're supposed to be green banners, so they printed the correct ones. But they still had this thousand of yellow ones that were supposed to be destroyed. But this guy just took them. Now he's selling them for ten bucks a pop in his little store there.

Rick Mossman: So, we counted them up. He had about 700 and some left. We figured out how many he'd sold and so forth. We took what he had. He sat there and wrote out a check for about $4,000, which was the amount of money of the pins that he'd sold to the National Park Foundation. We wrote up a report and did it all officially, and that was the end of it. But we got a donation to the National Park Foundation. But you know, who would have ever thought we'd run into counterfeit park service pins at the Olympics? (laughs)

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah, that is quite a story.

Rick Mossman: Yeah, but that was just an incredible experience, and so forth.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah. I can imagine. So, Rick, what was your next post? And how did you decide to leave Yellowstone?

Rick Mossman: Okay, so we had been in Yellowstone about seven years. Thomas, our oldest, was going to school in Moran. Now, I should describe this. Where we were at the south entrance, we were snowed in in the wintertime. Now we were only about three miles from our car, which was parked at the resort at the John Rockefeller Parkway, Flag Resort. We have a parking lot there where we keep our cars. So, our routine, you know, I have the greatest wife in the world. She put up with all what it was like to live in Alaska. We moved to Yellowstone. Our routine in the wintertime to get Thomas to school was we would get up about five o'clock in the morning. I had to go out and patrol. So, I'd run down on my snowmobile, turn on our car to let it start heating up, because it would be cold. I would drive back. She would have the kids all bundled up, you know, and ready to go by about 6:30. She would drive, because she had to get Thomas to school, and she had to take Jackson, who was an infant, with her, obviously, because I had to go to work. So, she would go down, get in the car, drive 18 miles, I think it was, to Coulter Bay. Wait for the school bus. The school bus would pick Thomas up. He was in kindergarten. And then drive another 10 miles to the Moran School at Moran Junction. She'd have to drive back, and, in the evening, she would have to repeat that process. So, it was a very long, involved process.

Rick Mossman: Along about the time Thomas was in the second or third grade, and I think Jackson was a kindergartener, when Thomas went into the sixth grade, he'd have to go to middle school in Jackson. Which meant he'd have to

get on the earlier school bus at Coulter Bay. We figured out that we were going to have to get up at about four in the morning and take our little sixth grader and leave about 5:30 in the morning and he wouldn't get home till about eight o'clock at night. We said, there is no way that will work. (laughs) That is not going to work for a sixth grader to spend from 6:30 in the morning till 8 at night getting to and from school. (laughs)

Brenna Lissoway: Right.

Rick Mossman: Anyway, we started looking around and, you know, I was looking for a chief ranger position. Wind Cave National Park came open, which is one of the unsung parks in the park service. I had been there before. It's an incredible park, it has incredible wildlife. I'll be the first to admit, even though I do all kinds of outdoor pursuits, caving is not one I've ever been into. But Wind Cave, and a lot of people don't realize unless they've been there, has an incredible surface resource. It's one of the top mixed-grass prairies in the world. Representations of it, Nature Conservancy has declared it of the 25 best sites they've plotted, 16 of those sites are within Wind Cave National Park. It's the only pure DNA-bison bison federal herd in the country, other than Yellowstone's. And of course, Yellowstone has brucellosis in their herd. We don't have it in the Wind Cave herd. So, our bison are very sought after when we do our roundup each year.

Rick Mossman: So, I applied for the chief ranger job there and got it. We moved over to Hot Springs, South Dakota. The other thing that was kind of interesting from a park service employee perspective is I had lived in park housing all my career, and so had Julie. So, all of a sudden, we get to Wind Cave and we have to guy a house. And I'm 45, 46 years old, never owned a house. And that was one of the scariest things I've ever done. I'm like, I'd rather be hanging off a 5,000-foot cliff than having to buy a house. (laughs) That was a whole new experience for us, trying to find a house and figuring out all the pros and cons of where to live and the kids are going to be in school. That was very, very stressful, trying to figure out that. And owning a house. I can remember within a year after we were living in this house, and Julie going, "I sure miss just being able to call maintenance." (laughs)

Rick Mossman: But we, you know, we debated about whether we wanted to live in town, where the boys could bicycle around. And I'm like, I don't think I can live in a city, I've lived in parks my whole life. Or since I started my career. We were able to find a house three miles outside of town on five acres, and we bordered forest service land and had elbow space. It was nice living out there, close enough to town it was no big deal to drive in, but far enough out that it was a little park-like, so to speak.

Rick Mossman: So anyway, so we moved to Wind Cave in 2003. Wind Cave is just an incredible park. Lots of issues. It's not a big park. It's one of the smaller national parks. But besides the world-class cave – and it is a world-class cave, and they do all kinds of cave tours year-round – but we had this incredible surface resource. We have elk, pronghorn, bison, deer, the four

big species. Mountain lions, coyotes. I used to tell my Yellowstone friends, on a day-to-day basis, I saw more wildlife in Wind Cave than I ever did in Yellowstone on a day-to-day basis. Because I'd drive in to work every morning and every morning, I'd see pronghorns and bison. Most mornings I'd see deer and many mornings I'd see elk. Not all the time.

Rick Mossman: We got involved in a lot of neat programs. We just had a lot going on there. We did a lot of prescribed fire. Wind Cave, I know that Everglades would contest this, but Wind Cave had the first prescribed fire program in the National Park Service. They did the first prescribed fire in 1970, I think. So, we had a huge prescribed fire program there. I had a fire crew that worked for me there. Plus, we had the Northern Great Plains Fire Office, which oversaw seven different parks in the area. We had all the wildlife issues. We had big issues like chronic wasting disease we were dealing with. It was one of those things where resource management would see an elk with chronic wasting disease, and they'd call us. We'd have to go out and track it down and hunt it and shoot the elk and then send the head off to Fort Collins to the lab.

Rick Mossman: We had issues with things like going, new sewer lagoons. We tried to build a; we were going to build a sewer line to the city of Hot Springs. The locals in a referendum defeated it, even though it would have saved the city millions of dollars. They did not want the federal government tapped into the sewer system there. That was a major public relations nightmare for the city of Hot Springs. It wasn't the Park Service's fault because we were willing to give them all this money. But we had lots of issues there that we dealt with. It was very interesting in that regard.

Rick Mossman: One of the highlights of my time there was I was acting superintendent in 2006. We were sharing, for about two years, we did not have a superintendent. Each month or every two months, each of the division chiefs, we would move it around and be acting. I was acting in July of 2006. We reintroduced black-footed ferrets. I'll never forget because they were declared extinct there at Wind Cave. The last one was seen in like 1977. We went out – I thought it was so appropriate – we went on the Fourth of July and we released the black-footed ferrets back to their home range. I told everybody, I go, for me, this is full circle. I started out as a wildlife biologist. Became a ranger. I always, throughout my entire career, I always tried to stay as involved as I could with resource management. In a lot of the parks, it was tough because of that rift between the divisions. And I was always offering my rangers to help with resource management projects. So, to be acting superintendent and get to release – I let the biologists, the park technician who was the one that did all the work on the program, we let her release the first one, and I got to release the second black-footed ferret. It was really cool.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah. Yeah. So that acting gig that you had as superintendent, did you have any aspirations to go for a superintendency, ever?

Rick Mossman: Oh, absolutely. (laughs) I mean, I'll be the first one to admit, I did not want to retire. And my age was coming up. But unfortunately, during the last two years of my career with the upcoming sequestration, the way the federal budgets were and everything else, there were only two or three superintendencies that came open that I was eligible to even apply for. I tried. I talked to a lot of people and I tried and tried. But I just couldn't get one. One of the things, and I'll be happy to submit here and happy to talk to anybody that will listen, that one of the big problems we have in the park service right now is we're losing so much good talent. The hiring of superintendents, and this is just my personal opinion, from what I've seen in my career, has become the last 10 to 12 years very political. So much of it is based on politics, both, mainly internal National Park Service politics, trying to achieve various goals. What I see is a lot of people becoming superintendents who don't have a clue what they're doing. They may be very good at their particular discipline, but they go into a superintendency thinking they're going to become a park manager. They don't realize that running a park, it's not just the park management, but it's like dealing with the employee pet policy, and dealing with employee housing issues, and dealing with park neighbors, is probably much more stressful than the actual park management. A lot of these superintendents don't realize that. I see a lot of the superintendents just don't have the decision-making power. It used to be most of the superintendents came from the ranger ranks. In the ranger ranks and emergency services, what are we taught? We are taught how to make quick decisions, and the right decisions, to save lives or whatever. And we have great decision-making ability.

Rick Mossman: Now all those people are being lost at the age of 57. The park service needs to build some kind of bridge program – and I don't have the answer – but to allow those people to move over into non-law enforcement jobs and continue their career, because we are losing a tremendous amount of talent. I mean, I had a young superintendent a number of years ago at a training meeting, and he came in when they were trying to hire all these business managers as superintendents. He sat there and looked at me and said, "Well, you law enforcement guys, you just do your 20 years. You're not good for anything else. We don't want you after that." And that was his attitude about law enforcement rangers, and this was a new superintendent. Unfortunately, there's a lot of that out there, in my opinion. That's where I personally think a lot of our major problems in the park service right now stem from how our hiring of superintendents is done, and also the fact that superintendents have very little oversight. You have a regional director or associate regional director who's overseeing 70 to 150 superintendents potentially in their region, and there's no way they know what's going on in that park all the time.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah.

Rick Mossman: They may see that superintendent once a year. There's not enough oversight. A lot of superintendents, most of them, they have good

intentions, but many of them don't know what they're doing, and don't have the skill set to be a superintendent.

Brenna Lissoway: Hmm. That's interesting.

Rick Mossman: I really see that as a major problem. The park service has got to, you know, as Mike Reynolds said this morning, has got to say, yeah, we have a problem, we need to fix it, and have to admit they have a problem and so forth. That's just kind of my perspective from what I can see.

Brenna Lissoway: Well, yeah.

Rick Mossman: Besides there at Wind Cave, I did go, I was acting for about six months at Fort Laramie. Which I had a blast. All my superintendent friends will hate me for this, but I found being a superintendent was easier than being a chief ranger. (laughs)

Brenna Lissoway: How so?

Rick Mossman: It didn't seem nearly as hard! (laughs)

Brenna Lissoway: Was it because the problems were dealt with before they got to you?

Rick Mossman: Well, to some degree. You know, as a superintendent, you are more of a manager. You're just managing people, and if you know how to manage people right, it's an easy job. As a chief ranger, you're dealing with emergency crises where people's lives are at stake and a tremendous amount of training. I mean, it always tickles me that as law enforcement rangers we have to go to training every year for law enforcement. We have to go to training every year to keep our EMT up. Those are required. There's various other kinds of training we're required to go to. To become a park ranger, you have to have a commission, you have to meet the physical testing, you have to meet the written testing at FLETC. Practical testing. And you have to keep doing that throughout your career.

Rick Mossman: You have to have absolutely no certification or qualification to be a park superintendent. There is no required training to continue to be a park superintendent. I don't know if people realize that. But as a ranger, you have to keep up all these skills and testing constantly for 35 years. As a superintendent, you don't have to have anything. (laughs)

Brenna Lissoway: That's interesting.

Rick Mossman: You don't have to keep up any certifications or anything. So, anyway.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah. Yeah. So, Rick, I've got to ask. Was there ever a point in your career where you were asked to do something that you did not agree with?

Rick Mossman: Yeah. I'd have to think about it. You know, I was never, I have to admit, and I have to think long and hard. I don't think I was ever asked to do anything illegal, what would have been illegal. I was never asked that.

Brenna Lissoway: Right. But something you morally or ethically just on principle didn't agree with? Thought it was a bad decision for the park service or—

Rick Mossman: Yeah. Oh, man, you should have asked me that before I got here so I could have thought about that. You know, I have to admit there were some broader things maybe I wasn't specifically involved with. It irked me when I got to Grand Canyon that we were given a river unit. We had to take down the vice president, and we had to take down senators. But you know, I quickly learned, and I didn't agree with the amount of money we spent to coddle these guys. However, I quickly learned that politically it was a great thing.

Rick Mossman: I remember Grand Canyon, a specific incident. The river unit was going to take down Senator John McCain, who was a brand-new senator of Arizona, and Senator Phil Graham from Texas, who was big on the grand tax bill at the time. I remember the superintendent asked me to go pick up Mr. McCain at the El Tovar Hotel. Pick up him and his family because we were taking their family and kids. And take them out to the stables because they were going to have the park service mule team go with them in case, they wanted to ride in case they got tired of walking. Somebody else went to pick up Phil Graham and his family. My wife was one of the river unit rangers at the time, my now-wife.

Rick Mossman: I can remember picking up Mr. McCain who was a very nice, gracious man. Of course, an American war hero. Picked him up and took him out to the trailhead, and we chatted on the way out there about just some vague things and so forth. We got out to the trailhead. We got them out, they started walking. His legs were broken in so many places when he was a prisoner for five years in Vietnam that he just hobbles. I think he's in a lot of pain. He walked the entire way down. He refused to get on a mule. Walked all the way down to the Phantom Ranch there, which I just found astounding. Phil Graham ended up jumping on a mule after about a half mile. (laughs)

Rick Mossman: Anyway, then they went on this river trip. My wife had some interesting stories from the river trip. Everything went fine. They were out there for a week or so on this river trip.

Rick Mossman: Then about a year later is when the park service was pushing, tried to limit the air space over the Grand Canyon. We were kind of in a fight with the FAA, who said they control the air space. There was a bill in Congress to bring natural quiet back to the Grand Canyon, to limit the air, this and that. There was a bill sponsored by the Democrats. It was all sponsored by the Democrats. No Republicans would touch it, except John McCain. John McCain was the only Republican sponsor of that bill to limit aircraft. There is no question in my mind, a lot of that was because of the river trip he went on down the Grand Canyon. After that trip, he used to talk about how important the Grand Canyon was as a national park and this and that and so forth. I realized then that yeah, we do have to do some things that we may not totally agree with, but you know, politically in the long term, they're going to help the park service and win those people over. As many

people have said, it's all a matter of getting people to the parks to convince them that this is something worth saving.

Brenna Lissoway: Mm hmm. That's interesting.

Rick Mossman: I'm trying to think of, anyhow, it was interesting. From that point on, I got the opportunity to – Laura Bush and her three girlfriends she'd grown up with, they'd go on a hike every year. They came to Yellowstone. I had to go pick her up down at Tetons where they were staying, and bring them up to the Lake Hotel, the convoy of all the Secret Service folks. Yeah, it was all very interesting. I knew that it can't hurt. We bring these folks. Plus, they are in a political position that they do have a right to know what's going on with other government entities and so forth. I have yet to see these politicians come to the parks that say anything bad about it. I mean, I daresay when we had the whole shutdown last year, a lot of the most outspoken politicians, I question whether they've ever even been to a national park, and really know what it's all about. Those folks that were in favor of a shutdown, and the fallout.

Rick Mossman: I'm trying to think of other things. There were things I disagreed with in management. I mean, I'm a big preservationist. I have been accused of you want to throw up a fence and lock everybody out. It's like, I don't want to lock everybody out. I just want to lock our resources in to make sure there's no outside threats and this and that. I'm a big proponent of wilderness. I used to go round and round in staff meetings my entire career where people would say, "We are de facto wilderness."

Rick Mossman: I would say, "No, we still need wilderness. We need that other layer of protection. And the park deserves it. And the people deserve it."

Rick Mossman: Bandelier's a great example. There was a proposal way back when to make wilderness before I worked there. The park service did not favor it at first because they said we don't need it. The example I give, ultimately a bill went through. It was not the park service-proposed bill that made over 70% of the Monument wilderness, I believe, 70 or 80%. But the example I give is there was a lot of pressure to build a road out to the Shrine of the Stone Lions, the centerpiece of that park. Without wilderness, park service [could have decided?] to build that road. With that wilderness designation, that will prevent the park service from ever even thinking about building a road out to that Shrine of the Stone Lions.

Rick Mossman: So, I think wilderness is important. A lot of people within the park service had different philosophies on that.

Rick Mossman: I disagreed many times on how we managed certain aspects. But being the good soldier, whatever the decision finally made, I supported it as much as I could and so forth.

Brenna Lissoway: So, I asked you earlier about mentors you had in your life.

Rick Mossman: Mm hmm.

Brenna Lissoway: Was there anybody that you mentored, or really had a connection with, during your career?

Rick Mossman: You know, I hope a lot of what I taught people rubbed off. (laughs) Occasionally I do hear from seasonals that worked for me in the past and so forth, and what they're doing. It's nice to see particular seasonals, how far many of them have come and done things and so forth. That's what I really enjoy now about being the director of the Law Enforcement Academy is being able to mentor these guys and pass on the mistakes I made and the good things I did so they know the ethics and all that sort of stuff, and what the right thing to do is.

Rick Mossman: Like I used to always tell a lot of rangers have got away from wearing the flat hat and are wearing the baseball cap because it's more convenient and so forth. I always told every ranger that ever worked for me, any time you're going out to deal with anything, you can never go wrong wearing the flat hat. There is no situation where you're going to look bad wearing the flat hat. So, whenever you can, wear your flat hat. That is our symbol. That is the most iconic thing about us. Wear it and everybody knows who you are. And I firmly believe that.

Rick Mossman: I was sometimes hard, you know. I became much more of a uniform stickler as I got older than I was when I was younger. Because the image is so important. There's a lot of things I taught people over the years. I'm one of those people that has always been, you know, and a lot of people think just the opposite, but I am one of those people that's always said, the resource comes first, and the people come second. We're here to protect the resource first, and we're here to protect the people second. Now a lot of managers, a lot of chief rangers will disagree with me on that. But that's the way I feel. Because my philosophy is, without the resource, we won't have people. So, the resource is the most important thing we are out there for. That's what we are protecting. Secondary is to protect the people that come visit that resource. But our job is to protect that resource. That's the number one thing. So.

Brenna Lissoway: And throughout your career, looking at some of the leaders that you've been surrounded by, how would you describe good leadership?

Rick Mossman: You know, when I teach Managing the Law Enforcement Incident, we have a whole chapter we teach on management. It's a philosophy I use in the incident command. I was going to mention some more on that, because I was the operations chief and our team, I was on it until I retired. I became the incident commander the last three years on that team. And my management philosophy was a good manager is a person that walks around with a coffee cup and knows the big picture. And that was one thing I was always good at. I knew the big picture of what everything that needed to be done, who was in charge of each different thing, and to make sure everything got done in the big picture. I didn't get tunnel vision on one particular thing.

Rick Mossman: I think the good managers are those that are willing to listen, willing, one, to lead by example. Two, to let people, you know, let people get their job done. You just need to tell them how to do it, but don't tell them how to do it. Just tell them what needs to be done. And then just oversee it all and make sure that what everybody's doing is in complement with what the other folks are doing, so that we're all driving toward the same end mission. That worked very well in incident management. I would say the same thing. I'll be the first to admit the last year I was at Wrangell-Saint Elias, Jon Jarvis was the superintendent, and I said then and there, I would follow John Jarvis off the face of a cliff because he was such a great manager there at Wrangell-Saint Elias. And when he became regional director, and then director, I tell people now, there's nobody else we could have better as director of the park service right now.

Brenna Lissoway: What things in particular impressed you about him?

Rick Mossman: What I remember about Jon Jarvis was when he first got there, he'd only been there a couple of months. He came down to visit me in Yakutat to see what that district was all about. I flew him all around. So, we went flying around, looked at the district and so forth. Jon never acted like he had an ego. He treated everybody with respect. One thing I've learned in my career is you treat all employees with respect – I don't care what their job is – and you will get so much more back in return. At my retirement party, I gave a ranger coin, which I only gave out to people that did special things. I gave one to our janitor of the visitor center at Wind Cave because he was the happiest guy, I saw there my entire seven years there. He loved his job. He kept the visitor center clean, and the parking lot. He was literally one of those guys that whistled while he worked. He was always upbeat. He just loved his job. His job, he said, "My job is to make this visitor center and this parking lot perfect for the visitors that come here and see it. Because this is what they're going to see first." I just admired him, and I told him that. Because that's what working is all about. Mission-oriented work.

Rick Mossman: So, in any case, Jon had that attitude toward all his employees. Everybody had a very important job to do, and no one was more important than anybody else.

Rick Mossman: About two or three months after we'd been there, he had all of us that were out in the field come in for a week. He was going to be talking about writing a mission statement for the park, and where we go from here. It was kind of the time; all the parks were supposed to write mission statements and so forth. He had every employee there, I mean, the maintenance guys, the resource guys, the rangers, the administrative people. He made them all come to this meeting that took a couple of days. It was funny because he was the scribe. He sat there at the flip chart and he was the one writing everything down. He asked for input from everybody. I mean, everybody in the park that was physically capable of being there was there. Because he didn't want input from just the division

chiefs. He didn't want input from just the field rangers. He wanted input from everybody that worked in that park. He took every bit of input seriously that was given to him. And I just really admired that about him as a manager. He could see the big picture. He knew what needed to be done and how we go about doing that, and so forth. That's why he's gone as far as he's gone.

Brenna Lissoway: That's interesting.

Rick Mossman: Yeah.

Brenna Lissoway: You know what? I think, Rick, we have to stop. I'm so sorry.

Rick Mossman: I was afraid of that. That's okay.

Brenna Lissoway: I still have other questions I want to ask.

Rick Mossman: We'll have to do it again. What—

[END OF TRACK 2]

[START OF TRACK 3]

Brenna Lissoway: Okay, this is Brenna Lissoway interviewing Rick Mossman. This is our second interview. Today is October the 26th, 2014. We are still at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado. I think Rick, for this interview I wanted to go back and there's a few things that it would be good to go back and talk about a little more in depth. One of those things is your experience with search and rescue in the park service. Can you maybe just kind of describe what search and rescue was like when you came into the park service? And maybe a little bit about how it's changed during your career?

Rick Mossman: Sure.

Brenna Lissoway: And then we can talk about some of the specific things you were involved with.

Rick Mossman: Okay. When I first got, that was one of the things that really hooked me on the park service. The second week I was a 20-year-old seasonal at Buffalo National River, Arkansas, in college. The second week I was there, the river was high and flooding, and a bunch of Boy Scouts went down the river. The Park Service couldn't control all the access points because the Park Service owned very little land at that point. Just the two old state parks. In any case, a bunch of Boy Scouts turned over their canoes right there by Buffalo Point. The rangers, they had all hands-on deck and I got to go down there. I was just on the bank as the other permanent rangers were bringing these scouts off the willow trees and in there and trying to get them warmed up and that sort of stuff. I thought, this is really cool, and that's what really kind of hooked me on the park service and wanting to be a ranger.

Rick Mossman: From there, once I moved on at Bandelier National Monument, they put me in charge of search and rescue there. I really got into it. It was just

fascinating. At that time, it was still real basic. But a lot of things haven't changed over the years. I had the opportunity to go to a Managing the Lost Person, then called Managing the Search Function, which was kind of a new edge search class that had been around for seven or eight years, I think, at that time, on how to manage searches. I found it fascinating, the science behind how to do a semi-scientific search for a lost person.

Brenna Lissoway: Was it an NPS class?

Rick Mossman: No. The class I went to was put on by the Coast Guard in Albuquerque, New Mexico. But a couple of the original authors of that class was Bill Wade and some others that put that class together. That class is still not the only, but the main manage and search class that exists today in the world. It's come a long way. It's gotten a lot better, obviously, over the years. It was so on the cutting edge when that was developed. It was just really neat. As a result of that, I went on to become an instructor of that class with the National Association of Search and Rescue. I still teach it in retirement. I've been doing it since, as a teacher since, I think, 1985. I'm still a big firm believer in it, and I love teaching it. I love teaching that class.

Rick Mossman: But there at Bandelier, we didn't have a lot of search and rescues. But we really trained hard. It was always fun. I can remember the time we got the outdoor writer for the *Los Alamos Monitor,* the local newspaper, out there and had him hanging off a cliff and so forth. It turned into a great partnership, because we got great coverage by the local paper on other park issues because some of those things where we reached out.

Rick Mossman: Then on at Grand Canyon, where I got to be the search and rescue coordinator while I was there. Grand Canyon at that time, and I think still today, probably leads the nation, as far as parks, in the number of major search and rescues. I talked a little about that before. But that was a lot of fun. You got to be involved in a lot of big searches, a lot of big rescues. And really enjoyed that. And went on to do the same thing at Wrangell-Saint Elias and Glacier Bay, and also at Yellowstone and Wind Cave.

Rick Mossman: It turned real critical as I was a member of the incident management team, which I don't know if we want to talk about later or go into now, but we did a couple of major search and rescues as the incident management team that I was involved with that ended up being successful, for the most part.

Brenna Lissoway: Well, let's talk about maybe one of those incidents and why you think it was successful.

Rick Mossman: Well, the toughest one was the search for Jeff Christianson, a back-country ranger at Rocky Mountain National Park who went missing on an eight-day patrol. The incident management team was asked to come help the park search. They had been searching for two days. The inter-mountain incident management team came down. The IC at the time was Eddie Lopez. I was the operations chief, though because of my search

background, I was kind of asked to manage the search more or less, with the help of a lot of other people. We spent eight days before we found Jeff. He was dead. He was actually found by a visitor. I can remember that very hard phone call when dispatch called me. And then asking the visitor, who had called in on a cell phone, and dispatch patched me to them. I had to ask the guy to go back over to the body, which he was very reluctant to do, to read his name tag to make sure it was the right guy. And of course, it was.

Rick Mossman: But then we went on to have the memorial service a few days later at the YMCA of the Rockies here. We flew back with his parents and the body, the incident management team did, to Minnesota, and had the funeral. It was all, the search was very stressful. Not just on the park staff, but all of us. Because everybody on the incident management team looked at this young ranger who was about 32 years old, seasonal who had worked here at Rocky a few seasons, and had worked as a winter park ski guy. Every one of us was like 20 or 30 years ago, but for the grace of God, there go I, because that could have been any one of us out on a back-country patrol.

Rick Mossman: Fortunately, we were able to change some of the back-country policies nationwide as a result of that. There's work that still needs to be done on that. Because that accident could have been prevented and so forth.

Rick Mossman: Anyway, one of the things I really remember from that was, and we were doing the funeral in Minneapolis. They lived about 30 miles north. We had the funeral at their home church in, I think it was called Ham Lake, Minnesota. They were going to bury him in the cemetery over in Saint Paul, Minnesota, about 30 miles away. After the funeral we had a two-mile procession of law enforcement vehicles and so forth.

Rick Mossman: I was in the front with the commander of the highway patrol, leading this procession. I was ops chief on that, kind of coordinating that sort of thing. We're doing down the interstate from Ham Lake to Saint Paul, on the middle of a Friday workday, on a busy interstate there in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. And they blocked every access, and there was no other traffic either direction on this interstate for 30 miles.

Rick Mossman: I turned to this commander and I said, "How can you block a six-lane interstate in a major city on a busy workday?"

Rick Mossman: He turned to me and he says, "We do this for presidents and vice-presidents. We'll do this for our brother law enforcement folks." It was so amazing. It really was. Anyway.

Rick Mossman: But then the other thing, one of the last incident management callouts I had was we had a dignitary. He was kind of the equivalent of the secretary of education for the country of Colombia. So, the White House and the State Department was involved. And he got lost in the Barataria Unit of Jean Lafitte National Historic Park down south of New Orleans.

Rick Mossman: So, our team was called in to help conduct the search. We went down there. We set up kind of a joint command with the sheriff, who was kind of running the search there. You know, he was kind of a typical, I hate saying it, but the stereotypical Southern sheriff. You know, looking for the photo ops.

Rick Mossman: They were doing okay with some of the searching, but they really didn't know quite what they were doing. And we brought in some other search experts and we found him after about two days. He was still alive. They had given him up for dead. But as I have mentioned before, I never, until we find the person, I never consider them dead. Maybe on the third day that we got there, we found him, and he was alive. A ranger search group we had out in the field were the ones that found him.

Rick Mossman: We got him to the hospital. The emergency room doc told me he wouldn't have lasted another 12 to 24 hours because he was going into kidney failure.

Rick Mossman: But what I remember the most about that was when the operations chief, Steve Winslow, came up to me and says, "We found him. He's alive. And we're trying to coordinate how to get him out of the field out there."

Rick Mossman: I can remember his whole family had flown up from Colombia. I walked over to his wife. I brought her over to the side and I said, "We found your husband and he's alive." And she collapsed in my arms. I sat there and go; I remember why I've been doing this for 35 years. That moment right there. (clears throat) I didn't think I'd get that emotional about that.

Rick Mossman: But my wife put it in the Christmas card. That was kind of my swan song, the search and rescue going out of the park service. And it really was. But you know, those things. Being able to not only to actually be in the search and rescues in the parks and saving people and helping people. But just being able to teach for the last 30 years. And the class. And knowing other people are going out there.

Rick Mossman: And at MLPI class—

Brenna Lissoway: What's MLPI?

Rick Mossman: Managing the Lost Person Incident, the old Managing the Search Function class that I still teach, it has saved so many lives that it's been incredible. There's no question. When I was in Yellowstone, I taught, I would teach that class a couple times there for the rangers. I had a Washington State trooper there in the class once. He wrote me about six months after the class and said, "I just want to thank you for that class." He said, "Since that class, because your breaks were so damn short, I stopped smoking. And I don't smoke anymore. Thank you for that." (laughs) And then he said, "As a result of what you taught me in that class, I was able to run a search where we saved a nine-year-old girl lost in the wildness somewhere around Seattle there." And he won the State of Washington's SAR award that year, whatever. You know, that made me feel really good that I was

able to teach somebody else who then went on to save somebody's life. That's a real good feeling when you can teach other people and get those kind of results.

Brenna Lissoway: And I mean, you mentioned it before that that's one of the key things in terms of your attitude about the person is alive until you find that they're not.

Rick Mossman: Right.

Brenna Lissoway: Is there anything else that you really try to impart on your students or people you work with on SARs on how to do an effective search and rescue?

Rick Mossman: Yeah. You know, there's a lot of techniques and so forth. But you know, from a management standpoint, a lot of it is the morale of the searchers, to keep the morale high. Meaning keeping them fed and that sort of stuff. Something as basic as that. Because you've got to keep the morale high.

Rick Mossman: One of the other most important things I always tell people is I, whenever I conduct a search, you usually make up a piece of paper that has the person's picture and then a description of what they were wearing when they were last seen and where they were last seen and contact numbers. We'll post those all over at visitor centers and restrooms and this and that, so visitors see it and so forth. But I always make sure on every search that every single search field member gets a copy of that. The reason I do it is when they're out there and they've been out there 16 hours and it's been pouring down rain or whatever and they're miserable and they're hungry, they can pull that piece of paper out and they can see a human face and know why they're out there and what they're doing. It reminds them that they have a mission and they're trying to save another human being like them. So.

Brenna Lissoway: I know that in recent years the park service has been moving toward preventative search and rescue.

Rick Mossman: Yes.

Brenna Lissoway: Were you aware of this movement at all? Or can you talk a little about how that came about?

Rick Mossman: I would love to. Because I was a part of that, especially at Grand Canyon. Grand Canyon, as I think I mentioned, I know I mentioned before, we kind of call it the upside-down mountain. We always had people in the afternoon that were struggling to get up from the trails after hiking to the bottom or partway down or whatever. One of the things we did, and it had been slowly building over the years. I by no means started it. It had started way before me and a lot of people involved, and it's got a lot better since. But to try to warn people before they went down.

Rick Mossman: When the new management plan went into effect there at Grand Canyon, we built the new back country reservations office. And we actually had

photos that were somewhat controversial. Some of the back-country photos. We had one photo that was a very far shot of a dead body laying at the bottom of a dry wash where a hiker had run out of food and water and ended up walking over a cliff. But you know, it was there for shock value.

Rick Mossman: One of the funniest things we did was we took one of our back country seasonals, had her dress up in just civilian hiking clothes. We had her on the trail, and we made this mixture up of kind of dog food and split pea soup. She had some of the split pea soup in her mouth, and she was on her knees kind of vomiting. We took a picture of that and we had that posted in there of what appeared to be a hiker puking up on the trail. (laughs) We got some flack over that. But we were trying to impress upon people what an incredibly tough environment the Grand Canyon was. How hard it was to hike down there. Even though it might be 65 degrees at the rim at eight o'clock on a June morning, when they get to the bottom it might be 112. And they needed to carry so much water, which they wouldn't do. On the Kaibab Trail, there's no water all the way down to the bottom.

Rick Mossman: So, at that new back country reservations office, we had all this basically preventative search and rescue photos and stuff. We would do a 15-minute talk every morning at eight o'clock, because that's when everybody showed up to get, all the permits were released that morning, any open sites. There would always be 30 or 40 or 100 people on the front porch waiting for it to open up. We'd give a 15-minute spiel on preventative search and rescue.

Rick Mossman: Then we started what we called the Wimp Patrol that I talked about before to help, again, with preventative search and rescue. Since then, it's got incredible. They've got great signs at the trailheads. Because, you know, as we say in preventative search and rescue, the best search is the one that never happens, and the best rescue is the one that never happens. And if we can get these people ahead of time, we do that.

Rick Mossman: One of the things we started there was trying to talk to concession employees at their training, because we realized a lot of our rescues were concession employees. College-aged kids coming from all over the country that did not understand the environment. We did the same thing when I was at Yellowstone and in Alaska and so forth.

Rick Mossman: But search and rescue's gotten a lot better. Cell phones and GPSs have changed the world tremendously. In some ways, for the worse.

Brenna Lissoway: How so?

Rick Mossman: Well, with cell phones—(laughs) Well, a couple of things. One, it amazes me how many young, you know, I'm an old map and compass guy. And everybody wants an electronic GPS, which are great instruments. But batteries go dead. Sometimes you don't have coverage, things like that. So many people are dependent now on the GPS that can't read a map or a compass. So, I still always carry a map and compass with me. I trust those

more than I do my GPS, which I also carry. So that's gotten a lot of people into trouble that they can't read a map and figure out how to get out of where they're at.

Rick Mossman: The other thing is the cell phones. Now that the cell phone coverage is so good everywhere, people are doing things that they might not otherwise do because they know that they can just call for help on the cell phone. In the early years of cell phones, maybe 15 years ago, it was a real problem. It's still a problem. But it was a real problem back then because they'd call in and say, "I'm hiking along the Appalachian Trail and I'm lost, and I have no idea where I'm at. Come save me." Well, at that time, there was no way to, it was really hard to figure out. Now most, well, by law they're supposed to, cell phones are supposed to have a GPS chip and dispatch centers have GPS tracking capabilities. So, they can usually ping that phone now and find that person. So, it's gotten a lot better than it used to be. But I think it has been, for some folks, what has caused people that shouldn't be taking certain risks or being in certain areas in the wilderness to maybe take chances they wouldn't otherwise, because they think they have this lifeline that's going to save them if they have trouble.

Brenna Lissoway: Mm hmm. Yeah. What do you think the approach of the National Park Service should be to those people in terms of personal responsibility?

Rick Mossman: Well, you know, I probably shouldn't say this, but I always like to say whenever there's big outcries about how much, you know, the public tax dollars we spend on rescues. You always hear about the big mountain rescues at Denali and how much it cost. A lot of people are outraged that their tax money's having to go to pay for that, and we shouldn't let them climb mountains. Things like that. And yet if you were to look nationwide overall at how much money is spent on search and rescue by county sheriffs and federal agencies throughout the country, most of the search and rescue money is spent on looking for the lost hunter just outside the city or things like that. That's a much bigger amount of money than the few climbers that get lost or injured or whatever on high peaks.

Rick Mossman: I've been a big proponent on the national parks that, you know, we used to have a saying, we would say it's the right and privilege of every free American to kill themselves in a national park. (laughs) I am all for people getting to do those things. We should not limit people that want to, obviously if there's resource damage, we have to limit those. But the traditional uses of climbing and recreating, people have the right to go out and hike and so forth.

Rick Mossman: We used to go round and round, like we shouldn't let, we should figure out a way to stop people from hiking to the bottom because they're overweight or too old or whatever. Listen, it's their responsibility, to a degree. Unfortunately, we have to pick up the pieces. Nobody's ever found that balance. But I don't think we have the right not to let people try to do what they want to do if it's an okay traditional use. And we have to

deal with it. That's our job. That's part of our job and our mission to deal with the aftermath. It's our job to do the best education we can to warn those people of the risk and so forth and let them do it. I don't want us to get to a society that I think to a large part we've become, where kids are so protected as they grow up by parents or guardians that they don't get out to experience those things in the wilderness, because some parent's afraid they're going to get attacked by a bear or bitten by a rattlesnake. It was Annie Dillard, the great naturalist, said, "Life's too short to worry about being bitten by a rattlesnake." That's always been one of my philosophies. People do need to get out and take those risks and so forth. Otherwise, they're not going to experience the national parks.

Brenna Lissoway: Mm hmm. Is there anything else that you want to talk about in terms of search and rescue?

Rick Mossman: No, I think that's pretty good for that.

Brenna Lissoway: Okay. You had mentioned your involvement with the incident management team. Did you want to talk a little bit more about that particular team? Or just the way that incident management functions in the park service?

Rick Mossman: Well, a little of both. I'll just try to keep it short. You know, Rick Gale was the father of incident management in the park service, and the father of all risk incident management. It came from the fire world. He's the one, the only one in the world, that decided at the time, back in the early '80s, it could be used for all risks.

Rick Mossman: So, he brought it to the National Park Service. We started using it when I moved to Grand Canyon in 1983, they were using it there for all their emergencies. Whether it was a law enforcement emergency, and the great thing about ICS without going into how it works, it's a management system that can kind of contract and expand as necessary. So, you pull up to a car wreck, you go into ICS mode. As more resources come in, you just fill in the blocks of your ICS command to as big and small as you want.

Rick Mossman: Then Rick developed in the 1990s the idea of actual teams. Of the team that would go take care of emergencies, or also plan big events in parks. Presidential visits and things like that. We created these regional teams. I think I mentioned before, when I went to Alaska, we had a team up there, and we had a couple of events.

Rick Mossman: When I moved to Yellowstone and got on the inter-mountain team, I think I already mentioned the Cerro Grande fire. A few years later, we were asked to put together the funeral, memorial service, for ranger Chris Egley, who was murdered down at Organ Pipe Cactus National Park. That was another very moving thing, to put together the memorial service. The funeral in his hometown in Cadillac, Michigan, where we had to rent the high school auditorium because we had so many people. We had almost

five thousand people there. We had law enforcement officers from every state that borders, I mean, every state around the upper Midwest. We had Canadian Mounties in their full red there from Canada. It was just amazing. And the outpouring of support when we went into that town from the local townspeople.

Rick Mossman: I remember we went to rent some rental vans so our team could move around. The only place you could get rental cars was the Chevy dealership. They gave us these vans and they refused payment from the government for these vans, because they wanted to help out.

Rick Mossman: You know, some of the other things we did, probably the biggest thing and one of the highlights of my career was we were selected to help the Secret Service at the Olympics.

Brenna Lissoway: The Olympics?

Rick Mossman: Did we talk about that?

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah, we did talk about that.

Rick Mossman: Okay, I couldn't remember. (laughs)

Brenna Lissoway: No, it's good. It's good to make sure.

Rick Mossman: The other big one that I'm very proud to be part of was our team was asked to go back in 2008 to plan the inaugural for President Obama. I need to rephrase that. Not the whole thing, obviously, the White House and the Capitol and all that kind of plans all the actual festivities. But keep in mind that the National Mall and all the green space where all the people that are watching this is national park land. Of course, the Secret Service was handling all the security around the Capitol and the president and all that sort of thing. But the park service was expected to deal with the largest crowd ever to be in Washington, DC at one time in history. It was like, whoa, 200-plus years, and this is going to be the biggest event ever in Washington, DC, and we've got to plan for it.

Rick Mossman: We went back there starting in November. The team took, we took turns going back for a few weeks at a time, working with the National Capitol Region. We had our incident command post set up in the training room at the National Capitol Regional Office. We were working with the park police and having to go to meetings with the Secret Service and the While House and the National Capitol staff. We're going to meetings with transportation folks in northern Virginia and Maryland because the experts were saying no traffic would be able to move that day of the inauguration in most of the District of Columbia. You would not be able to get on the subways because they would be so packed. The only way you could get on the subway if you lived within DC was to ride an empty one out to the end, out to Maryland or Virginia, and then come back in.

Rick Mossman: So, we're dealing with these incredible things. Of course, the National Capitol Region staff, they do an incredible job maintaining those grounds,

picking up litter, all that kind of stuff. You had all the interpreters; the monuments and memorials are still going to be open. We had to facilitate how to get all these employees to work that morning for the inaugural. And then how we were going to deal with, they were saying potentially up to five million people standing there on the National Mall, on the National Park Service land. Anytime you have five million people, even for an hour, you're going to have medical issues, etcetera. It was going to be very cold. We knew we were going to have people spending the night down there. Of course, it's illegal to camp down there. But what are you going to do, because you know, you're going to have thousands of people just staying down there all night. How are you going to handle that? Tremendous issues.

Rick Mossman: Ultimately what we did was, we took what's called the tennis bubble, which is a bunch of tennis courts under a big bubble there near the National Capitol Regional Office, under a kind of air-inflated bubble. We set it up like a standard fire camp. We had 600 cops. We had mobile restrooms. We brought in a caterer. Anybody that was working the mall for the National Park Service could come down on the previous night, which I believe would have been a Tuesday night, if I remember right. Then stay there overnight then walk to wherever they had to work that day from there, from the National Capitol Regional Office, which is right behind the Jefferson Memorial.

Rick Mossman: Then we set up MASH hospitals, two MASH hospitals, on the National Mall. And a bunch of first aid tents to deal with medical situations. Probably one of the, just because of financial reasons, as it led up to it, about a week before the inauguration, I was back in Wind Cave. Like I said, we were taking turns. I had just flown back, and I was going to fly back for the actual inaugural and the park service decided with who they had there at the time, they didn't want to fly a whole bunch of people back because of the cost. So, I didn't get to go back for the actual inaugural, but I was there for the two months before and helping plan it. So, I got to watch it on TV. And that was okay. That was okay.

Rick Mossman: The rest of the team that was still there did an incredible job. If I remember right, they did not have a single fatality. They had over 3,000 medical rescues. They ended up having there on park service land approximately two million people standing there watching the inauguration all day. Most of the medicals were cold-related type medicals. Nothing super-serious. They did have one, I think one heart attack. But they were able to get the guy to the hospital, and from what I understand, he survived.

Brenna Lissoway: So, your assessment overall was that it functioned well?

Rick Mossman: It functioned well. It was a big success.

Brenna Lissoway: Is there anything that you would have done differently?

Rick Mossman: You know, it's been so long ago. There were probably some little tweaks. I mean, it's funny. We always kidded ourselves on the incident management team. We'd have a big after-action review after each event. We'd end up, it was just internally of the incident management team and the agency authority, the park superintendent, whoever that might be. and some of the other major folks, local folks that were involved. We always sat there and beat ourselves up, that we should have done this different. We should have done this better. But it was never anything major. And yeah, there were tweaks we probably would have made afterwards. But you know, stuff that came up that was just totally unexpected, because no event like that had ever happened before that was going to be that big.

Brenna Lissoway: Like what? Anything in particular stand out?

Rick Mossman: I can remember one of the big deals was we were going to set up this camp and have employees come. Washington, DC, the employees are in a union back there. I can't explain all the politics of that. But there is a federal employees union back there. So, we had to go through the union reps to get permission to have this fire camp and to have the employees be there. We were battling over standby pay versus overtime. It got into a bunch of financial stuff, which, you know, I personally, I know that's reality. But it's like, you know, this is one of the greatest moments of American history. We're inaugurating the first black American president. And it's just historic to be here. And we're battling over, you know, standby pay and what kind of cots we're going to have to provide for people and what kind of meals and so forth. (laughs) Which I just kind of found odd and ironic, you know? But that was a lot different, but that's something we couldn't do differently, I guess, because of the union.

Rick Mossman: I can't think of many other things, looking back on it, that we would have done differently, to be honest.

Brenna Lissoway: That's got to be a good feeling.

Rick Mossman: Yeah. Yeah.

Brenna Lissoway: So, I'd like to maybe change gears a little bit and talk—

Rick Mossman: Could I just mention one other thing with the incident management team?

Brenna Lissoway: Absolutely. Yes.

Rick Mossman: We did a lot of other events. You know, I have to admit, I got to be on the incident management team the last 12 or 13 years of my career. Like I said, I was the ops chief and the last three years spent as incident commander. That was one of the highlights of my career because incident management worked so well. And the park service being the first federal agency to use it for all risk management. It wasn't until after 9/11 and Katrina that all these federal mandates came out that all federal agencies should use it and local and state had to start using it and that sort of thing. I think the National Park Service needs to be very proud that they were the

first agency using it, 25 years before it became a federal mandate or anything.

Brenna Lissoway: Why do you think the National Park Service was, I mean, what about the organization do you think it was so well adapted to using ICS?

Rick Mossman: Well, I'll be very blunt. I mean, it was all Rick Gale. He's the one that brought it, he brought it to the park service and said, by God, this works in wild land fire and makes things go so smoothly. Everybody understands it, whether they're a city official, a state official, a federal official. The forms and the common language and all that kind of stuff. And we can just adapt it to all other emergency services. Because of what we do as protection rangers in the park service, emergency services, it was very easy to adapt it, use the same forms and the same lingo and all that kind of stuff. The park service was ahead of everybody else by 25 years on it.

Brenna Lissoway: And just to clarify one thing, when you say the incident management team, there was only one team?

Rick Mossman: Yeah. Let me clarify that. When Rick Gale started in 19__, he formed a type 1 team in 1992. That was the first official team, and the first event they ever did was the planned event on the 50th anniversary of Pearl Harbor. Then the second event they did, and this was what really helped ICS take off in the park service was in 1992, when Hurricane Andrew hit the Everglades, Rick Gale flew in there with his Type 1 team. Just to give you an idea of the scope of the damage, they said that between headquarters and Flamingo, which is about 29 miles of road, there were approximately a million trees across the road. He brought in resources to clear the roads, get the buildings rehabbed. They took care of all the employees who lost their homes in Homestead. Everglades National Park was up and running long before anything else around there. It was kind of ironic because the park was already open, but nobody could get to it because there was so much damage outside the park and that hadn't been cleaned up yet.

Rick Mossman: That was so successful that after that, Rick Gale said we need to have Type 2 teams, which are teams that are a little under, the typing in ICS, the Type 2 team is folks with a little less experience, etcetera. Not as, supposedly as experienced as a Type 1 team. And we should have one in each region. So, in the mid '90s, the park service tried to have one in each region and get people on those teams. From about 1993 to about 1999, they kind of got fleshed out. It ended up being three, an Eastern team, a Central team and a Western team and an Alaska team. It's kind of changed over the years. But to this day, I know there's still pretty much, well now there's about four or five Type 2 teams, loosely based on regions in the country. And people come and go off those teams and so forth.

Rick Mossman: The idea was that if you had an incident, a planned event like a presidential visit or a park dedication, that they need a team to come in and manage the event, that you would do the ones in your region. And I'm

very proud that that inner mountain region with the ICS before me, Eddie Lopez, Sherry Collins, Danny [Zeman?], our team was so well functioning that that's why we ended up going to the inaugural in Washington and to Jean Lafitte in New Orleans, even though they were outside of our region, because we were able to put a team, because of the experience we had, we were able to go into those other areas and help them out. Which was a great feeling.

Rick Mossman: You know, the last incident I was on, well two of the last incidents I was on, one was the oil spill, the BP oil spill in the Gulf coast. We took the team down. We spent almost six weeks at Everglades headquarters. We were tasked with, how do we prevent the oil from hitting Dry Tortugas National Park, Everglades, Big Cypress, Biscayne and DeSoto? We were given the authority to do whatever we needed to do. We had to work with the Coast Guard and the park staffs. And we brought in a bunch of scientists. And ended up writing, you know, because at the time they said it's imminent all this oil's going to hit the Dry Tortugas and the coral reefs and the thousand islands of Everglades. Fortunately, it never did and still hasn't, but we were doing all these preventative measures. And also trying to figure out how we'd clean these areas up and whether you wanted to clean them up. And some areas you do more damage by trying to clean it up than by just leaving it.

Rick Mossman: It was very interesting. Especially working with the Coast Guard and BP on dealing with that whole thing. I don't think most Americans to this day realize the damage that, because most of it's underwater, the damage that oil spill has done. It could have been a lot worse. But that was incredible.

Rick Mossman: Then the last event I was on was after, and I like this because again, it kind of came full circle for me, where I started my protection career at Bandelier. Our team was asked to go back after the Los Conchos fire in 2011 and do the flood mitigation. Because the whole upper two-thirds of Frijoles Canyon, which is where the main park headquarters and the main archeological ruins are, was burned over. There in northern New Mexico you get the monsoons in late July and August, and there was a great fear. We brought in all these experts to say what's going to happen, what kind of flood are we going to have here? Based on all their data going back over a hundred years and looking at how much area had burned. It burned very hot, it burned everything. Even though, right down to within a mile of headquarters. They said, "You're going to have the biggest flood in the history of this canyon." They'd already had some major floods before, and the park had just made a three million dollar addition to their visitor center. They said, "You're going to lose it. Period. And here's what you're going to have to do to prevent all this from happening."

Rick Mossman: I'll never forget. We brought in a couple of Northern New Mexican Native American fire crews. I've never seen a fire crew work so hard in my life. Within 48 hours they had put out, I forgot how many of tens of thousands of sandbags. We had to piece by piece with a contractor take out a historic

bridge so that we could replace it, because they said it's going to form a dam and back up into the visitor center area. Again, it was imminent that it was going to happen, so we were working very quickly. Over about a 48 to 72-hour period, we got everything we could do in place. Sandbags, and remove this bridge. We removed debris so that when the water came down it would kind of flow right through and not stop anywhere. The canyon had been evacuated and was going to remain evacuated.

Rick Mossman: Then at that point, you know, the monsoons didn't come immediately, and it was a waiting game. Then we had to determine how, when's it going to be safe? We had to set up a whole new headquarters, administrative offices for the park so they could continue to function. And we moved out their maintenance building up on the rim of the canyon there.

Rick Mossman: Then we had to determine when we were going to let the public back down in there. So, we worked with the park to set up a shuttle system so people wouldn't drive down there. We set up a shuttle system. We put in early warning systems.

Rick Mossman: About a month later, the monsoons came, and the big flood came down. Fortunately, most everything was saved. There was apparently one log that kind of got caught up and did a little damage to the visitor center. But that was about it when the floods finally did come. We felt really good about that, that we were prepared in such a short time and that ultimately, we did prevent a tremendous amount of damage to the historic CCC structures there at park headquarters.

Brenna Lissoway: Mm hmm. Yeah, that is an interesting, one of your early parks to be able to go back and protect it in that way.

Rick Mossman: Right. It was fun to go back there and do that.

Brenna Lissoway: So, I want to talk a little bit now about, well, actually I wanted to give you an opportunity if you wanted to talk a little bit more about any accomplishments or challenges that you had at Wind Cave. Because that was the end of your career.

Rick Mossman: Right. Right.

Brenna Lissoway: We ran out of time last time to talk about that.

Rick Mossman: Yeah. I went over to Wind Cave as a chief ranger. Wind Cave National Park is one of those little parks that even a lot of park service people don't realize. It's interesting, a lot of park service people and a lot of people in that area call it Little Yellowstone. What was interesting about Wind Cave is on a day-to-day basis, driving to Wind Cave, I saw more wildlife than I did in Yellowstone. We talked about that yesterday.

Rick Mossman: But what was great about Wind Cave being a kind of small to medium-sized park, we had a lot of issues going on. We had, we wanted to – did I talk about the sewer lagoons?

Brenna Lissoway: You mentioned it.

Rick Mossman: Yeah. Lots of issues with sewer lagoons. Dealing with an overpopulation of elk, how we were going to do that. At the time, they used to round up the elk and ship them out, up until the early '90s—

Brenna Lissoway: Why? Why would they?

Rick Mossman: Well, the problem is that Wind Cave at that time was only about 28,000 acres. Since the 1920s or '30s, they would round up buffalo every year and ship them out and sell them, and also the elk. Because there's a fence all the way around the park. And so, the population would rise. There's no natural predators anymore. So that's how the park handled it.

Rick Mossman: Well then when the CWD, chronic wasting disease, was discovered, they stopped shipping out the elk. We still shipped out the bison. Like I mentioned before, Wind Cave has the purest DNA bison other than Yellowstone. We don't have brucellosis, so our bison are now being used to take to other park areas, to create the new private preserve in Montana. Nature Conservancy was buying them and so forth and so on, just to pay for the cost of the roundup is all we would sell the bison for.

Rick Mossman: But in any case, so since they couldn't ship out the elk anymore, the population has skyrocketed, as it was doing at Rocky Mountain and Theodore Roosevelt. We were going through the whole process of how we could get rid of the elk. Of course, there was all the political and public pressure to open it up to public hunting and things like that. That's one of the stands I took as a chief ranger. I said, "As long as I'm chief ranger here, I will fight tooth and nail to ever open this national park up to public hunting, because that's not what we do in national parks." Even though there's some instances where that's happened, and still happens, such as Grand Teton, where it was within the enabling legislation, but I said, "That's never going to happen as long as I'm here." (laughs)

Rick Mossman: Ultimately, we found other alternatives that are working. It's still kind of in the early stages. Building gates that they open up and close at certain times of the year so the elk will leave the park. We got game and fish to give out more elk permits on the forest service land around the park so more of the elk would be taken legally under sport hunting, which we all were very much in favor of. But you know, I just was not about to allow public hunting in any shape there in the park. That would just, I felt, set too many bad precedents. I know it's being done under controlled situations in certain areas. But personally, I'm totally against that. I'm glad we were able to prevent that from happening there at Wind Cave.

Brenna Lissoway: What about working with Native American groups there?

Rick Mossman: Okay, yeah, that's a very good question. We did a lot of consultation. Every project we did, we consulted with the tribes. In the park service when you consult with tribes, you have to consult with any affiliated cave. For Wind Cave, there's over 22 tribes that are affiliated with Wind Cave National Park. I mean, all the way down to tribes in Oklahoma, tribes in

Minnesota, Montana, Wyoming, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas.

Brenna Lissoway: Oh, wow.

Rick Mossman: So, these 22 tribes we would have to consult with on any issues. And part of this, keep in mind, that in the Lakota Sioux culture, Wind Cave was where the bison came from the underworld. And also, in their creation story, that's where they came from, was the hole in the earth of Wind Cave. So, you think of it in the terms of Wind Cave is as sacred to the Sioux as the sipapu is to the Hopis down in northern Arizona. The sipapu there in Grand Canyon National Park. Very sacred.

Rick Mossman: We had a sign there by the natural entrance, which is still there, the natural entrance. And the wind blows in and out very hard. That's why it's called Wind Cave. The park service created many years ago an artificial entrance where they take the cave tours down in there. We had a sign by the natural entrance that, to be blunt, basically said the cave was discovered by a couple of white cowboys in 1980, whatever. We realized and the tribes did not like that sign, because that's where they came from, in their culture, thousands of years ago and so forth. So, we took that sign down way back in 2004, I believe. We worked with these tribes. And I have to admit, we had meetings there at the park, and lots of letters and plans went back and forth.

Rick Mossman: One of the most intriguing things for me was, not having been around Sioux culture much before I moved there, was that every time we had a meeting, some representative would always present to us, since it was an official government meeting, present to us the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty that said all Indian lands west of the Missouri River still belong to the Sioux tribes. Because they are still suing for that. Because under that treaty, all of western South Dakota is still their land. The government has never bought it from them or anything like that. They just kind of came in and took it after gold was discovered back in 1874. So, they still contend that that's their land. So, every time we had a meeting, they'd present that to us as a petition, if you will, to say this is still our land, and have it on the official government record.

Rick Mossman: We'd have these meetings. Sometimes they'd be contentious. But usually we would work together to try to work through things. But it takes a long time. We finally got the new sign in at the natural entrance at Wind Cave last spring. Almost 10 years later. (laughs)

Brenna Lissoway: And that was based on just discussions between the park and the tribe, and what the wording was going to be?

Rick Mossman: Yeah. Right. Over the last 10 years.

Brenna Lissoway: So, it took 10 years.

Rick Mossman: It took 10 years. I personally haven't seen the new sign yet. But I know that it talks a little bit about their creation story. It also has the flags of

some of the tribes on the sign, also, and so forth. But it's more geared toward the real history, the true history, getting back far further than the Anglo-American history.

Rick Mossman: We'd also work with the tribes, it was kind of fun, you know – Wind Cave, not the only park, but one of the only two or three parks I know of where we allowed spiritual sun dances by the Lakota Sioux in the park. We had a couple of families, clans, if you will, that would come in and do a sun dance every few years, based on, there's a certain timing that they do that on.

Rick Mossman: One of the sun dances was always done by Russell Means. Russell Means was one of the original founders of the American Indian Movement back in the '60s. He was involved in the takeover of Alcatraz Island in the late '60s. And involved in the burning down of the Custer County Courthouse. A very controversial figure to a lot of people. He was one of the leaders at Wounded Knee. The Wounded Knee standoff in 1973 with the FBI and so forth. So, to work with him was very interesting. You know, he's kind of turned into, but he just died about a year or two ago. But he was involved with a lot of Hollywood movies later in his life and had his own film production company. He had a home in Albuquerque, New Mexico. But he also had his ranch on the Ogallala Sioux tribal land there in South Dakota.

Rick Mossman: He'd come in for the sun dance. It was always kind of interesting because he was a very political figure. If there were other people around, or cameras or microphones, you know, he always had to kind of bluster about white man oppression and things like that. But you'd get him one on one, when you had nobody else around, and he was a very nice human being and very, very knowing. I mean, he knew reality. Even though it may not have appeared that way on TV or whatever. But he was in that regard. So, it's fun being able to work with those folks. To have their sun dances.

Rick Mossman: One of the other sun dances in the park they actually allowed park employees to come to the sun dance. To parts of it. We couldn't go to all of it. I can remember going with the superintendent to one of them – and this was very moving – where they actually let us, the superintendent and I, go into the sacred circle with them and be blessed by the central cottonwood tree in there ceremonially. It was very moving to be part of this ceremony that's been going on for hundreds and hundreds of years of the Sioux tribe. And to be able to be a part of that. Because they wanted us and the staff to understand the culture and the meaning and so forth of that.

Brenna Lissoway: Real genuine outreach.

Rick Mossman: Right. Right.

Brenna Lissoway: Is there anything else at Wind Cave? Major accomplishments or challenges?

Rick Mossman: No. One of the opportunities I had at Wind Cave, and I just wanted to bring this up, only because it made me appreciate, I mean, I always have, but it really made me appreciate even more the history and culture we protect as national park rangers. For about six months I got to go down and be the acting superintendent of Fort Laramie National Historic Site. I had been through there as a tourist many years before, and I never realized the significance of Fort Laramie until I got down there. I was acting superintendent and I got down to this park and you know, it was a military fort from 1839 to 1890. I didn't realize it was the central place for all the military materiel and soldiers came through on their way to the western Indian wars during the 1860s. That's what most people think of at Fort Laramie. But again, it started in 1839 and was a major fort to protect the Santa Fe Trail, the California Trail, the Oregon Trail and the Mormon Trail.

Rick Mossman: I remember walking in the visitor center and seeing the passport stamp. In the visitor center, there are like five of them. I'm like, why are there five passport stamps here? Again, it was for five park areas right there. The California Trail, Oregon Trail, Santa Fe Trail, Mormon Trail and Fort Laramie. It was really amazing, the history. I just had no idea and got immersed in the history and culture there.

Rick Mossman: One of the things I really remember is walking with the curator there. He showed me around the historic buildings and some they have just stabilized; some they have replicated to what they were during the 1860s. I can remember we were in the vault looking at all these artifacts and so forth. He has me put on the white gloves and he's handing me swords and guns and things from that era. He hands me this document on this kind of parchment paper. He says, "This is just a typical commission where a captain's being moved up to a major. You can kind of read the standard wording." I'm holding this document and I'm reading it. And I get down to the bottom and it's signed, original signature of Abraham Lincoln. (laughs) I'm sitting there, I start trembling, holding this piece of paper, hoping I don't tear it. (laughs) He said, yeah, at that time, Abraham Lincoln, the president, had to sign all these commission things. To sit here and hold this document signed by Abraham Lincoln that we are protecting at that park, it just, I mean, again, brings back why we have national parks and why we have the mission we have.

Rick Mossman: That was really cool. Because most of my career has been in natural areas. So, to kind of come back to that after starting my career at Ford's Theater, and then to come back to that, to a historic area, really brought that value. It reminded me of all the, again, the historic and cultural things we take care of.

Brenna Lissoway: Can you talk a little bit about how you see the park service during your career changing in thinking about natural and cultural and, you know, how those things either come together or are separated in terms of management consciousness? This is a big question I'm trying to ask here, but—

Rick Mossman: Yeah. Right. It's interesting you say that. When I started out, I admit loving the outdoors and the resources. I wanted to work in the big natural parks. You know, the Yosemites, the Yellowstones. One thing I set out in my career, and I don't know if I said this yesterday. I may have. I wanted to work where I wanted to work. I never went anywhere in my entire career for the money. My father once told me, he said, "Don't ever worry about the money. Do something you want to do for your life." You'll figure it out money-wise.

Rick Mossman: So, in any case, I had offers in various places that I turned down. Because I wanted to work where I wanted to work. And I don't regret any park I've worked at. I guess what I'm getting at is early in my career people were saying, "Well, don't go back east, because you might get stuck there. Don't go do the Cannonball Circuit because you may get stuck there." Things like that. I think that's still out there, to a degree. So, there are a lot of people that don't go work in those areas.

Rick Mossman: If I was the director of the park service, personally, there's a number of things that I would change. Two of the things I would do, that I've always said throughout my career as I've grown, is one, I would make, like we used to do in the old ranger skills class, where we spent a week on each discipline, learning what the other folks do and having to immerse ourselves in an interpretive talk or a maintenance project or whatever. You know, if there was any way we could do it, any new park employee, I don't care what they're in, that they were able to go into some kind of field training and spend a month working in maintenance at a park, and a month working as an interpreter and a month working with protection. I know it costs money and this and that. But I think if you were to do that, we could all work together so much better towards our common mission that we all believe in. I mean, as we've heard folks say here at this conference and so forth, we're the most mission-oriented employees of any federal agency. We all have the same mission. That's why we're here. We all need to work together because we're all doing something to contribute to that mission. That's what we all want to do. But sometimes just because the way the system's set up, we're very separated.

Rick Mossman: The other thing I would do, the second part of that, is I wish there was a way, again, a training system in the park service where you could move around. Used to be back before, in the '70s and before, they moved you around, kind of like the military, every few years. We don't do that anymore. For some reasons, that's good. I think there's some reasons that's bad. But it would be great if there was a way that employees could move around and work at a historic site, work at a recreation site, work at a natural site, work at a cultural site, during their careers so they could kind of get the aspect of what I consider the four different types of management we do for park areas.

Brenna Lissoway: The four different types of management?

Rick Mossman: I divide the parks, and this is me personally, and I have seen it in writing in some places, that we have recreation areas, we have natural areas, we have historic areas, and we have cultural. Sometimes historic and cultural are combined. Most people combine those. I see those as two different things. Because we have a lot of historic sites that yeah, you could say they're cultural sites, also. But we also have cultural sites to define certain things that certain ethnic populations did. And I consider them more of a cultural site than a historic site.

Brenna Lissoway: Like an example would be?

Rick Mossman: Maggie Walker National Historic Site in Richmond, Virginia. I look at that more as a cultural site. Because it was this African American woman who through, and I can't remember, and I don't want to get this messed up, but I think she was a paraplegic. She started back in the 1800s she started the first black bank. And she called it the Penny Bank. She was trying to get African Americans to contribute money to build up some savings. I can't remember if it was before the Civil War or after the Civil War. I want to say it was before the Civil War. Ultimately her banks had more money in them than all the national, the other banks in Richmond, Virginia. I look at that site, that's historic, but I think it's more of a cultural thing than it is a historic thing. I guess that's what I'm trying to say.

Rick Mossman: But it would be good if people – because you know, I've worked in areas and like I mentioned before, yeah, I mentioned before how I've had employees who didn't think another national park should be a national park and had only worked in that one park their entire career. I think a lot of employees, just because they don't understand and they're ignorant of what a history park is all about or a cultural park and how we manage it. Back in the '70s, we had a separate management book for historic sites, a separate management book for natural areas, and a separate book for recreational areas. Different management policies for each of those areas. Fortunately, that went away and has all been combined now. But I think it would be great if there was a way that employees could be forced through their career to work in those different areas, so you'd have a much greater appreciation of what it's like in those other areas and the challenges that you deal with and so forth.

Brenna Lissoway: Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Yeah, that's interesting. So, I'd like to talk a little bit now about the Association of National Park Rangers.

Rick Mossman: Okay.

Brenna Lissoway: Talk to me about when you first became aware of that organization, and maybe when you first decided to participate.

Rick Mossman: Yes. I moved to Bandelier in 1979. Like I mentioned before, they sent me straight to FLETC to get a commission. That was pretty new at the time. And I learned about the organization. I honestly can't remember exactly

how, but I really wanted to go to one of these Ranger Rendezvouses. Unfortunately, there at Bandelier, unfortunately for that, fall is our busiest time of year, because we had a lot of elk poaching and so forth. So, I could never go.

Rick Mossman: But finally, in 1983, I got to go to Las Vegas, to the Showboat Hotel and the Ranger Rendezvous there. Another ranger and I from Bandelier went to it. I have to admit, the first thing I found great about it was I got to see these friends I'd had from Washington, DC, from Petrified Forest when I'd worked at Petrified Forest, when I'd worked at Buffalo River and when I'd gone to ranger skills. I got to see a lot of these friends who came to that Rendezvous. So, from a social standpoint, it was way better than a high school reunion. And it was a lot of fun. We just had a ball.

Rick Mossman: Then also to see these figures who I had never met that I had heard about. You know, the Rick Gales and the Butch Farrabees and the Dick Martins. You know, these kind of great rangers that were out there working at the time. And being able to go up and talk to them and meet them and so forth, and say, "I want to be like him when I grow up," (laughs) was just really fascinating. And just the whole aura about it, you know, that first Rendezvous. I bought a whole bunch of raffle tickets, I remember, from Rick Gale. I wasn't sure exactly how it all worked. But the, kind of the best prize they had, they held to the end, was one of the hand-carved ranger statuettes that Rob Arnburger made. And I won it. That was the only thing I won at that entire Rendezvous was this ranger statuette that was carved by Rob Arnberger. That was so exciting. It still sits on my mantle at home. (laughs)

Rick Mossman: I'm like, I really want to belong to this organization. So, I joined. I think that's when I joined. I may have been a member before, just had a membership. I really wanted to go back to the Rendezvouses. Just because of where I worked and the finances and stuff, I didn't go again till I was at Grand Canyon in 1988. It was at Snowbird Resort. A bunch of us from Grand Canyon went up to it – '87 or '88, I can't remember what year it was. Seeing everybody again, people from all over the country I'd worked with, and the whole social aspect, and hearing the speakers. Like I tell my academy students, there's nowhere else you're going to be able to go up and walk up to the superintendent of Yellowstone or Yosemite and sit there and talk to them or have a beer with them and talk about jobs and get mentoring and so forth. That's what's great about the Rendezvous.

Rick Mossman: Right after that, I moved to Alaska and I became a life member. I paid for a life membership. In about 1990, I think, or 1992, can't remember the date, I ran for, back then the organization was set up by regions, so I ran as the Alaska regional rep. And I won. So, then I went to the Rendezvous for the next five years. The first four years of that was as the Alaska regional rep.

Rick Mossman: Rick Gale was the president. And I am so happy I got to be the rep for the seven years he was president. Because he was such an incredible leader. At that time, ANPR, under his leadership, was doing tremendous things.

Brenna Lissoway: Like what?

Rick Mossman: Well, we were, I look back at the accomplishments ANPR did. They had raised the housing rents in Yosemite, they had raised the housing rents almost 400 percent, almost overnight. ANPR went to bat. Rick Gale, on behalf of ANPR, went back and testified before Congress and the rents were changed. I'm not sure exactly how that happened, but they did something to change that rent increase the park service did. He went back to testify at Congress on a number of issues. Sometimes not in line with the park service policy, but what we as field rangers felt was more important, to the point that I remember hearing that there were congressional delegates that said, "We put more stock in what ANPR testifies to than we do in what the National Park Service says." Because they realized that we were the field rangers doing the work of protecting the parks, versus the managers out of Washington. So, we had tremendous influence on Congress.

Rick Mossman: Probably the other biggest event during that time was the Ranger Futures. There was a lot of administrative cases going on where rangers and firefighters were fighting for the 20-year enhanced retirement that all of the federal agencies had. ANPR was right in the thick of that. We filed, and I talked to one of the higher managers back there then to make sure I get this right. But we filed a class action suit. ANPR was behind a lot of that. They helped with that. As I remember, over 650 field commissioned rangers signed that, which was almost half the permanent workforce of rangers at the time. Ultimately that went through in about 1994. Even though there were rangers that moved back to Washington – Jim Brady and Dick Martin and Rick Gale and Butch Farrabee and those guys went back to Washington to work in the Ranger Activities Office and help with that – without ANPR support and pushing, I don't know if that would have happened. So, I think ANPR deserves a lot of credit for that.

Rick Mossman: There were a lot of other issues where the ANPR has pushed the National Park Service and so forth. I used to always use that as a membership recruiting tool. Because employees have always asked, "What benefit do I get by belonging to the ANPR?" All I could say was well, we have this newsletter. But then I would try to say these are the intangibles. Your rent may be cheaper right now because of ANPR. You have 20-year retirement now, partly because ANPR was so involved in that issue. Things like that. It's hard to articulate those, what seem like intangibles to many employees. But there were many issues like that that Rick Gale took on the seven years he was president and we were behind him trying to support him on those things and so forth as representatives for ANPR.

Brenna Lissoway: Do you think ANPR is as active and as influential as it has been in the past?

Rick Mossman: I don't, yeah, I honestly don't think, I think we've lost, for a lot of various reasons, the amount of membership and some of the leaders we had back then. I think we've lost a lot of that. I don't think we're nearly as influential now as we were back then.

Brenna Lissoway: Why do you think?

Rick Mossman: The park service culture has changed in a lot of ways. I think in general in the park service, the way we have a major problem with leadership. That's been pointed out at this conference. Leadership at certain levels. Like I said before, I would not want anybody else as director right now, other than Jon Jarvis. But I think we have some major leadership problems at central offices and superintendencies. And as a result of that – I don't think we have as, we've lost a lot of membership in ANPR, and I just don't think we're as influential as we used to be. I think that has a lot to do with perhaps in the past the people we had as leaders in ANPR were higher levels within the park service than they are now. It's just because of who steps up to the plate. ANPR is an all-volunteer organization, it depends on who steps on the plate. Right now, we don't have a lot of high officials in the park service as leaders within ANPR, which we used to have. So.

Brenna Lissoway: This is really interesting. I want to follow up on. You said that the NPS has had a lot of culture change. Are there other things that stick out in your mind?

Rick Mossman: Yeah. And some's good, and some's bad. When I first started out in the park service, and for a long time, we had, it was a real tight knit family. I'm not saying it isn't now. But part of it was because most of the employees lived in the park. I can remember those incredible Friday night potlucks at Bandelier and Petrified Forest and Grand Canyon and getting together as employees and doing things. Everybody lived in the park. And you know, there was just this great culture. We were on this mission.

Rick Mossman: And what happened, and it's not anybody's fault, but you know, the economic recession in the late '80s and technology has gotten us to the point where now many people are working from their homes. Because all of us as families kind of want that American dream to own our own house, like I mentioned, I never bought a house to live in personally until I moved to Wind Cave at the age of 45 or whatever. A lot of people want that investment. So, since the '80s, a lot of people, you know, and the whole required occupancy has changed tremendously. I think that's a good thing to give people the option to buy a home and invest for their family in the future and so forth. But what that has done is it's made a disconnect between employees. Where you have people living outside the park, and the people living inside the park.

Rick Mossman: I really notice it at Wind Cave. Living outside the park, you know, I find out I was missing out on a lot of things going on socially and so forth after hours at the park because I didn't live in the park anymore. That's another one of those things that's just created because of placement and movement, that the employees aren't together that much on things. That's changed the whole social culture within the parks, I believe. I'm not saying that's bad. It's just part of our economics and people wanting to have a better life for their families and so forth, and not live in government housing or whatever. So, I think a lot of that has changed. And working out of the homes. Of course, with all our new technology, while we can work out of our homes or whatever, has caused a lot of that no longer face to face contact, and that personal touch, if you will, that we used to have that we've lost.

Brenna Lissoway: Mm hmm. Maybe just, anything else you want to say about how you think ANPR has changed over the years? Or maybe particularly commenting on Rendezvouses?

Rick Mossman: You know what I like about ANPR, we may have lost some of our influence with Congress and perhaps even the park service as an agency. But you know, the Rendezvouses have not changed. And that's what's great about them. I mean, I look at the Rendezvous. As we've always said, it's part professional and part social. Just being here this week, I have seen people, I saw one person I went to ranger skills with almost 35 to 40 years ago. It's the first time I've seen her since then. It's just wonderful to reconnect with all those people. It's wonderful here at this particular Rendezvous to see so many young people and to be able to talk to them and encourage them and so forth. So that has not changed in all these years of Rendezvouses. Which is great. You know, we still bring in good speakers.

Rick Mossman: I can remember in the past we used to have the secretary of the interior show up. Like how many times can you go up and offer the secretary of the interior a beer? (laughs) And be able to talk to him one on one. And speak pretty freely. Hear a presidential appointee. That's always wonderful. It's always wonderful when the director of the park service shows up, you know.

Rick Mossman: I can remember at the, I believe it was Myrtle Beach, and I believe it was Election Day. John Ridenour was the director at the time, and he pretty much knew he was going to be leaving, because the president he was appointed by was going to be not reelected. And he knew he was going to be out of a job that day while he's there speaking at the Rendezvous, which is kind of interesting. ANPR needs to keep, for the future, keep up the Rendezvous the way it is, the things we do socially at the Rendezvous. The raffles, all that kind of stuff. We need to keep having the sessions. I was just amazed the last few days watching how many people attended the various sessions on everything. And just some incredible sessions.

Rick Mossman: I mean, I found out yesterday one of the sessions was on a young man who was involved in a shooting where he almost died at the Arch in Saint Louis. I worked in the Midwest region at the time and I never heard about it. Never heard about it. He's still recovering from that in a lot of ways. And sounds like he got very little support from the park service in the whole thing, which is very unfortunate. I know a lot of the other old greybacks in the room came out very upset after hearing all this, how little support. It was like, what went wrong, what did we do wrong that this hasn't been fixed over the last 35 years. So, it's an opportunity to find out those things. Even us retirees to go back and say we need to help get some of this stuff fixed within the park service. Because it's been broken and still not fixed after all these years. So, it's tremendous at these Rendezvouses what we learn from and so forth.

Rick Mossman: Outside the Rendezvous, ANPR needs to still keep going, advising the National Park Service as the field ranger representatives of what needs to change, whether it's employee practices or events at parks or resource issues. I know that ANPR a few years ago, as an example, testified on, they were going to allow the Hopis to collect golden eagle eaglets at Wupatki National Monument. Of course, they are allowed to do that because that's part of their tradition. There are other places they can do that except, other than a national park, but it was my understanding more convenient there. ANPR was very vocal to testify in Congress against that, saying there are other areas this can be done. It doesn't need to be done in a national park, and ultimately, it was not. ANPR needs to be that field representative to help represent those issues and problems to the public when perhaps the agency can't because of politics and administration and that sort of thing. I think that's one of our big voices we have. You know, we need to really get out there and let people know who we are and so forth.

Rick Mossman: It's so exciting to have in 2016 the International World Ranger Congress here in the United States. That's going to be exciting. I think it will help out publicity for the association.

Brenna Lissoway: I'm going to pause right there.

Brenna Lissoway: Okay. We're continuing here, Rick. I wanted to have you talk a little bit about your involvement with the International Ranger Federation, is that right?

Rick Mossman: International Ranger Federation.

Brenna Lissoway: Federation. Right.

Rick Mossman: I was, again, I look back on my career and many times I felt my time was really off on jobs I missed out on or this or that. But I also have to remind myself that the timing was perfect for me on a few things. While I was on the board of directors there from '90 to '94—

Brenna Lissoway: Of ANPR?

Rick Mossman: Of ANPR. That's when the International Ranger Federation, we were helping create that. The International Ranger Federation is basically a federation of ranger organizations throughout the world. I remember when Rick Gale and Bill Halainen who were representing ANPR flew to England or Scotland and signed the original charter in 1992 with the Scottish Ranger Federation, that may not be the exact name, and the English Countryside Ranger Group, of these three countries, saying the rangers, we form a pact that we need to work together, and we're all on the same mission.

Brenna Lissoway: Do you know how that was instigated? How did they get connected?

Rick Mossman: I honestly don't remember. Some of the older folks, older than me that were around then, Bill Halainen would be the best person to ask on that. Who really should be part of these oral histories. Because he's the one that's been putting out the morning report since 1980 whatever and still is.

Rick Mossman: In any case, I'm not sure how that happened. I think it was through just some foreign travels and foreign connections and so forth. But in any case, they signed this charter and they said we ought to have a group get together of all the rangers and find out what happens in the rest of the world. In any case, so they signed this charter and they talked about having a ranger meeting a few years later somewhere in the world. And I was like man, I want to go do that. I want to go on this foreign trip and do that whenever that happens. That would be so cool.

Rick Mossman: In 1995 they had the – and we were going to the business meetings there and trying to come up with how we were going to support it money-wise from ANPR and things like that. It was interesting being involved with a lot of these discussions and so forth of this new organization.

Rick Mossman: In 1995, they had the first International Ranger Federation, what we called the World Ranger Congress, in Zakopane, Poland, which is kind of a ski resort area there in the Tatra Mountains of Poland. I had the great opportunity to room with Rick Smith, who was another mentor in a lot of ways for me. I got to work with him a couple of times on things. Not in a park, but on other national park issues, and ANPR issues. Another great leader in ANPR for many years.

Rick Mossman: In any case, we all flew, those folks that flew in, there was about 100 to 150 delegates at that first congress. There were about 30 or 40 of us in the United States. I was fortunate. I got an Albright fellowship. I was living in Alaska at the time. I got an Albright fellowship to go to it that paid my plane ticket. And I think I paid the rest.

Rick Mossman: I went to speak. And I got to speak at the first conference. What my talk was on was on subsistence use within the national parks in Alaska. Which of course that was a new, when the new parks were created in 1980, the idea of hunting and fishing in the parks for subsistence, that's a common

thing in the rest of the world, national parks. But that was the first time that happened in the United States.

Rick Mossman: So, I was going to speak on this. I had this nice little slide program and so forth. And they had this plenary session set up that there would be two speakers in each block. I got up and gave my talk and felt very proud of myself. Talk about subsistence uses. I had about, I don't know, 30 or 40 people there listening and so forth from around the world.

Rick Mossman: I should back up a little bit. We were all supposed to arrive in Warsaw, Poland, on the same day. Rick Smith and I both arrived at about the same time. We got together. There was some delegates, other people there, that were telling us where we should go. I can remember the first two people we met were two rangers from Amsterdam. One of them had been to Warsaw before so he took us right downtown and showed us all the sights, because we had a couple of hours before we had to get on a train to go to Zakopane.

Rick Mossman: What was really interesting, after he showed us all the sights, we went down to this train station where we were going to get on this train, and we still had some time to kill. So, we're sitting there, sitting around the table having dinner. The buses came in there. There was kind of a big open platform there, and everyone would come up this big staircase. We started watching. We'd watch the people come up the staircase. And you talk about how rangers are alike worldwide. People would come up, and we'd go, "That's a ranger." And sure enough, you know.

Rick Mossman: Many times, we were sitting there. We're not in uniform, or anything. The four of us were sitting there and all of a sudden somebody would walk up. They'd kind of look around and they'd look at us and they'd walk over, and they'd go, "Are you here for the ranger conference?"

Rick Mossman: And it's like, "Yes, we are!" (laughs) It was just amazing that even these people from all over the world, they could recognize these people and just know somehow, they were a ranger.

Brenna Lissoway: Can you at all possibly articulate what, why?

Rick Mossman: Well, what I discovered over the next week was, and it made me feel so good, and it's why I've stayed in contact and part, as little as I can, with the IRF, rangers are no different anywhere in the world. Rangers in every country in the world that I've ever met, have a mission, and it's the same mission we have. They are mission driven. They want to protect the rhino, they want to protect the castle, whatever it might be. We may be on totally different economic levels, but we all have the same mission. We have totally different cultures, totally different growing up, totally different, like I said, economic levels. But we all have the same mission in our heads. We are so similar as brothers and sisters, it's unbelievable. And that's what I really discovered during that first conference. It was just amazing. It was just amazing. Because you get to talking to these guys and having

dinner with them, I don't care if they're from India, Africa, Asia, Australia, South America, Africa, we were all alike. We were all alike. It was amazing. It's like you found all these lost friends.

Brenna Lissoway: Can you tell me a little bit about what other countries, other rangers' impressions of the United States are? Did you get a sense of that?

Rick Mossman: No, I really didn't.

Brenna Lissoway: And the way we do, the way our national park system functions and—

Rick Mossman: Yeah, I think, you know, they all recognize that we have the first national park. I'll say that. I guess they all looked at us saying, you know, of course we were pretty much the richest country in the world. And they looked at us as having the resources, begin able to do more to protect than their countries. To hear their struggles was just amazing. They asked for support in various ways. I think they looked at us as somewhat the leaders. But again, it's only because we were the first and we have the money and the resources and a lot of the political backing that they don't in a lot of those other countries. So, I think they looked at us like that.

Rick Mossman: But the point I'm trying to make is, the IRF was set up, I want to say this, for field rangers. It was set up for the rangers. It wasn't set up for the managers, necessarily. That's what was the common bond we all had. We were all field rangers there, for the most part, who had been out there as ground pounders, saving people's lives, stopping poaching, whatever we could do. We weren't the bean counters sitting in the big city, the political appointees or whatever. And that was the common bond we all had that we all respected about each other. We had been on the ground and seen it and done it. That was really the common bond that we all had. And we would discuss those things.

Rick Mossman: The point I was going to get back to about, I gave my speech about subsistence use, and I was very proud of it. And I answered some questions. The next person that got up was a ranger from Kenya, Daniel Onsembe, who's still a friend of mine. He gets up to talk about being a ranger there in Kenya. And he starts talking about his national park. He has refugees coming from five different countries into this national park to escape their country. And these people are trying to survive with their kids, you know. Eat. Trying to find food, trying to build campfires, just trying to survive. And he's having to try to deal with this and protect the resources, and not necessarily kick these people out but, you know.

Rick Mossman: After he talked, I felt about two inches high. (laughs) I said, you know, my problems are nothing compared to his problems. It was just inspirational to hear him talk and the issues he was dealing with in Africa, so much greater than the issues we're dealing with here in the United States.

Brenna Lissoway: Was there anything, because you went to several International Ranger Congresses, right?

Rick Mossman: Mm hmm.

Brenna Lissoway: In all those experiences, was there anything that you learned from an international ranger that you were able to bring back to the United States and implement? Or try out? I mean, were there lessons that you learned from them?

Rick Mossman: Yeah, there were. I think the biggest thing was to discover in most, not all, but most of the countries, how little resources they have in the sense of support from their country and their government to do the protection. As much as we sit here in the United States and we complain about not enough money and not enough tools that we may need to do our job here, I guess I thought I could do more with less, to a degree. Because these guys are doing stuff on their own, sacrificing their lives, literally, to save a rhino or an elephant or whatever. Far more dangerous than what I'm doing, and that I should be appreciative of my job and the tools I do have to do my job. You know, that was kind of probably the big thing I came away with. I also came away with we need to support those. I am very happy with all the work that ANPR has done. We kind of came away from Zakopane and I know [Einar Olson?] took the lead on trying to send uniforms over there. I sent a bunch of uniforms and equipment to the rangers in Chad and the Congo. Because they literally had nothing. Anything they got, they had to buy on their own. And it was just amazing.

Rick Mossman: But anyway, that first IRF conference was just to make those contacts. Then five years later, I got another Albright grant to go to the one in Kruger National Park in South Africa. Again, it was the same thing. It was bigger. More people there. The opening ceremony they had; kind of like Bob Krumenaker mentioned this morning when they talk about the world congress here in 2016. It was like the opening of the Olympics. A flag raising and all the countries there. Very moving. And to meet with all these people and be able to see this incredible national park with Kruger and it was a childhood dream to go to Africa, and to see that.

Rick Mossman: Again, these rangers. Going on field trips with these rangers and sitting there having dinner with them at night. My goodness. Even their personal lifestyles were no different than ours. (laughs) We were so much alike. All of us around the world as field rangers. The camaraderie and the personal, how not just in our, again, not just in our ranger lives, but our personal lives and our spiritual lives, we were all connected. We were all very, very similar. It made you feel so good knowing that these were the same kind of people protecting all these other places around the world.

Brenna Lissoway: Hmm. Sounds very inspirational. So, you know, I think you've discussed a few examples of this during our interview. But I wanted to give you one more opportunity in case there's something else that you really want to discuss. You know, during your career, you witnessed a lot of changes in the park service. Was there one in particular that you felt was really well handled by the agency? In terms of the way management changed? Or response to an issue? Anything like that?

Rick Mossman: I would say one of the changes I've seen over the last approximately 40 years is in, you know, you look at the history of the park service and we all, those of us who've been in the park service, and I've been a student of the history of the park service since I was literally seven years old. I've read most of the books, and still read many of the books written by former managers and employees, etcetera, on the history of the park service and all that kind of stuff, the background information.

Rick Mossman: In the '50s and '60s, there was such an incredible focus on recreation within the parks. There was a lot of very close calls where resources were compromised, in some cases there were some issues of it, in favor of public use. As we all know as park employees, the dichotomy we have in our organic statement of preserve, or conserve the wildlife and historic objects therein, and to allow for the benefit of the people, and of course all the politicians and the American public has always looked at that in different ways. No, they're for the people to recreate in and to see. No, they're to protect the resource, etcetera, etcetera. There's always been that dichotomy that we have had to deal with as managers and rangers. And in the '50s and '60s and into the '70s, it was all about recreation. With all the social upheaval we had in the late '60s in all realms, from the Vietnam War to, as I like to say, drugs, sex and rock and roll becoming a lot more public. And the American Indian Movement, and the environmental movement starting up in the late '60s, and all the great environmental rules we had implemented by both the Johnson administration and the Nixon administration. You know, endangered species, clean air, clean water, NEPA, all that kind of stuff.

Rick Mossman: I've noticed the agency when I was in it, the pendulum started swinging, to some degree. I mean I can remember a lot of those early managers who were more focused on the public and recreation. I can remember a manager visit at a training session once tell me about how they were going to build this great tower at Hot Springs National Park and what a wonderful thing it was going to be to have this tower. I'm thinking to myself, that's a really bad idea. And I was a young, dumb ranger. But I thought it was a stupid idea.

Rick Mossman: There is a tower down there. I don't know if that's the one. I think it's on private land in or on the edge of the park. But this manager thought it was a great idea to build this tower so you can look down on the park. Of course, at Gettysburg, we the park service bought the land out and tore down the tower that some private person had built there.

Rick Mossman: What I've noticed, I guess, is a lot of that older management thought of these tourist attractions and these public recreation and use, that's not what we're all about. We're about the resources. I've seen more, you know, we need to protect the resource. Whether we're talking a cultural, historic resource or a natural resource, that we need to protect those.

Rick Mossman: Even our recreation areas, which we all accept that yeah, those are made as recreational areas. Like a lot of people don't like jet skis, or personal watercraft, the correct term. There's been a controversy about allowing those in certain areas. And I, for one, yeah, we don't want to allow those in national parks and so forth. But you know, there are going to be national lakeshores and some or our recreation areas. Well, that's why it was set aside. Maybe the use is appropriate there. So, we deal with that.

Rick Mossman: But I think we have, as an agency, got more and more, and the managers we've had for the last 30 years realize, we've got to protect the resource. That's the number one goal. That's always been my philosophy. If we don't have the resource, we don't need to worry about protecting the people, because they're not going to come. So, we've got to protect the resource for the people. I'm one of those visionaries or whatever. Like I said before, I look at the big picture. And my vision is, I look at, we're protecting a national park for the next 10,000 years. Granted, there's going to be other changes in the world. But our national parks, you know, I want 10,000 years ago Yellowstone to look like what it does today, other than the natural climatic changes that may occur. Most people in our world, in our world of shortsightedness, people don't look at it that way. You know, I always contend, and I know I will offend people, but a thousand years from now, people will know about wars and generals and presidents. They won't remember those names. But if the national park is still there, they have that national park, and they'll remember the national park. That's why the cliché statement of the "national parks are America's greatest idea." And the greatest contribution we've made to the world. And it will continue that way. And I think that's going to be the greatest legacy of America.

Brenna Lissoway: Can you, is there something in particular that you see that the agency, can you put your finger on something—

Rick Mossman: Specific?

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah, specific, that really, that was part of this pendulum swing toward more resource protection? Something really significant in your mind? If not, that's okay.

Rick Mossman: I'm just trying to think. I think, you know, there's obviously the legislation we know about. We know about the 1978 Redwoods Act which, in that act, it talked more about preservation and preserving areas as one of those things we hold up as a law since the 1916 Organic Act to help us. I'm trying to think of, so many people have done so many things because of the pressures on the parks. You know, God, I can't think of anything off the top of my head.

Brenna Lissoway: What about something in your own personal experience?

Rick Mossman: Okay. You know, I look back. Yeah, I look back and I think one of the greatest victories I ever had is not, may not be a big deal to most people.

But I look at a personal victory where I made a permanent impact on the world, if you will. When I was in Yakutat, Alaska, like I said in the previous comments, a lot of what I was doing there was public relations and so forth. One of the things I discovered I had to do was to keep the forest service in check. The way the forest service worked there on the Tongass National Forest, whenever there were going to be projects, of course they had to go through the public process. But they all went through the public process by announcing that they're in Yakutat, a village of 500 people. And there was no newspaper, no radio.

Rick Mossman: One day I noticed something posted around town that the forest service was going to permit, was asking public comments to give a permit out to a local outfitter who wanted to build a bear hunting lodge on Alsek Lake. Alsek Lake is mostly in Glacier Bay National Preserve. Created in the 1980 ANILCA. When you go on this seven-to-13-day trip down the Alsek-Tatshenshini River from Kluane National Park or British Columbia and you come down either river, you get to the international boundary, Glacier Bay National Preserve on one side, Tongass National Forest on the other. You come down the Alsek River. You come into Alsek Lake. One of the few freshwater lakes in North America, there's others, where you can raft through it. You're rafting through icebergs, there's glaciers coming into this lake. It is phenomenal. It's one of the most incredible wilderness experiences you can have.

Rick Mossman: Then you get on the outlet of the lake and you go on down to the takeout point down in Glacier Bay National Preserve. No sign of man. There's forest there. What we call inter-glacial wood, which is big trees from the Ice Age that were covered by the glaciers that are now being exposed. These trees look like they have just fallen, but they're ten thousand, 12 thousand years old. Just a phenomenal place. I mean, you just feel like just, you can't get any more into the wilderness and the feeling of what you're looking at around there, it's just unbelievable.

Rick Mossman: So, this hunting outfitter wanted to build a lodge right on the edge of that lake where the outlet was, on forest service land. I was outraged. I called the park superintendent; I said what was going on. Again, they just advertised [unclear] and they were just going to rubberstamp the permit.

Rick Mossman: So, I took that permit announcement the forest service put out and I faxed it to every Canadian river outfitter that floated the Alsek River, and every American outfitter that floated the Alsek River. And I faxed it to them. I faxed it to a few other people. And within 24 hours, I know that the owner of one of the largest and oldest kayaking and rafting companies in Alaska walked into the forest supervisor's office in Sitka, Alaska, and said, "What the hell is this?"

Rick Mossman: The whole project was stopped right there. That lodge was never built. That wilderness protection of that lake is there. There's no manmade lodge on it or anything else. That was probably, in the big scheme of things,

personally one of the greatest victories I ever had. Because if I hadn't faxed that thing out to all those outfitters and let the public know what was going on, there's no question that lodge would have been built there, and there'd be motor boats running out of that lodge on that lake. And hunting going on around it and so forth and so on. So, you know, to this day I'm very, very proud of that. (laughs) I admit, I got into a lot of—

Brenna Lissoway: Did you get into trouble for that?

Rick Mossman: I did not get into trouble from the park by any means. The park service totally supported. All I was doing was giving public information out. I mean, that's all it amounted to. But the forest district ranger and the forest service employees were very upset at me for doing that. That was okay. That was fine. I said, this is wrong, and I'm going to do whatever I can to make it right.

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah. Yeah. Wow. So, I asked you about changes that you witnessed in the agency. Can you look back at any point where you feel like there was a missed opportunity for the agency? Or even with some situation in a little more local level, at a park that you were at, that you wished had been taken advantage of or had gone differently?

Rick Mossman: [pause] Oh, man.

Brenna Lissoway: I know, that's a big question.

Rick Mossman: Yeah. Well, I'll give a good example. Wind Cave National Park. A very small national park. Incredible resource. To the north is Custer State Park, 75,000 acres, beautiful park. Bison, elk, nice mountains, forest. The crown jewel for the state parks in South Dakota and so forth. There's been a couple times where the state has offered to give that to the National Park Service and make it a part of Wind Cave National Park. As late as about 11 or 12 years ago, there was a push by the then-governor to push that over to the park service. The park service basically said no. Now granted, that's kind of political things, perhaps above the park service. But I think that was a missed opportunity to create an incredible national park with over 100,000 acres. I think that was very much a missed opportunity.

Rick Mossman: There's other things the park service can do. I'm a big proponent of public land. As our population keeps increasing, we need more public land. We need more parks. That's the only way we're going to protect areas. We're so land blasted by the outside environment around our parks that we're becoming islands, as has been pointed out many times, and that's very sad. We need to try to keep working towards these wildlife migratory corridors or whatever it might be and look at the broad big picture of ecosystems. We were doing that to a little degree, but maybe we need to be a bit more emphasis on that. Because we can't keep some of these islands forever. They just aren't sustainable as an ecosystem because they are, again, the big picture, too small.

Rick Mossman: I think we need to embrace, when appropriate, the idea of new national parks. Like I mean, to me it's a no-brainer to create a North Woods National Park in Maine, especially if the land is going to be donated to us. And then instead of staying out of the process, we as both ANPR and the National Park Service should be more involved in that. You know, all the controversy about the Antiquities Act and the Presidential national Monument Proclamations, I personally think it's wonderful. I'm glad to see President Obama creating these national monuments. I might say that, and again, it's just my personal bias, I would like to see when he's creating these monuments, I would like to see them run by us. I mean, I'm obviously prejudiced for the park service. The first two national monuments that were created that the park service did not run, I may be a little off on this, there may be some other examples, were Admiralty Island and another one I can't think of, up in Alaska, under ANILCA.

Rick Mossman: Then of course when Clinton created all the new national monuments as he left office, those were kept under the forest service or the BLM. Nothing against those agencies, but we are the pros at it, and I think we should be administering those areas.

Brenna Lissoway: Do you have any concerns about being stretched thin as an agency?

Rick Mossman: I do. I do. And you know, I know, I guess I've heard that from managers over the years, that we already were spending all this money, and we're getting stretched too thin. We don't want any new parks. I look at it like we have an opportunity here to protect something that if we don't, we're going to lose forever. So, what's more important? Protecting it now and forever, and yeah, being a little thin managing everything. Or just say, forget it and get a bigger budget and maybe do a few more things in other parks. Build a new road, build a new visitor center. But we've lost this other thing forever. It's permanent. It's gone. So, I'm one that says we need to protect these places, and that's a higher priority in my opinion. Yeah, it hurts us all in management, and we get frustrated, and we don't have the, we have the billion-dollar backlog of maintenance and that sort of stuff. But we've got to preserve these areas. It's like the wilderness. We need to get, not just in park land, but other land, as much wilderness, in my opinion, as we can get. Because once it's gone, it's gone forever. It's not coming back, for the most part. I think we're still in that beginning evolutionary stage of parks and wilderness, etcetera. We haven't got there yet. Nothing's been completed. A lot of politicians say we're done. There are no more. But it's like, I think we have to keep going with that. We still have a lot of places to protect. And we have a lot of work to do to get total watersheds or ecosystems or whatever we can do protected. And we need to do that, because once they're gone, they're gone forever. And I don't think people realize that.

Rick Mossman: I think it's a real misnomer for politicians to say we're done creating national parks when we have so many historical and cultural things. We're going to be protecting presidents' homes for as long as we have presidents

in this country. So, we've got a lot of national parks coming down the pike. I mean, they may not be big natural areas, but they may be historic areas of whatever. The National park Service is going to continue to grow. That's just a fact of life, and people have to accept it. (laughs)

Brenna Lissoway: Along that same line – this is going to be my last question – you know, there's been a lot of emphasis about the next generation, the new generation of park managers and park custodians, and what the park service really should be focusing on, recruiting and retaining these people. So, what bit of advice would you give to a new person thinking about a career in the park service, or who is pursuing a career in the park service? What do you think is the most important thing that you could pass on from your experience to them?

Rick Mossman: That they need to learn and become educated with the resource. Whether it's historic, or nature, they need to get out on the ground and learn and understand it. And be committed to it. I tell my prospective rangers at the academy, I say, you have to go into this with a mission. Even if you don't agree with certain aspects and policies we have in the park service, like maybe you think we should have hunting in certain parks, you have got to go in with the mission that we don't allow that, and that you have to uphold that policy or whatever.

Brenna Lissoway: Even if they don't agree with it.

Rick Mossman: Yeah. Let me rephrase that. Yeah, there are certain things that you have to be committed to, what I would call the holy rules of the National Park Service, if you will. One of them is no hunting in national parks and monuments. No logging in national parks and monuments. I always tell people, one of the things I preach and teach wherever I go is unlike all other federal agencies, our mission is preservation. Other federal agencies have multiple use missions. Which is fine. But our mission is preservation. We have less than, I think, one-tenth of one percent, or whatever it is, of this nation's land. There is no reason that this country, we can't protect that small amount of land to the highest standard there is out there, and we have to hold that sacred.

Rick Mossman: I went through the whole seven years I was at Yellowstone, and there was all this push to open up more and more to snowmobiles. I used to advocate to snowmobilers and tell them, "You have got the entire northern half of the United States, public land and state land to go snowmobile on. You have got all this private land out there that if private owners are willing, to go snowmobiling on. Why do we have to have Yellowstone, which amounts to a tiny fraction of that amount of land, why is it so important to open it all up to snowmobiling?" We have to hold these areas of the National Park Service to the highest standard for preservation. We want them to look the same in ten thousand years, other than climatic changes and things like that. And we're not talking about that much land. We really have to get that out, that the national parks are the most sacred lands

in the United States. More so than all the other federal lands, which have their own missions and multiple use, and that's an important thing. We need to get the timber and the minerals and so forth. Those other agencies have done a good job trying to preserve and conserve certain areas. But you know, to me, it's a no-brainer. I don't understand why people want to come in and do things in park, extractive resources, why we still fight those battles when we're not talking about that much land, and we have all that other land we can do that on.

Rick Mossman: So, getting back to the original question, which was—

Brenna Lissoway: Just advice to the future.

Rick Mossman: Oh, yeah. So, the folks need to get out and be in touch with the land. Just one real quick story. About four years ago, we were hiring our summer seasonals. Two of the candidates we were looking at were in Franklin, North Carolina, in the seasonal law enforcement academy there at Sylva. I called one of them up and said, "I have this job. Are you interested?"

Rick Mossman: And he goes, "Well, I just accepted a job at Mount Rainier."

Rick Mossman: I said, "Well, stop right there. If you've already accepted a job, I'm not even going to offer you the job, because you've already accepted a seasonal job."

Rick Mossman: We called the other person, and the other person did accept the job.

Rick Mossman: The next day I get a call back from the first person. And he says, "Well, I know you hired so and so, and you still have another job. I want to talk to you more about that because I really am interested. Because the problem is, the job they're sending me to at Mount Rainier, I'm going to be in a cabin and there's no Wi-Fi and no cell service. And do you guys have Wi-Fi and cell service there at Wind Cave?"

Rick Mossman: And I just paused for a moment, I was so – I couldn't believe it. And I said to him, "I'll tell you what. You come be the chief ranger here at Wind Cave and I will go take that job at Mount Rainier without the Wi-Fi and the cell phone." (laughs) Because I just couldn't believe that his priority, this seasonal ranger, his priority was to have cell phone and Wi-Fi service, instead of working at this incredible back country cabin in Mount Rainier National Park. (laughs) You know? I guess I would say the new generations, we all see it with our own children and so forth, you know, the technology and the cell phones and the texting and all the social media. It's all great stuff. But we are losing touch with the natural world. The younger generation is. So, I would tell the up and coming folks, you've got to put away the cell phone. And you've got to get out and learn the resource and understand it and feel the wind and smell and those sorts of things and get back to the resource.

Rick Mossman: If it's a historical thing, the same thing. You need to go in there and understand the history there, and what all went on and why we're protecting this place and what it meant to this country and to the world.

And if you're just worried about your technology and getting your texts out, you're going to miss out on all that, and lose all that.

Brenna Lissoway: Well thanks so much, Rick. This has been terrific.

[END OF TRACK 3]

[END OF INTERVIEW]