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Jenny Matsumoto
October 28, 2016

Interview conducted by Lu Ann Jones
Transcribed by Teresa Bergen
Digitized by Casey Oehler

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ANPR Oral History Project

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

Audiofile: MATSUMOTO Jenny 28 Oct 2016

[START OF TAPE 1]

Lu Ann Jones: So Jenny, why don't you give me your full name?

Jenny Matsumoto: Jenny Teresa Matsumoto.

Lu Ann Jones: And where were you born?

Jenny Matsumoto: I was born in Denver, Colorado.

Lu Ann Jones: Let's see. And what year were you born? Do you mind telling me?

Jenny Matsumoto: No. I was born in 1956.

Lu Ann Jones: All right. So, let's see what we—

[END OF TRACK 1]

[START OF TRACK 2]

Lu Ann Jones: Another test. So, tell me a little bit about your family.

Jenny Matsumoto: I am actually, I was thinking about this. I'm like two and a half generations. My father was the firstborn in California, United States. And my mother actually immigrated after the war. So I figure I'm kind of one and a half or two and a half, something like that, generation. But I have that experience of when I went to high school and I said, "I need to buy the yearbook—"

Lu Ann Jones: I'm going to move the recorder up and let you test this a little bit. Yeah. You need to buy the yearbook. Uh huh.

Jenny Matsumoto: They asked me what it was. And I didn't know what it was. I just said, "But everyone's buying one. I think I need to get one." (laughter)

[END OF TRACK 2]

[START OF TRACK 3]

Lu Ann Jones: Let's see what we got here. So, you were talking about getting a high school yearbook.

Jenny Matsumoto: Yeah. And I got one. And that was a weird thing to me. I didn't understand the whole concept. But I have it. So, it was good that I kind of laid the path for my sister. Yearbook, prom stuff, all those weird things that happen in high school that my parents didn't go through, necessarily. Because my dad was interned.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow.

Jenny Matsumoto: I think he went to high school, but he had that in his mid to late teen years.

Lu Ann Jones: And where was he interned?

Jenny Matsumoto: At Poston, in Arizona. So, I don't remember which camp, because there's multiple camps at Poston. Yeah, so it was all those things. Even now, people use common American phrases, and I'll just go – they're familiar to me because I've heard so many people use them. But it's like, what is that, you know? What does that mean? Where does that come from? Don't look a gift horse in the mouth or something. I just—(laughs)

Lu Ann Jones: Okay. [Lu Ann Jones adjust audio recorder and microphone in an effort to eliminate a hiss.]

[END OF TRACK 3]

[START OF TRACK 4]

Lu Ann Jones: So, I'm going to start, not start over again, exactly. But I do ask people on the tape, I'm going to ask you to sign what we call a release form that says you agreed to do this interview, that ANPR can transcribe it and can use it for educational purposes and so on. But I do like to get on the recording a verbal consent that this is okay with you.

Jenny Matsumoto: Oh. Yes, yes. It's okay. I'm giving my permission.

Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) Thank you. And I always say, too, even though I don't think I've ever asked anybody a question they didn't want to answer, but if I should ask you a question you don't want to answer, you're under no obligation to answer the question that—

Jenny Matsumoto: Okay.

Lu Ann Jones: It's totally voluntary.

Jenny Matsumoto: Okay.

Lu Ann Jones: So, you were born again in Denver in 1956. How did your family get to Denver? Had your parents grown up in California?

Jenny Matsumoto: My dad and his family, when they immigrated to the United States, they were in a place south of Fresno. And that's where my dad was born. But after they were interned in Poston, they needed workers in Colorado because so many of the men were involved in the war. So, my father and his two oldest brothers were allowed to go to Colorado to work in the fields, and then once the rest of the family, he's one of ten kids, were released, they decided to all go to Colorado. Because I think they were even encouraged not to go back to California. So that's where all of my dad's siblings who are still alive are still living in Colorado. My mother, during

the American occupation, her two sisters married American servicemen in Japan. Her oldest sister, who basically raised her because they were orphaned when they were young – not anything due to the war, just health reasons from my grandparents – she developed TB and the Red Cross contacted my mother in Japan. They thought she was going to die at that time, so they worked it out to bring her to the United States, and her sister happened to be living in Colorado. She recovered, and because my mother's immediate family were all in the United States, she didn't want to go back to Japan. So, she stayed, and she met my dad. It was real interesting because she said, she remembers her father saying, "If you marry a farmer, you'll never go hungry." So she said that's why she married, my dad was a farmer.

Jenny Matsumoto: It didn't occur to me, it took me a while to put together all the pieces that probably during the war there were times when it was really hard to get food for her in Japan. And so, they got together. And my father continued to farm all his life.

Lu Ann Jones: What was he growing?

Jenny Matsumoto: In Colorado, it was sugar beets and corn. And then when we moved back to California, it was almonds, peaches and grapes in the central valley. So eventually he converted it all to almonds or sold off the grapes and peaches. But that's what he did until his mid-eighties. Then he had a stroke, and had to all of a sudden stop farming, which was very difficult. But, yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, how did you get interested in natural resources and biology? The kinds of things that you pursued.

Jenny Matsumoto: I wanted to go into archeology, and that had to do with watching – my parents got magazine subscriptions to National Geographic. That's when Richard Leakey was just really big, and I just wanted to go someplace different and do something different. And that time period, I remember in high school, even a high school counselor telling me, "Oh, you shouldn't do that, because it's just like digging ditches. You should go into teaching or nursing." A more conventional women's career.

Jenny Matsumoto: Then after college, we lived in the Central Valley, not too far from Yosemite and not too far from Merced. There's a junior college up in the foothills in Sonora, California, and they had a natural resource program. Some friends were going there, so I took off and went there. And on a dare, I got involved in a rock climbing class. And we went to Yosemite. I majored in wildlife, and it just sort of evolved from there.

Jenny Matsumoto: My parents were appalled. Because I think they wanted me in a more traditional field, also. They also wanted me to be successful, and they couldn't see how this was going to be successful. Whereas if I were a teacher, a lawyer, a CPA or something like that, they could see that I would be okay and taken care of. But

when I started rock climbing, I would get these letters from my mother. They weren't even letters. They would just be a newspaper article about the latest climber that was killed in Yosemite. (laughs) It was so funny, because I'd open up this envelope. That's all there would be. And it's like her subtle way of saying, you should stop doing that. (laughs) You could die doing that.

Jenny Matsumoto: But yeah, so it's sort of haphazard. It wasn't – and it was also during the seventies, so environmental issues were in the news and up front. And my parents always had, not only National Geographic, but Life magazine and Time magazine. So those were the things I was reading about and listening to on the television. So, I think that was an influence, also.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah, I was, you're right. I mean, the seventies, I talked to a woman, Laurel Munson Boyers, who was there [at Yosemite National Park].

Jenny Matsumoto: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: Do you know her?

Jenny Matsumoto: Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: And talking about the seventies as just the heyday there in Yosemite in terms of backpacking and the real beginning of rock climbing as a sport.

Jenny Matsumoto: Mm hmm.

Lu Ann Jones: Were there any other women who were rock climbing at that time?

Jenny Matsumoto: Not many. And I got so interested in it, I became one of the aides for the instructor. I climbed mostly with these two guys that were good at pushing me. I mean, otherwise, I would have been fine to never learn how to lead a climb. And in fact, yeah. So it was that experience.

Jenny Matsumoto: In fact, they got this crazy idea that we should climb McKinley. I ended up actually going and getting a job at the concessionaire when it was still McKinley. Fortunately, we didn't do it. Because I started thinking, I don't think I can do that. You know, I can do the rock climbing and so many pitches and all that stuff. But I wasn't really ready for the big mountaineering kind of ice axe, self-arrest kind of thing. But it did get me up to Alaska during a time period when there was still space on the shuttle bus. You didn't have to worry about not getting on the shuttle bus. And it was a pretty magical time.

Jenny Matsumoto: And actually, that's where I met Laurel's parents. Her mom was my supervisor when I was, for my two summers with the concessioner.

Lu Ann Jones: Oh, really?

Jenny Matsumoto: And her dad ran the shuttle bus program. The second summer, one of my jobs was to gas up the shuttle buses overnight so they'd be ready to go in the morning. But yeah, that was funny. When my husband got to mention Laurel, I was like, Munson, that name sounds so familiar. (laughter) I think I worked for her parents. So, yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: So, you had that contact with the park service. So how did you decide that you wanted to get into the park service?

Jenny Matsumoto: This is something I've always felt a little guilty about. Because when I used to be an instructor in training, and you do that where "so what got you?" "Oh, when I was little, my parents took me to a national park. We went to a park ranger program, and I knew that's what I wanted to be." We did go to national parks growing up, but that's not where it started. It sort of after working in Alaska, I didn't know where I wanted to go back to college. I had a friend who was going to Humboldt that I met. She said, "Why don't you come to Humboldt?" I still needed a few more units before I could transfer. So, I went to a junior college in Eureka, and then I transferred to Humboldt. Humboldt is the park ranger college. I mean, they actually had a program called Natural Resources Planning and Interpretation. I got involved with that.

Jenny Matsumoto: Then I got a work study job working in the student employment office. And I had a great supervisor. One of my jobs was to post all the new vacancies that came in. She pulled one out and she said, "You need to apply to this. This is really good." It was the co-op position that the National Park Service had at that time.

Jenny Matsumoto: So, I applied and I was selected. I started working seasonally at Lassen. And I loved it. I worked with great people. I loved the park. It was a perfect first park. Small, but a lot of varied programs. I thought yeah, this is it. I think this is it. I'm going to do this. And so.

Lu Ann Jones: What kinds of programs were you doing that summer?

Jenny Matsumoto: I think this was taboo, but we still did it was, I did living history program. My friend that I used to do it with, we had a line that I would use. Because she would say she was from Indiana, and I would say, "And I'm from the Far East." Because we wore the dresses and the bonnets. And we had live oxen that were really scary to work with sometimes. And we had a covered wagon. But it was talking about the settlers who came across the immigrant trail, which is part of the area that Lassen covers. And we also did campfire programs. And we did long hikes and short hikes. We did visitor center work. It was kind of at the height of interpretation, because we could do so much. We did Junior Ranger programs. And because there wasn't a lot of definition of other than living history, you were supposed to be more true to the fact and not have Asians playing new immigrants. But you could do anything. I worked with really creative people, and we did really creative things. And that's probably part of the hook that kept me involved was that, oh, we can do these amazing things.

Jenny Matsumoto: I remember we created, my friend and I, she created these two characters, Dr., Professor Andrea Andesite. It was another geology name. We talked about what minerals are, versus rocks, and minerals are made out of potassium. It's just like, well what has potassium? Bananas. So, we would have this machine that we made up. We'd throw a banana in it. And all these particles that were minerals. And out would come this rock that was found in Lassen. And we just did these crazy things. And no one ever said no. It was just try it and see what happens. So, it was a great atmosphere to work in. It still, to this day, I don't know if it was my first park syndrome, but Lassen is one of my favorite parks, still.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, how did you, once you got into interpretation more fulltime, and you say in Lassen it was fairly informal in terms of you could do a variety of things. Was there a time when you got more interpretive training, or kind of imbued with a philosophy of interpretation education in the park service?

Jenny Matsumoto: That happened after, I had three seasons at Lassen and then I graduated. My first permanent job was at Saguaro. And that's when I was getting, that was the start of the interpretive skills courses. So, I had interpretive skills one, two and three. I remember going to Albright, and to Harpers Ferry to take those classes, and became very interested then in becoming a skills instructor. So that sort of encouraged me doing that. But it was an eye opener to go from a seasonal to a permanent job. And then, at Saguaro at that time, the law enforcement district ranger oversaw the interpretive program. And he didn't know that much about, I mean, he knew about what happened. But it was, his main focus was law enforcement.

Lu Ann Jones: Right.

Jenny Matsumoto: Because we had a lot of crazy law enforcement issues there in the west district. It wasn't that I got a lot of guidance. It was just like oh, thank goodness you're here, and here's your office and here's this box of files and go for it. They had a huge volunteer program. They only had one paid seasonal who was a GS-2, who was actually acting in my position. This was before Ranger Careers. So, I was a district naturalist, and I was a GS-5. And the GS-2 was acting until they hired me. But that's where I finally got a little more understanding of the role of interpretation and the training, and a little more guidance, especially once I started going through the different interpretive skills courses. I never went to Ranger Skills or anything like Fundamentals. So, it was sort of hit and miss. But through those classes, I met a lot of other interpreters who had more experience and were kind of someone to bounce ideas off of and talk to.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, what do you think makes a good interpreter? Or let's say at that point, what was considered good interpretation.

Jenny Matsumoto: I think it hasn't changed that much, because the focus, because we were in Tucson was still trying to do some outreach. We had such a small staff, we didn't do a lot. But providing information and trying to connect with the visitor where they were

at. In fact, prior to my getting there, they didn't have interpretive training for the volunteers. So, we had volunteers that were saying, "Well, you're not supposed to walk your dog on the trail, but I'm not going to see that." (Lu Ann Jones laughs) So I brought in some instructors. I had a bit of a rebellion. I mean, I did have some volunteers just outright quit after that, because I was pretty insistent that you tell the truth, and the truth is, you can't have dogs on the trail and all these other things. But I think it was still to communicate the mission of the park service, and to get people to understand what the difference was.

Jenny Matsumoto: One of the challenging thing for us at the Southwest at that time was our uniforms were identical to the border patrol. So, it was important to delineate even with the community that we might look like them, but we're not them. And our mission is completely different from theirs.

Jenny Matsumoto: There were a lot of resource challenges. Law enforcement had people always taking target practice on the cactus, and out there on park property. So it was, a lot of education. Letting people know what was going on.

Lu Ann Jones: One of the things that I noticed that even though we talk a lot today about youth engagement, that youth engagement was part of your park service career all along. So, can you talk about that? You were dealing with fourth graders and that kind of outreach. Does that make sense to you as a question? Because I think again, this whole youth engagement that we are very big on now, but again, it doesn't seem like, it's a new phase of a longer trend, it seems.

Jenny Matsumoto: Yeah, in fact, I think that's one thing I've noticed being in the park service is that with every new generation of employees it seems like a new initiative. But it's just an old initiative repackaged in a different way. Sometimes it has funding, sometimes it doesn't. But, no, I think youth initiative has always been important. I think sometimes with initiatives, it's a good idea and it comes out with a lot of PR from the Washington office, but it doesn't come with a lot of support and funding. So, you felt like here was something you had to try to be successful at, but you didn't always have the background. But someone somewhere got to check it off their list. I think it's one reason it keeps coming back is that it hasn't been supported well enough. I feel like part of the goal of reaching out to youth is to not only create a more diverse visitor population, but to also try to create a more diverse workforce in the park service. But I feel like this was going on in the '80s when I started at the park service, and it still is struggling to meet both those goals.

Jenny Matsumoto: One real eye opener for me was actually when I had to resign from the park service; I went and taught in Vancouver, Washington. That was such an eye opener. I felt like every park service employee should spend at least two months in an urban environment with where their visitors tend to come from. Because it made all sense why they do the crazy things they do, and why the think what they do. You can get so sort of protected when you're working in the park, and you live in the park. Because most people have the same values and thoughts and

appreciate the same things and do the same activities. So, you're a little bit isolated and insulated. Where when you're in an urban environment, and this might be different for those people who work like in Santa Monica Mountain or Golden Gate. There's this whole other world out there, and people don't like the park service or the government. I learned a lot about kids and where they're coming from. I felt that if you're at Yellowstone, people wanted to come to you. They really wanted to come to you. But that was not necessarily the case for kids who lived in Tucson. Because Saguaro was right there. Yeah, we've been there, we've seen a cactus. Show me something I haven't seen. It's the same thing with some of the other parks I've worked at where we're dealing with the gateway community. The kids are very familiar with what is in their backyard. They aren't interested. Some are, but some aren't.

Jenny Matsumoto: My most successful outreach program was at Sequoia and Kings Canyon where I went to a community that was only 20 minutes from the park, but largely Hispanic population. The majority of kids have never been to the park, even though we were that close. And I had these horrible slides. I mean, you know the kind of slides where they're old and discolored, where the bear looks more orange than brown. I thought, oh, this is just going to take up 10 minutes going through these slides kind of quickly. It took me 45 minutes because they had all these questions. They couldn't believe they were that close to animals like bears and mountain lions and that was a positive experience not only for the kids but for me, because it made me realize what we could do and who we really needed to focus on and try to reach.

Jenny Matsumoto: But then there was that whole thing about the cost of our entrance fee. It didn't seem like much to us. And we always did that thing like oh, you know, that's a cost of three lattes, or whatever. But some of these families, they really struggle. There are families whose parents are migrant workers and working in the fields. It was a big deal. Even though we tried to develop these free pass things, there was the cost of gas, and it was still a drive. And it was driving on a windy road, and there were all these unfamiliar, scary things about the park. It wasn't how they usually spent their social time.

Lu Ann Jones: Right.

Jenny Matsumoto: I think one of the reasons why these outreach programs aren't always successful is that we're not, we're trying to bring them where we're at, and where we're coming from, and I'm talking about the park service. Instead of seeing where they're at. And what do they want. So maybe if we want more student interns, they don't want to live where there's no cell service. So maybe we could say, "Did you know you can go work at Golden Gate? Or Santa Monica Mountains? It's an urban area. It's in Los Angeles or San Francisco." And, "Really?" They want to get out of the Central Valley, and they want to go there. They don't want to go to something that's even more remote than where they're living. I think that we need to kind of recognize that. Eventually maybe if they do work at Golden Gate and they have a positive experience, their next thing is like, you know, I

would like to try a Sequoia Kings Canyon, or a Yellowstone now. Because they feel more confident. But I think it's a little presumptuous of us to think that we can get them as enamored as we are about our place. So, I don't know if that answered your question. (laughs)

Lu Ann Jones: Oh, it does. So, you kind of toggled there between the park service and school teaching. Remind me again how long you taught school. And then you came back to the park service?

Jenny Matsumoto: I taught for about six years. I taught elementary. Then my husband got a job in Sequoia and Kings Canyon. My credential did not transfer from Washington State to California without a lot more classwork, and I just wasn't ready to go there. Plus, when we moved back in 2001, that was kind of the height of the standardized testing, which I was doing in Washington State. But it really made teaching a negative experience and very difficult. Not only for me, but for the students. Because I never felt that tests should make kids cry, and that's what some of the standardized testing did. So that's why I sort of, when we came back here, there were some temporary job opportunities in education again and in interpretation with the park. So, I decided to do that instead of pursue my teaching credential for California. But I was able to utilize that teaching experience.

Jenny Matsumoto: Since I was familiar with standardized testing, I knew that teachers would not be allowed to have outside experiences unless it supported what they were trying to achieve with the test scores. So, I actually developed activities that mimicked what they were having to do in the classroom with the standardized test. Since I had taught, it was really easy for me to adapt, to take a math program or a language arts activity and all of a sudden instead of it talking about going shopping at the grocery store, it would be talking about coming into the park or something, and calculating how much, how many pine nuts a bear might eat or something. So.

Lu Ann Jones: I did want to loop back. So, I mentioned that when you were at Yellowstone that you had done some interpretation after the fires there in '88.

Jenny Matsumoto: Right.

Lu Ann Jones: Now were you there in '88?

Jenny Matsumoto: I was just at the tail end of the fire. Actually, I got there in '89. My husband got there in '88. So, I was there sort of the spring after the fires. But it was still, I almost said a hot topic. But it was still an important topic because people were describing Yellowstone as devastated and ugly. Actually, that first spring there was the most amazing spring. The wildflowers. The fireweed was incredible. So it was a topic we were talking about. Not only with the students, because we had a lottery program where students from different states would actually bring, or teachers would bring their students to Yellowstone, and we'd stay in these cabins in the Lamar Valley. But also college students, like different, like Sierra Club

groups would be coming through. And we always incorporated that. Because as we led them on hikes, it would always be through some area that impacted, and trying to talk to them about how it was coming back, even though it looked like it wasn't ever going to.

Jenny Matsumoto: It wasn't always an easy sell, because the fire program was so new in the park service at that time. I don't know if we had all the information that we have now on what happens in fires and regeneration. I mean, we had the story about lodge pole pines really were dependent on the fire for heat to open up the cones and reseeding the landscape and everything. But I think some people, some of the kids and some of the other students that came left knowing a little more and others still felt like it was still a devastated area and couldn't sort of see even the beauty of a burnt landscape. Because it was pretty stunning, I thought.

Lu Ann Jones: So how did interpretation think about the role it would play in terms of, well, kind of translating that landscape to the public? What kind of conversation I guess went on around developing programs that would help people try to understand what had happened there?

Jenny Matsumoto: There was a huge push to create a lot of new waysides and exhibits. There was a children's nature trail that was developed. No matter if it was personal or non-personal interpretation, everyone always incorporated some element of the role or the story of fire in the natural ecosystem. So, it was being approached from a multi-faceted way so that people could read about it in the paper. Or they'd take a walk on a trail and read about it on a wayside. And then if they went on a—

[END OF TRACK 4]

[START OF TRACK 5]

Jenny Matsumoto: —ranger-led walk or a campfire program. It would be part of a message. It's not that that's all we talked about. We still talked about wildlife and natural history and cultural history of the Yellowstone landscape. But if it was appropriate, you would weave in the fire story, too. Actually, sometimes you didn't even have to, because that would, during the question and answer part of any program, it seems like that came up. Like, "Do you think the trees are coming back?" Or, "Do you think they'll come back?" Or, "How long do you think it will take for it to look the way it used to look?" A lot of people were concerned about how many animals were killed in the fire.

Jenny Matsumoto: So, there were, so that would come up. I thought it was a good approach to sort of not just hit it from one standpoint, but just no matter where people went, they could hear about it.

Jenny Matsumoto: I don't know, we all had some training. Of course, we had access to a lot of subject matter specialists to talk to. So that was really helpful. It was just being, everybody was focused on us. Natural resource management, they were studying it and they were writing papers and they were doing presentations on it. So, it was

something during that time period that was just a part of life if you were going to be working in Yellowstone.

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. So, at what point did you marry another park service person?

Jenny Matsumoto: It was, we actually met in—

Lu Ann Jones: And your husband's name is—

Jenny Matsumoto: Greg. We met in Sequoia when I transferred to Sequoia and Kings Canyon from Saguaro. He was at that time still working in interpretation. And he went to Yellowstone in the fall of '88, and it took me almost a year to get a job in Yellowstone. Then we, we got engaged. Then he transferred to Crater Lake, but I stayed in Yellowstone. So, we did this long distance wedding planning thing. I designed our wedding rings to look like the park service hat band. Because we met in Sequoia. So, it has sequoia cones in it. We found a jeweler in Bozeman that another ranger recommended. And he said, "Oh, yeah, I think I can make them look like pinecones and not pineapples." (laughter)

Lu Ann Jones: That's fascinating.

Jenny Matsumoto: So that's where we met. Then we got married while he was at Crater Lake, and I was at Yellowstone still. But we got married at our friend Bill Tweed's house in Three Rivers. After the wedding, I drove up to Crater Lake to just check out where he was living and everything. It was funny, because as soon as I arrived, different staff people were asking me if I was interested in working in HR or are you interested in doing this, because they had several positions open up. I was just going to go up there to hang out. And then next thing I know, I had a job interview. The chief of maintenance offered me his admin position, because his admin person was getting ready to leave. I made the big decision then that since we were both in interpretation, it was that dual career thing. We were both approaching that level where we'd be supervising each other and that couldn't happen. So, I thought well, I think I could do anything. So, I'll try this. And so, I accepted the job and went back to Yellowstone for, I don't know, a couple of months and wrapped things up and then moved back to Crater Lake. And did admin for – that was my first administrative experience – for a couple of years.

Lu Ann Jones: What were the different skills that you were using from one to the next? What was that shift like?

Jenny Matsumoto: It was hard to not work with the public anymore. Because even though sometimes there'd be some repetitious moments in interpretation, you'd all of a sudden be working with a student or a visitor who's real excited. And you go, oh, yeah, that's why I'm doing this job. Where I was now not working with the public. I've never been, I mean, I can balance my checkbook, but this was a real stretch of my envelope. I was overseeing budget and personnel stuff. I was managing accounts, multiple accounts. Before, I just had my own little account in interp. And so, it was like roads had a different account, trails had another account. Buildings and

facilities had different accounts. And they were project money, that was new. We had DSC [Denver Service Center] there doing something. And it was like, it was, it was a real eye opener. And just working with park employees. There were some positive moments. But the rewards were much different than when you work with the visitor. So, I had to get used to that shift. Plus, the amount of snow. We were there in Crater Lake during one of the biggest snow years. I think it was like 900 inches the last winter.

Lu Ann Jones: Oh, my gosh.

Jenny Matsumoto: I always felt like a little mouse in a maze. Because I'd walk from the housing area to the maintenance building where I worked. The snow would just be blowing up higher and higher as the winter went on. I just thought—(laughs) I don't know if I can do this. But I met some great people. And that's probably what's been the highlight of my park service career is I've been very fortunate to work with some amazing people, even for a short time. We've remained friends, even though geographically and time goes by, you know, we haven't seen each other on a daily basis or anything. But as soon as we see each other, you know, we pick up right where we left off. That's made it easier to go through those more difficult moments.

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. Well, looking back, are there things that the park service, you think, could have done? Or maybe still needs to do to accommodate dual career couples?

Jenny Matsumoto: I feel like it's more of a kind of back burner option that's not emphasized. I haven't gone through any recent supervisory training or superintendent trainings or anything. So, I'm not sure what they emphasize or bring up. But I think when I take that employee survey that comes out once in a while. And we always end up ranking really low as one of the government agencies for people that choose to work at, is that work/life balance thing. Because I did go through a moment where I was really frustrated that I was sort of – I knew my career was not going to go where I thought it was going to go. I mean, I was really focused on chief of interp kind of career path. And now I had to step out of that. It wasn't until I had to resign from the park service when my husband got a job at Fort Vancouver that I realized how I really defined myself through the park service. If there is that opportunity, I hope selecting officials realize oh, here's a talented person. And we want to hire the spouse for this position, but it looks like this person could really slide into this other job that we have available. You know, let's try to make that work. Because I think it's also good for the person that they're hiring that their spouse is coming along and they're in some kind of satisfying career, too. So, I don't know how much emphasis it is. I think OPM [Office of Personnel Management] has created tremendous roadblocks for the park service in hiring, and it seems to get more challenging. I think USA Jobs was just like this crazy-making thing that the park service, well, all the federal agencies have adopted. And so, I've talked to people who are college graduates who have asked me, "Can you come and help me on this USA Jobs thing?" And it's like, sure, I'll help you.

Jenny Matsumoto: So, I'm sort of veering off of the dual career thing. But it would be great if there was more emphasis and support, just because I think it benefits everyone involved, especially if they're both qualified for the positions. I completely understand when one person is not qualified. No, I don't want them to just hire someone because they have a job, and they have a spouse. But if they're both qualified for any vacancy within the park, it should be something they think about.

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. One of the things when we talked briefly before we started was that I know just that you had done some work with different EEO [Equal Employment Opportunity] coordinator and counselor. So that's a very, you know, it's very private and confidential. But in the space that you can talk about that, can you talk about what your role was, what kind of issues were coming to you in that capacity?

Jenny Matsumoto: I worked as EO counselor, well, I was a federal women's program coordinator and I worked in Saguaro for the southern Arizona group office. So that administered a lot of the smaller parks in southern Arizona. At that point, it was trying to help women in the careers in the park service. But not just women, but also to make the park service population in general more aware of different things going on and what they could do to help, you know, bring women into more higher-level management positions. I want to say I thought it was Cathy Davis I might have worked with. Someone in this group office was really supportive, you know, and was just trying to do these things. Although I felt, I don't know, it was just kind of one of these things where you could kind of do whatever you want again. I really believed in the program. Maybe because I was also a woman. But I really, you know, think I tried to put a lot of effort into it at that time. In Yellowstone is where I was an EEO counselor. The few cases that I did work on, it was mostly an employee and a supervisor having a disagreement. I think the employees felt – and at that time, this was before CORE and all those other programs there are now. I felt they thought that was their only avenue at that point. Of course, when it goes to EEO, then everyone gets on the defensive immediately is how I felt. That's why I was real excited when they developed CORE and the mediation program, although—

Lu Ann Jones: And what does CORE stand for?

Jenny Matsumoto: CORE stands for conflict, resolution, I can't remember what each letter of the acronym stands for. But it was sort of, it was the lowest level, most informal level of sort of mediation. It was not binding. So, if you met with a mediator, it wasn't like people signed something at the end. But unfortunately, and again, I don't know how these programs were introduced to supervisors. But I got the sense that a lot of supervisors still felt that mediation was the first step to grievance. Instead of that mediation could possibly be the first step to avoiding a grievance. I have a friend, Dick Lazarus, who was teaching Crucial Conversations. We were actually seasonals together at Lassen, so we've known each other quite a while. He and I would have conversations about this course he was teaching. Because I took it

from Dick. And one thing, it had all these steps about here's how to have a crucial conversation. And I said, but you know, it requires people to have the ability to self-reflect, saying, "I don't do this well," or, "I'm quick to anger, and I know that and I want to work on this." So, I need to – and then they could weave in those skills that crucial conversation was trying to incorporate. But there was no pre-course work to crucial conversations, but it was introducing some good strategies on communication.

Jenny Matsumoto: I think that a lot of these communication skills, those kinds of courses come when you become a supervisor. There's nothing for the field level employee that is offered on a regular basis. I think that's why we don't always have the best supervisors, because those field people often become supervisors all of a sudden because they get a higher grade level. We need to realize everyone in the park service when they are entry level has the potential to become a supervisor. We should be training everyone in communication or how to negotiate, you know, how to have those difficult conversations. And for people not to be afraid that if I say something to someone that's going to mean this is going to lead to a grievance or something like that.

Jenny Matsumoto: It's a very fearful thing. Part of it is, I watched the full house committee hearing [on sexual harassment in the National Park Service] where Mike Reynolds [deputy director for operations] spoke and the two other witnesses spoke. And the fear of retribution and that things aren't truly confidential, I think, is very true. Because parks are small communities. Even though I never shared the name of anyone except with the superintendent, whoever I was dealing with, it always got out in that informal grapevine in the park. People sensed that something was going on. In part, it could be they saw it building. So, they always knew that so and so and so and so never got along. And so there needs to be that recognition that there is this, it's not as confidential as people think, and people are aware of that. That keeps people in check, to some degree, that they might not want to deal with something. So instead of dealing with it, I'll just transfer and get out of this job.

Jenny Matsumoto: But then if it's a supervisor who's the problem, that supervisor continues having this issue. And of course, it might be that they think, it's always this other person. I just did another bad hire again. And it's hard for anyone, and I've been a supervisor too, if you have a problem employee, it's very stressful and nerve-wracking. You don't always know where to go to get help on how to make this better, or is it a situation that you can make better?

Jenny Matsumoto: There is a long history too within the agency, and I've even seen it where it's difficult to get rid of someone who is a bad employee or supervisor. How this may be dealt with is, you see that a new position is suddenly created. They take their grade level and everything with them, and now they're doing something else. They're just not supervising anyone. So that makes people think well you know what? You can do whatever you want. They'll just promote you. It's something

people have seen. So, it's a hard rumor to say, oh, no, that's not true. It's like no, there's enough people that have witnessed that.

Jenny Matsumoto: So, I think it's a challenging time for the park service. I took that mandatory sexual harassment training. I've done Skillsoft training. I think Skillsoft does some outstanding training, and I thought it hit some of the appropriate topics. But one thing that sort of jumped out, all the perpetrators are women. It's like okay, I know we needed to do something quick. But you know, we could have gotten something a little more realistic or balanced. I don't know what it's like to have the heat of the House committee on you, and you feel like you need to do something quickly. But I think if they are serious, they need to do it slowly and do it well, so that people can see that something is happening and that there is an effort to train everyone, no matter what their grade level. I feel like a lot of emphasis is put on supervisory training. But not enough on people coming into – not the Fundamentals Training. I mean, let's get everyone in the park trained in communication skills. I think that would be great, to see funding for something like that.

Jenny Matsumoto: There's a human side of the park service that's been, I feel, consistently neglected. I think EO is just one part of that.

Lu Ann Jones: You mentioned, again, early on, that there were some issues that you felt the park service hadn't dealt with as well as they might have, as well as some things that clearly the park service does well. And you mentioned that in recent years, the service hasn't done well on the satisfaction survey, etcetera. So, what are some things that you think the park service should really be thinking about now, seriously?

Jenny Matsumoto: I feel like it's that human side. As you saw on my resume, I've been doing critical stress incident peer support. It usually occurs because there's been a fatality in the park. It's one of the most rewarding things I have done. And it's a collateral duty. And it's because I have been able to see a side of park staff that no one else gets to see. These are confidential debriefings, so it's not that I write up these big reports and pass them out. But these debriefings can occur any time of the year. Many times they happen at the height of visitation season. Like this year, a – oh, it just was crazy at Sequoia and Kings Canyon. We had nine or ten fatalities. I've done a number of debriefings. And I will say, here they are, short-staffed, weary, every weekend, every weekday, just crazy busy with visitors. And they respond to every incident, every search and rescue, giving their 150 percent. I know they're tired. I see it in their face. I hear it in their voice. And they're concerned about each other. I hear things such as, "I was worried about so and so because I knew that they were on their days off, and here they were coming in after working this many days." I mean, it's just a side that people don't hear about and that managers don't always hear. I don't know, someone needs to get it to the National Leadership Council that you have these amazing people who aren't making tons of money. They don't want to just get rewards and sunsets anymore. They are human beings and you need to recognize you have these amazing human beings

working for them and at all levels. We have seasonal bear techs doing traffic control so that all the emergency service and the law enforcement rangers can deal with this horrible accident right on our only park road. And people in maintenance are coming out and they're helping the cleanup. I mean, it's where you see, it's not even the mission of the parks. It's where you see the park service at its best. Because there is no division. They're just one park staff and they all come together, and they all know what to do and they're just jumping in trying to help one another.

Jenny Matsumoto: I don't know what the park service can do to support something that realizes that more. But it, I think it takes having managers who are really willing to see the human side of things.

Jenny Matsumoto: I'm going to sort of incorporate one question that I was thinking about that was on your list was a mentor. And I thought, who is that person? The first person that came to mind was Jack Davis, who was a superintendent at Sequoia and Kings Canyon in the '80s. He did a very minor thing, but I will probably never forget. My joke is that I'll get Alzheimer's and I won't recognize my spouse, but I'll remember Jack Davis' name. I had just transferred to Sequoia Kings Canyon. Maybe I'd been there for a couple of months. I was duty stationed in Kings Canyon, but I had to come to headquarters for some reason. I was eating lunch outside. I see Jack walking by, and I say hi and he says hi.

Jenny Matsumoto: He's almost three-quarters of the way back to his office. I see him stop in the parking lot and turn around and walk back. He goes, "You know, I don't think we've met. I'm Jack Davis, the superintendent." He asked me who I was and what I did. We had maybe a 10-minute conversation. But I thought that was amazing that a superintendent did that. Right now, Woody Smeck is our current superintendent, and he has that same human element. He's a very understated leader. One thing he did during our first all-employee meeting when he became our superintendent, he did a short intro and introduced himself. And then the different division chiefs began talking about something. And what Woody was doing while they were all talking is he went and shook the hand of every employee, seasonal or permanent, and introduced himself to them. Every single employee. I just thought, that's great. And I consistently see him doing this.

Jenny Matsumoto: During the Rough Fire which we had, huge fire, didn't burn much of the park, but was a huge fire outside the park in the surrounding US Forest Service area, and we had to evacuate Cedar Grove and Grant Grove. I went over to Grant Grove after Cedar Grove had been closed and evacuated just to check on the employees. I was just doing an informal one-on-one. I found out a lot of things that had occurred and typed an email to some key people in the incident command, and also copied Woody on it.

Jenny Matsumoto: Then Woody followed up with some debriefings where it was just him and my other teammate in CISM and I was told he just asked questions. And he said, "If you want to be mad at anyone, I'm the person that you're mad at." It was just like,

oh, my gosh, he was very honest. He would ask ,"What do you need now? Tell me what you need." Then he would say, "Okay, I can do this. I can't do that." He was very honest. And he followed through. It's so rare to see that, where someone's willing to say, " Yes, mistakes were made, and it was my fault. You have no one else to blame but me because the buck stops here." And then to try to understand things from their perspective and fix the things that he could. And not go over the top by promising things he knew he couldn't. He only promised to do those things he could do. And it made the people who felt unseen all of a sudden like, I think he sees me, and I think he hears me.

Jenny Matsumoto: I think that's what I would like to see the new leadership be more like. That they truly see and recognize everyone who works in that park as a person and an individual. And knowing they can't fix everything. I mean, that's not what I'm asking for.

Jenny Matsumoto: Sometimes all it takes, like after a debriefing that everyone seemed particularly stressed, I just said to one division chief, "Hey, have you been into the park? Just drive out there." I said, "You don't even need to have lunch with them. Just walk around and shake hands and say, 'You know, it's been a crazy year. Thanks for doing what you're doing.'" I said, "Just do that. That's all you need to do."

Jenny Matsumoto: Because I know division chiefs and managers are super busy. I know they have these things and deadlines that I don't know about or understand. But I think all that can wait. I came to the realization that I wasn't that critical in the park service. And that's not because I went from upper-level interpreter to admin. It's just that I could get hit by a truck and you know what? A park would still go on. Someone would pick up the projects, and that it might not get done exactly on the time that it was supposed to. But it would get done still. I think that's one thing that is hard for all of us to admit, is that we're not that important. So, taking a day to do something like spending time with your staff that is okay. I mean, it's just a revalue, reprioritizing things and seeing what is important. Sometimes I think it's worth having a report maybe be a day late to go out and tell your people, "I see you and you're doing a great job."

Lu Ann Jones: I'm going to stop you.

Jenny Matsumoto: Go ahead.

Lu Ann Jones: (coughs) Sorry. I think I'm going to get a little cooler here or something.

Jenny Matsumoto: Do you need water?

Lu Ann Jones: I think I will get, yeah, thank you so much. Were there other questions that you were interested in answering? I'm glad you interjected that and said oh, that's something I wanted to talk about. Other things?

[END OF TRACK 4]

[START OF TRACK 5]

Jenny Matsumoto: I can't remember all the questions. (laughter) I'm really terrible.

Lu Ann Jones: That's okay. Well one of the things I do think is kind of an interesting question is describe a time when you felt most excited, most engaged, about your work, and what were the conditions that kind of created that? What were the variables? Any thoughts about that?

Jenny Matsumoto: I think there were two things. Especially once I stopped working with the public, every once in a while at Sequoia I would volunteer and do something on a holiday weekend. It was great to have that interaction with visitors who – you know, I see deer quite often in the park. They're not that exciting anymore, and sometimes they're really mangy looking. There are visitors who will be, all of a sudden you see a car stop and you'll see their hand come out of a window and try to slow you down. And then they're pointing, and they're pointing at this ugly doe that is just standing there. They are taking I don't know how many pictures of that doe. And they are just super excited. It's like, that's right, there are people who've never seen a deer. (laughs) They think this is really neat, and it's good to get that perspective.

Jenny Matsumoto: And the other thing just goes back to the work I've been doing with critical incident stress debriefing, and with family liaison. Family liaison is where I work with the family that's involved in a search and rescue. It gets me excited in a different way, just because I feel like it's something that I can give back to the park staff. It's really rewarding in that sense to be with the staff in a time that's very difficult. To help them get through a very difficult time or to do something as a family liaison on an incident to help make their work on the incident a bit easier. And those are, the human side still, whether it's with the visitor or with the park staff, that gets me excited about work.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow. Anything else you'd like to add?

Jenny Matsumoto: I can't think of anything. I would hope, one thing is, when I talk about diversity, to also recognize that it's not just someone's ethnic diversity that I think, I want the park service not to forget that when people who have been in the service for a long time, that you don't need to write these people off. There's a lot of institutional knowledge – and I'm glad you're doing these oral histories – that I feel is lost because someone retires, and some choose to still stay involved somehow in the park service. But many times, people feel like oh, they've been there, done that. And they feel like some employees that are new, that they're the first ones to discover something. And sometimes it's worth reaching out to those park staff who have been there and find out what their perspective is.

Jenny Matsumoto: Because I will say that I watched some of the centennial videos that came out to park service employees. One in particular showed a lot of young park service

employees in uniform. They were very diverse in ethnicity. And the only people that had gray hair that I saw were Sally Jewell and Jon Jarvis.

Lu Ann Jones: Very interesting.

Jenny Matsumoto: I just thought, well, I'm still part of the park service. (laughs) I don't feel like I'm ready to sort of curl up and die yet. So, I want the diversity focus not to just be on one part of diversity. That they need to really embrace it as a whole, and to recognize everyone that they still have in their service. And to take advantage of the strengths of all of them, no matter their age or background or ethnicity or socioeconomic status or whatever it is, or where they come from. Because I think that's what makes the work and also, not only visitation but the work force, richer. Because you're recognizing that everyone brings something to the table, no matter who they are, and to appreciate that.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, one of the things that I talk about is how the centennial, as a historian, the centennial was focused on the future. So here was the challenge for a historian is how do you make yourself valuable to an agency that now, when it's celebrating its centennial is now focused to the future? But part of it, and we'll be talking about this more when we talk about the project tomorrow, is kind of seeing this project as a mentoring exercise of where people who are veteran employees are able to extend their knowledge to the future generations, and to see that as a valuable resource.

Jenny Matsumoto: Oh, great.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah. So, I think your kind of observations there are really to the point of this whole project. But very, yeah, just very thoughtful in terms of thinking about what do we mean when we say diversity.

Jenny Matsumoto: Well, thank you.

Lu Ann Jones: It seemed, too, that in certain settings that you've been in, I mean, you've been in very diverse settings in terms of Saguaro or California parks. I mean, there's, dealing with children of different backgrounds. I mean, again that for certain parks, at least, is not a novel idea, necessarily. Do you see what I'm saying?

Jenny Matsumoto: Yeah. Yeah. Actually, when you started talking about diverse, I mean, just the different parks I worked at, but also the different positions – even though there was a time period when I was a little frustrated all of a sudden I was doing these different seasonal jobs and everything, I think that has really been to my advantage, you know. Having been a seasonal, then becoming a permanent, being a supervisor, then going back down to being a seasonal again. Because it kept me from losing perspective. Oh, yeah, this is what it's like to be a field person. This is what it's like to be a seasonal, and remembering how that feels. And then also working in all those different park environments. You know, a big park to a small park where you know, sometimes people will say, "Oh, you know, at a small park, you don't want to go there, you want to try to work at Yosemite or Kings

Canyon or Sequoia." But I said, "You know the value of working at someplace small like Saguaro," I said, "is I did everything." Because they needed the extra hand, the staff was small. You ended up doing more things than your position description said. So, it's been sort of rich in that sense, having done all those things. It's taken me time to come back to that point where I'm glad I've had all those ups and downs in my park service career. I also feel like, though, as a peer supporter, I think, I feel more effective being sort of under the radar in my position. Because I'm not a supervisor. I don't come with this other kind of, I don't know, voice in the background or something.

Lu Ann Jones: You just kind of come as you.

Jenny Matsumoto: Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: Not as some position.

Jenny Matsumoto: Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: Just as you.

Jenny Matsumoto: So, it, at moments, it was frustrating. But now I kind of appreciate all the things I've been able to experience. So, yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, thank you so much for participating in this.

Jenny Matsumoto: Oh, thanks, Lu Ann.

Lu Ann Jones: It's just been great to talk to you.

Jenny Matsumoto: Oh. Thanks.

Lu Ann Jones: If you were counseling somebody who was younger than I am, who was starting their career, any – I think you just said, do a variety of things. Anything else that you would suggest to them?

Jenny Matsumoto: One thing we've had that surprises me is we've had people turn down positions because in some of our districts, you don't have cell service. I would hope that some of the newer younger people would be open to a lack of technology. At Sequoia and Kings Canyon, we have horrible bandwidth. We can't even have so many people using multiple lines for a conference call without something weird happening. It's frustrating, you know, at times when you're trying to do your work. But I think it's a good experience. One thing about interpretation that I've seen evolve that I guess I would tell especially a young interpreter coming in, like oh, yeah, we should do Facebook and Twitter and all this stuff, and we should have a wayside that when you walk past like your phone, or something starts talking to you.

Lu Ann Jones: Right.

Jenny Matsumoto: I always felt like I didn't think the role of the park service was to compete with the kind of interpretation that was happening outside the park service. Especially in our great wilderness parks. That we should be sort of the refuge where you could go and not have that experience. That it's good to exist side by side. People can go to maybe Golden Gate and Santa Monica and have those great digital technology experiences. But maybe it's nice to come where yeah, you kind of lose cell service. It might seem scary to a lot of people who grew up in the cell service era. But there was many more years where people were wandering the woods without cell service or spot devices.

Lu Ann Jones: Right. Yeah.

Jenny Matsumoto: And there's a certain risk that goes in that?

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah. Yeah. [knocking on door] Let me see. I think it's Mr. Reyer here. [answers door, says wait a minute to next interviewee, Eldon Reyer] Oh, well, thank you so much for doing this. This has just been a great conversation.

Jenny Matsumoto: Oh, yeah. Thanks, Lu Ann. Thanks for asking me.

Lu Ann Jones: Oh, absolutely.

[END OF TRACK 5]

[END OF INTERVIEW]