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**Ginny Rousseau and Dennis Burnett**  
**October 25, 2014**

Interview conducted by Brenna Lissoway  
Transcribed by Teresa Bergen  
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ANPR Oral History Project

Ginny Rousseau and Dennis Burnett

25 October 2014

Interview conducted by

Brenna Lissoway

Transcribed by

Thea Marie Garrett

Transcript has been reviewed and corrected by interviewer and narrators.

[START OF TRACK 1]

Brenna Lissoway: Okay, this is Brenna Lissoway, interviewing Dennis Burnett and Ginny Rousseau and we're sitting at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado and today is October the 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014. We're just sort of coming towards the tail end of the Ranger Rendezvous. What I thought where we could start is maybe just have you all introduce yourselves and then we can get started with the interview.

Ginny Rousseau: (Laughs) I'm Ginny Rousseau. I was a ranger for 35 years with the National Park Service and worked sixteen different parks.

Brenna Lissoway: Great, thank you.

Dennis Burnett: Dennis Burnett, I'd like to wish my lovely wife a happy birthday.

Brenna Lissoway: Oh, happy birthday!

Dennis Burnett: Started in 1972, worked about twelve areas coast to coast from Point Reyes [National Seashore] to Cape Cod [National Seashore]. I spent twenty-eight years as a park ranger and seven years as a special agent.

Brenna Lissoway: What I was hoping we could do, with your interview in particular having you together doing a session, is to really focus on hearing a bit about your experience as a couple with careers in the Park Service. Maybe you could just start with the beginning of your couple's story and talk about how you met.

Ginny Rousseau: Well, we met in Yosemite Valley. We were both park rangers. I worked night shift and Dennis worked day shift, so we were kind of like ships passing in the night. We ended up working together, socializing together and eventually ended up, in April of 1978, got married in Yosemite Valley on Chris and Paula Andress' front porch in employee housing. The interesting thing was that I was permanent and had been there for five years, Dennis had just gotten permanent—

Dennis Burnett: I was seasonal there for two seasons and then got my subject-to-furlough status in 1978 January—or before that, it was actually August, it was on my way to Big Oak Flat, I was going to be the road patrol supervisor for the following summer. January, I transferred to Petrified Forest National Park as a permanent park tech GS-7 and moved to Petrified Forest and then came back to Yosemite to get married.

Ginny Rousseau: And the interesting thing was that I had lifetime reinstatement rights but Dennis as a new hire had to work three years before those reinstatement rights would be lifetime. So that kind of started our juggling of careers. One of our early discussions before we got married was what were we going to do about both of us being

protection rangers and wanting to continue a career. The interesting thing is I had worked very, very hard as, at that time, the only woman in Yosemite Valley in Protection trying to do a good job, gain all the skills I could and reputation. And Dennis had worked – what, seven years seasonal?

Dennis Burnett: Five years.

Ginny Rousseau: Five years seasonal, so his passion for continuing to work were just as great. (unintelligible). So, we said, “Well, first, is anybody going to give up their job?” And we looked at each other and said, “No, I wouldn’t ask you to do that”. So, we said, “Well, let’s just see how we can make it work.” Somebody gave me some advice a long time ago. They said, “Don’t say you can’t make it work. Say, how can we make it work?” And that’s kind of what we, by the seat of our pants, flew for the next thirty-some years.

Brenna Lissoway: Did you all have someone you could see that you used as sort of a model of a way to have dual careers in the Park Service?

Dennis Burnett: Not in the same discipline that saw, especially for protection. There may have been other disciplines where there was: interpretation, administration, that sort of thing. But doing the same job we didn’t know anybody.

Brenna Lissoway: Had you all, in the past, had any other serious relationships where – did the job come up in that previously? In other words, did you have any other points at which, you know, you had to make a decision about how are we going to do careers or is this some person that I want to follow? Do you know what I’m saying? Did you have another decision point—

Ginny Rousseau: No.

Brenna Lissoway: —previously.

Ginny Rousseau: Well, I didn’t. Because of being one of the first women in Yosemite, to me it was very import to maintain a professional – absolutely professional and above-board demeanor. And I would not date rangers because I felt I didn’t want to be accused of sleeping my way to the top or – (laughs) – that’s a little crude, but that some people had that kind of reputation and I just felt it wasn’t— Well, that kind of went down the tubes when I met Dennis. But he was a seasonal and I was permanent, so I wasn’t helping my career really (laughs).

Dennis Burnett: Sleeping your way to the top? (all laugh)

Ginny Rousseau: So, no. I was so focused on my job and my career and because it took him so long to get permanent, I think he – you – had that same passion and drive.

Dennis Burnett: Basically, we ended up flip-flopping from job to job.

- Brenna Lissoway:    So, can you talk about what your next transition from Yosemite was?
- Dennis Burnett:    I was out at Petrified Forest [National Park]. I had just gotten status and so after we got married and moved to Petrified Forest, and you worked as a seasonal?
- Ginny Rousseau:    I was given a seasonal appointment – or was it permanent intermittent?
- Dennis Burnett:    Could have been permanent intermittent.
- Ginny Rousseau:    Yeah. That’s one of the types of positions that’s very handy in the Park Service for dual careers is to put somebody on permanent intermittent because then you’re not locked into a schedule of *having* to work them so much.
- Dennis Burnett:    All it would cost is one FTE [full-time equivalent], or a percentage of an FTE.
- Ginny Rousseau:    Yeah, and so throughout our career that was one that we kept switching back to whenever the other person took the primary job. A lot of parks would put the other person on permanent intermittent. We went to Petrified Forest that way.
- Dennis Burnett:    I think I went there as a GS-5, if I remember right. Then in, oh, probably July of that same year, 1978, put in for a position at Point Reyes National Seashore where I started in 1972 as a volunteer. We were in the process of moving to a lighthouse on the coast as a GS-7 park tech when, as the last in-take list was being exhausted, myself and three other rangers were being picked up at Lake Mead [National Recreation Area] in GS-9 park ranger positions. So, we stopped the move to Point Reyes and then moved on to Lake Mead.
- Ginny Rousseau:    And there I was picked up permanent intermittent by the park. Basically, worked seasonal type work and some in the winter, I think—
- Dennis Burnett:    A little bit, mostly summer—
- Ginny Rousseau:    Mostly in the summer.
- Brenna Lissoway:    You were not working in law enforcement, right?
- Ginny Rousseau:    Oh, yes—
- Dennis Burnett:    Yeah—
- Brenna Lissoway:    You were?
- Ginny Rousseau:    Protection.
- Dennis Burnett:    Yeah.
- Brenna Lissoway:    Protection. How did that work? For you to be working in the same

division?

Dennis Burnett: As long as we don't supervise each other.

Brenna Lissoway: Okay.

Ginny Rousseau: I worked at Lake Mead; I was assigned to Overton Beach which was the tip of the—

Dennis Burnett: Overton Arm.

Ginny Rousseau: —Overton Arm up on the Virgin River.

Dennis Burnett: So, she was answering to an area ranger and then I was answering to a separate area ranger at Echo Bay.

Brenna Lissoway: I see, Okay.

Ginny Rousseau: And there was a district ranger over both of us. And that worked pretty well other than Dennis was the low person on the totem pole and got all of the nighttime callouts because there was the district ranger, sub-district ranger, and you.

Dennis Burnett: Government phone in the house and I was the one that was supposed to pick it up. So, after hours callout we worked out a system where – I'm not sure whether those two individuals knew, but – we would go out together. If you've got a bar fight at 2 a.m. we don't recommend going in by yourself, so my backup would be Ginny.

Brenna Lissoway: And they didn't know that?

Dennis Burnett: Well, I'm not sure we didn't tell them.

Ginny Rousseau: We may have.

Dennis Burnett: It just wasn't a big deal. We'd worked together for several years.

Brenna Lissoway: Sure.

Dennis Burnett: We saw it as an officer safety situation.

Ginny Rousseau: Or, if he did go out on something and I didn't go, I'd have the radio and I was monitoring so if something had happened I could have either – either I could have responded or could've called for some other backup. But Lake Mead's not a place where at 2 a.m. you want to go out by yourself. I mean, not so much even that it's a law enforcement incident but the major medical incidents that you get, it takes more than one person to manage the scene.

Dennis Burnett: And that's an hour in transport too.

Brenna Lissoway: I have to ask then, did either of you feel differently after working on your own, so to speak, and then having your spouse so closely in tune with what you were doing? Did that change how you approached your job at all?

- Dennis Burnett:            No.
- Ginny Rousseau:        Throughout our career it's kind of interesting, if you flip forward, I don't know how many years, to when Dennis was working in the Washington office as the law enforcement manager for the Park Service and I was the chief ranger at Shenandoah [National Park] all the national calls of incidents would come from Shenandoah dispatch to him in the middle of the night.
- Dennis Burnett:        I was the 24-hour contact for the director.
- Ginny Rousseau:        And I was the chief ranger. And so, the phone would ring, I'd answer it and I'd hand it and say, "It's for you." I mean, there has never been – our career or our work, just it was part of who we were. I mean, if it was somebody from Big Meadows [in Shenandoah] calling to say there was an incident I took the call. If it was a national one, I would hand it to him and say, "Here, this one's for you." And that's just a very casual way that we – we've always worked. Work, life, everything, it's just all one thing.
- Dennis Burnett:        When you live in isolated parks you live together with everybody: maintenance, interp [interpretation], administration. You know, Lodgepole [in Sequoia National Park] you're two hours from groceries, top of the mountain, that sort of thing.
- Ginny Rousseau:        One good thing is you can come home and say, "Wow, guess what. Here's what I did."
- Brenna Lissoway:      Well, that is interesting, and I've heard a lot of people say that, you know, protection careers can be very difficult on marriages because of the long hours and the intense situations and that sort of thing. How do you feel about that?
- Dennis Burnett:        That's usually the case when one's a police officer and one's not, and they don't understand. We both understand what we're doing and what it takes, and it was never an issue.
- Brenna Lissoway:      So, you think it actually helped?
- Dennis Burnett:        Didn't hurt.
- Ginny Rousseau:        It certainly didn't hurt. He'd call me up and I'd be up at Shenandoah, an hour and a half from home, and he'd say, "Are you coming home for dinner?" And I'd say, "Give me just a half hour more, just one more a half hour."
- Dennis Burnett:        I needed to know the time frame in preparing for her and the kids. When I was in DC – well, first we lived an hour west of DC, a little more than that, sort of halfway between Shenandoah and DC. She would commute one way; I would commute the other. I started commuting (I was there for thirteen years) at 6 a.m. when we first moved to the Warrenton, VA, area and by the time we left thirteen years later I was leaving the house at 4:20 and then try to leave DC

by 2:30 or three in the afternoon. I had a small office set up at the house and I had contact with the West Coast, Alaska, Hawaii-area parks if I needed to. Often times I would be talking to them from home because we had kids.

Ginny Rousseau: But I would take the kids to school, he would pick them up after school. It's again: how can you make it work? But let's go back—

Dennis Burnett: Let's go back, so from Lake Mead, two years there—a little over two years. I still didn't have my three years there. Bill Wade called and had a vacancy announcement—actually he had two positions.

Ginny Rousseau: Mm-hmm.

Dennis Burnett: Which is a rarity. One was a backcountry manager in the North Carolina side of the park and the other was a campground supervisor, which Ginny had done in Yosemite Valley. So, we talked about it for five minutes and said, "Sure."

Brenna Lissoway: That was going to Shenandoah?

Dennis Burnett: That was going to Smokies [Great Smoky Mountains National Park].

Ginny Rousseau: Smokies.

Brenna Lissoway: Smokies. Okay. Great, so what was that like, working at Smokies together?

Dennis Burnett: That's where we had our first child.

Ginny Rousseau: They didn't know I was pregnant when we moved there.

Dennis Burnett: Well, we were still at Lake Mead, we were both on the dive team and we'd just finished the dive refresher and Ginny said, "Well, I've got a sinus infection, Dave McLean (park dive officer), I don't think I need to dive," knowing that she was pregnant.

Brenna Lissoway: Aha.

Dennis Burnett: So, he understood. We sent a copy of the birth notice, a picture of Linsay, and said, "This is the reason why I couldn't take the dive refresher nine months ago – or eight months ago when you asked." (Ginny laughs)

Ginny Rousseau: We got to Smokies, I worked up until we delivered, or we had her. But the interesting thing was that I was thirty-four years old when I had Linsay and up until the minute I had her it was like, Okay I'm going back to work, but just as a campground supervisor, not as a sub-district ranger or district ranger. I just thought, you know, we waited a long time for this, I think I need to stay home and take care of her. So, I resigned and became a stay at home mom. Now, that raised havoc with me because my identity was tied up as a park ranger. So anytime we would meet people I would say, "Hi,



I'm Ginny Rousseau, I'm a park ranger!" being eight and a half, nine months pregnant, looking at me like – I had a hard time with that because I'd worked so hard in my career to be this professional female ranger and all of the sudden it was gone and I was housewife (laughs). And I was like, I don't like this. Uh, but made it work, I guess.

Dennis Burnett: I would walk in the door and she would hand me Linsay and she'd go out for a hike. "Here." "Understood. See you in an hour" (all laugh). The Ob/Gyn who delivered Linsay was arrested several years later by Park Rangers in an undercover sting operation for buying black bear gall bladders that came from bears that were poached from the Smokies. (didn't name the doc or nationality for fear of libel) About two weeks after coming home, Ginny starts having major concerns (post-partum blues?) that people won't think that Linsay is her daughter with the name Linsay Anne Burnett. So, as required by the State of North Carolina, we posted in the Courthouse of the County Seat, Bryson City for thirty days, our intention to change Linsay's name. Her legal name became Linsay Anne Rousseau Burnett.

Ginny Rousseau: But didn't – I guess I did – we did some training for the park. Horse training.

Dennis Burnett: Well, horse training. I ran the horse program for the Carolina side of the park. I had ten or twelve horses, and Ginny, having gone through the horse program at Yosemite and I'd ridden quite a bit at Petrified Forest and elsewhere, so we put on a training program for the park which we—

Ginny Rousseau: Forty hours.

Dennis Burnett: —had a lot of fun—

Ginny Rousseau: Yeah.

Dennis Burnett: —doing.

Ginny Rousseau: Mm-hmm. And then I also, because I was a defensive tactics instructor, started teaching defensive tactics at what was then Sylva, the park ranger training program [Seasonal Law Enforcement Training]—

Dennis Burnett: Seasonal Academy.

Ginny Rousseau: Seasonal Academy. So, I would teach defensive tactics there and for part of it I had Linsay in a backpack or sitting on the floor chewing on handcuffs and it worked well.

Brenna Lissoway: So, you were brought on as a contractor or?

Ginny Rousseau: I'm not sure whether they paid me for it or not.

Dennis Burnett: Southwest Tech did.

Ginny Rousseau:        Southwest Tech did. After training, we would get a bite to eat with Linsay with us. I would usually order decaf coffee. So, once Ginny ordered coffee and Linsay asks, mom, you getting decaf? Ginny and I started called each other G and D early on, unless it was Rousseau or Burnett.

Dennis Burnett:        But for the horse program I'm not sure how we pulled that off.

Ginny Rousseau:        I think we just said, "Let's do it."

Dennis Burnett:        [Speaking at the same time] "We'd just do it."

Brenna Lissoway:       Uh-huh.

Ginny Rousseau:        But again, we had the skills, we taught well together, we knew how to work and what can we do for the park? And it got me out of the house.

Dennis Burnett:        So that was probably two and a half years, I'm guessing.

Ginny Rousseau:        Uh-huh.

Dennis Burnett:        I think maybe the only mistake we ever made as a married couple—

Ginny Rousseau:        (speaking at the same time) Yes.

Brenna Lissoway:       Okay, which was what?

Dennis Burnett:        We put in for the same job. (Ginny laughs) Oh-my-god.

Ginny Rousseau:        Philosophically, you can rationalize it, but emotionally—

Dennis Burnett:        And we did, "Oh, we can do this."

Brenna Lissoway:       So, what happened?

Ginny Rousseau:        It was the sub-district ranger job in Sequoia.

Dennis Burnett:        At Lodgepole.

Ginny Rousseau:        At Lodgepole. We were both on equal footing because he's got his three years in and we said, "Sure."

Dennis Burnett:        So now we can see what happens.

Ginny Rousseau:        Let's see what happens (laughs).

Brenna Lissoway:       What did happen?

Dennis Burnett:        I didn't get the job (all laugh).

Brenna Lissoway:       And you didn't either (to Ginny)?

Ginny Rousseau:        Yeah, I did.

Dennis Burnett:        She did.

Brenna Lissoway:       Oh, you did get the job! Okay.

Ginny Rousseau:        But, the interesting point was that I had resigned, so technically

- they couldn't move us—
- Dennis Burnett: She had lifetime reinstatement rights so she could take the job but they couldn't pay for the move.
- Ginny Rousseau: So, they hired Dennis as permanent intermittent, moved us on his appointment.
- Dennis Burnett: On my status as being gainfully employed
- Ginny Rousseau: I signed on when we got there.
- Dennis Burnett: When she got there she became a GS-9 sub-district ranger and I became a GS-5 step 10 sub-district – not sub, part time intermittent—
- Ginny Rousseau: No, permanent intermittent.
- Dennis Burnett: —permanent intermittent and they would work me when they could, if they needed me.
- Brenna Lissoway: Interesting.
- Ginny Rousseau: Well—
- Dennis Burnett: What worked out well for me is that Art Partin \_\_\_\_\_ was the fire management officer there who was one of my district ranger from my time – my five years in Death Valley [National Park] and he ran me through a ton of fire training, wildland and structural, and I basically took over the structural fire program for the Giant Forest area [in Sequoia National Park]. So, we used to always say, the fire alarm goes off, Ginny heads to the house where the kids are, I'd head to the fire cache and we go from there.
- Ginny Rousseau: And if somebody was visiting us, we looked at each other and said, "We can both go!" Boom! We're out of here.
- Brenna Lissoway: Babysitting, right? (all laugh)
- Ginny Rousseau: Built in babysitting. An interesting thing that happened, though, after we got to Sequoia – again, I was five months pregnant with our second child – was that somebody, a whistleblower, put in a, what do you call it?
- Dennis Burnett: Filed a complaint.
- Ginny Rousseau: Filed a complaint that, number one—
- Dennis Burnett: —Somebody who didn't get the job filed a complaint for the hiring of her.
- Ginny Rousseau: Number one, they said I wasn't qualified, number two, that—
- Dennis Burnett: We weren't married.
- Ginny Rousseau: —we weren't married.
- Dennis Burnett: You have to be legally married to do what we did.

- Ginny Rousseau:        To move on his appointment and then—
- Dennis Burnett:        Her job, my move. Sort of.
- Ginny Rousseau:        So we had to take – and here I was nearing five, six months pregnant, Linsay was two – take our marriage certificate in to show the District Ranger, Tom Tschohl and Human Resources at Park Headquarters, that yes indeed we were married.
- Brenna Lissoway:      Wow, oh that’s—
- Ginny Rousseau:        It was like, “Really?” But not that big a deal, I mean, I still had the job. Sequoia was a little challenging. Dennis was home with a two-year-old – well, let’s back up, he was the permanent intermittent staying home with Linsay.
- Dennis Burnett:        I was a “house spouse”.
- Ginny Rousseau:        He was a “house spouse”.
- Dennis Burnett:        Before the movie *Mr. Mom*.
- Ginny Rousseau:        And we came up with the generic term “house spouse” because that way it could be either person. So, I worked the Wolverton ski area and the sub-district area. I skied through eight and half months pregnant. An interesting aside is there were no maternity uniforms in the Park Service as yet. So, I wore green jeans, I borrowed Tom Tschohl’s shirt and hemmed it around the bottom and wore suspenders underneath it with a turtleneck and that was my uniform.
- Brenna Lissoway:      Wow (Ginny laughs).
- Dennis Burnett:        And this was during the era where if you were pregnant you weren’t incapacitated, you could still do the job up to a certain point. There were supervisors in the Park Service who when they found out that one of their female rangers was pregnant, they’d pull their commission. Yes, that was not uncommon.
- Brenna Lissoway:      Wow.
- Dennis Burnett:        And we knew a couple of those supervisors, so we were very frank in talking to Tom Tschohl, and said, “We’re not going to have an issue with, this are we?” And he said, “No.”
- Brenna Lissoway:      So, he knew you were pregnant when you were hired?
- Ginny Rousseau:        Oh, yeah.
- Dennis Burnett:        Yes.
- Brenna Lissoway:      Okay.
- Ginny Rousseau:        The other thing was that – who was the superintendent? Gene, no—
- Dennis Burnett:        Not Gene Dougherty.

- Ginny Rousseau:        Boyd—
- Dennis Burnett:        Boyd Evison.
- Ginny Rousseau:        Boyd Evison, wonderful man. Obviously, I got too large to wear a duty belt, so I wrote a memo and said, “May I wear a shoulder holster.” He didn’t even blink an eye. He approved it. So that whole rest of my pregnancy I wore a shoulder holster.
- Brenna Lissoway:      So, at what point did you stop working?
- Ginny Rousseau:        Didn’t.
- Brenna Lissoway:      Right up until delivery?
- Ginny Rousseau:        Mm-hmm.
- Brenna Lissoway:      Wow.
- Ginny Rousseau:        An interesting, or a funny incident that happened. I had just come down from – this is kind of a little sidebar, but it shows women being pregnant, and response, and everything – I’d come down from the ski area at Wolverton, I was in the office finishing up some paperwork in the evening and a young man knocked on the window; we had windows along the whole walkway. And I let him in, and he said, “I’ve just been beaten up by a couple of guys in the campground who I came up with, but they got mad and beat me up.” And there is like six feet of snow, five feet of snow—
- Dennis Burnett:        There was a lot of snow.
- Ginny Rousseau:        —on the ground at that point. So I got on the radio and I told dispatch I said, “Call Randy Coffman or Dennis Burnett and let them know there’s been an assault in the campground and I’m just going to take the young fellow and go drive by and see where it is. Not approach. Sound reasonable?” So, I do that, I’m sitting in the campground. All of the sudden, these cars come screaming up to the area. Dispatch had gotten it that Ginny has been assaulted in the campground. So, Dennis threw Lindsay in the patrol car, screamed over there, Randy screamed in and I’m going, “What’s the matter, guys? (Ginny laughs) No problems here.”
- Brenna Lissoway:      (To Dennis) It must have given you quite a fright.
- Dennis Burnett:        It gets your attention.
- Ginny Rousseau:        Gets your attention. But anyway, here we were then, well, okay, it was April—
- Dennis Burnett:        April tenth.
- Ginny Rousseau:        —Tenth (Ginny and Dennis laugh) and all of a sudden, it’s like, “Hmm, I think we better head down the mountain.”
- Dennis Burnett:        Well actually, we’d gone down the week before—

- Ginny Rousseau:        We'd gone down the week before.
- Dennis Burnett:        —thinking it was about time to deliver and—
- Ginny Rousseau:        He wanted to induce.
- Dennis Burnett:        Yeah.
- Ginny Rousseau:        And I said—
- Dennis Burnett:        And he says, “No, you’re about a week away. Go on back up the mountain.”
- Ginny Rousseau:        “Nah, I’ll be fine. Let’s just let it do its course.” Went back up, and we had the last major snowstorm of the season come through. Oh, when barometric pressures drop, people who are pregnant tend to have their babies. So, it was like, “Hmm, I think it’s time.” So, Dennis chained up the car – or you had chained up the car ahead. We were in the Volvo which does not do well in snow.
- Dennis Burnett:        Called Randy Coffman who’s a paramedic, one of the first in the Park Service, if not the first then the second after Ernie Kuncl. He came over to take care of Linsay. We headed out at midnight. And two hours and fifteen miles later – we were pushing six to eight inches of snow, plows weren’t out, hindsight’s everything--we made it as far as a quarter mile below Amphitheater Point on the Generals Highway. As we’re approaching Amphitheater Point, she’s going into (demonstrates labor breathing) the breathing – what do they call it? Lamaze?
- Ginny Rousseau:        Yeah, Lamaze breathing.
- Dennis Burnett:        And we’re just crawling along, it’s really snowing hard, we’re making progress, and she starts breathing like that, I said, “You’re not supposed to do that until later.” And she goes, “It is later.” (Ginny laughs) Water broke, made it around Amphitheater Point and got just down to snowline, about a quarter mile, and pulled over and said, “Well, here we go.”
- Dennis Burnett:        Called Randy on the park radio and said, or on the radio, and said, “Well, we’re not going to make it. So, this is where we are, everything’s cool.” So, he goes and gets Tom Tschohl, the district ranger, to take care of Linsay, he gets in the park ambulance and he followed our tracks down to Amphitheater Point. There were a few close calls with guardrails and stuff. When Randy arrives, he says “What’s the damage on the car?” I said, “Well, nothing, why?” He says, “Wow, there was one turn back there where, I swear to God, you hit the guardrail.” (Ginny laughs) So we transferred, the baby was delivered, we delivered—
- Brenna Lissoway:        So, you delivered your child in a car in a snowstorm?
- Dennis Burnett:        Yes, in Sequoia National Park. The birth certificate says, “One

quarter mile below Amphitheater Point, Generals Highway, Sequoia National Park.”

Brenna Lissoway: (under her breath) Oh, my gosh.

Ginny Rousseau: 2:07 a.m. I looked at my watch.

Dennis Burnett: We left the car in the pull-out, under an oak tree. Every time we drove down the mountain and pass the pull-out, we would say to the kids that's the oak tree where Bryant was born. A year later, while driving to Sacramento with Linsay she says, dad – do all babies come from oak trees.

Brenna Lissoway: And it was just the two of you?

Dennis Burnett: Yeah. Hindsight is, you know, we had the woodstove going at home, Randy's a paramedic—

Brenna Lissoway: Could have just stayed (speaking at the same time).

Ginny Rousseau: Why didn't we just stay (speaking at the same time).

Dennis Burnett: Could have done everything right there. Less than two hours of labor and we go, “Is that normal?” Well, it was for us.

Ginny Rousseau: Basically, I skied through eight and a half months pregnant. I had an hour and a half labor—

Brenna Lissoway: Oh, gosh.

Ginny Rousseau: I mean—

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah.

Ginny Rousseau: (laughs) We had no clue we weren't going to be able to make it down—

Dennis Burnett: There was never an issue, never an issue.

Ginny Rousseau: Didn't even dawn on us that we wouldn't make it. The interesting thing was, like I said, Tom Tschohl was a bachelor, so this was real interesting for him, taking care of Linsay – Randy was too, so these gentlemen certainly got an education.

Dennis Burnett: We all lived together at Lodgepole, so everybody knew everybody, it was no big deal.

Ginny Rousseau: So anyway, we delivered. It was a new Volvo, and his first thing was, he said, “Don't get the car dirty,” and I said, “Shut up,” (laughs) and we didn't. This may be more than you want, but basically, I tried to lie down and said, “Mmm, that's not going to work.” Squatted in the front seat holding the back of the driver's seat and the steering wheel facing the passenger and I said, “Catch him!” (laughs)

Dennis Burnett: So, I did.

Ginny Rousseau:        And he caught him. And I slid down in the passenger's seat—

Dennis Burnett:        Wrapped him in, we had—

Ginny Rousseau:        Blankets—

Dennis Burnett:        Bath towels and stuff like that.

Ginny Rousseau:        And he started nursing—

Dennis Burnett:        Car's running and the heater's on—

Ginny Rousseau:        And I just sat there.

Dennis Burnett:        And just waited for Randy to show up.

Ginny Rousseau:        So, Randy gets there and cut the cord and—

Dennis Burnett:        This is probably twenty minutes later – twenty-five minutes later, this is an issue.

Ginny Rousseau:        Yes, cut the cord and loads me in and as we load the placenta I'd delivered. We're fine and he said, "Well, I'm going to start an IV." And I said, "No you're not, I'm not a park visitor (laughs). Stop and get me some water to drink at the Visitor Center."

Dennis Burnett:        Yeah, she hates needles.

Ginny Rousseau:        I hate needles. So, Randy's checking out Bryant and doing all his thing and checking me. Great ride, left the car and great ride to the hospital, and got there and the doc says, "You okay?" and I say, "Sure, we're fine," because he had some kind of an emergency.

Dennis Burnett:        He knew we were coming.

Ginny Rousseau:        He knew we were coming. Randy was so proud to tell the nurse, "Well, it's an Apgar 10 on the scale." Which is the top, so he made sure they knew Bryant was—

Dennis Burnett:        Okay.

Ginny Rousseau:        Okay. We get ready to leave the hospital and they say, "Well, you need to sign the birth certificate. Who delivered the baby?" And I said, "Well, we did." And they said, "No, it's who cut the cord." I got pissed. I said, "No."

Dennis Burnett:        "I guess we're not leaving."

Ginny Rousseau:        "We're not leaving. Randy did not deliver." I love Randy dearly and he's Bryant's godfather, but he did not deliver. We did, excuse me, the two of us. [They said,] "No, you can't do that. No." Well, what we ended up doing was—

Dennis Burnett:        Two hours later, Randy and I both signed.

Ginny Rousseau:        There are two names on the birth certificate (all laugh).

Dennis Burnett:        It just seemed like, how stupid is this? (Ginny laughs)



Ginny Rousseau:        So, his name is Bryant Whitney Rousseau Burnett, Whitney for the mountain. (notice the two middle names!) Bryant use to ask us why we named him after a girl singer (Whitney Houston).

Brenna Lissoway:        Wow, that is remarkable. Truly.

Dennis Burnett:         100<sup>th</sup> anniversary is next year, September 25<sup>th</sup>; I think Bryant may be the last—

Ginny Rousseau:        Last birth—

Dennis Burnett:         —at least employee birth in the park.

Ginny Rousseau:        Yeah.

Brenna Lissoway:        The last employee birth in the park?

Ginny Rousseau:        We think. We're not sure.

Brenna Lissoway:        Oh, wow.

Ginny Rousseau:        We got the morning report saying Bryant was born in the car. I mean, born at Amphitheater Point.

Dennis Burnett:        Bill Halainen posted it on the NPS Morning Report.

Ginny Rousseau:        But anyway, that kind of started another phase. I was a nursing mom, so we had a code worked out. It was, "Are you available for a phone call?" That meant, "Get home. This kid wants to nurse."

Dennis Burnett:        And I had some [breast milk] on hand.

Ginny Rousseau:        Thanks to Lamaze and breast pumps and all that. But this was early on and there was not a whole lot. I had a lady in North Carolina that was a Lamaze coach that I called all the way to North Carolina if I had issues. I think I took off nine weeks or so.

Dennis Burnett:        I don't think it was that long.

Ginny Rousseau:        Six, with Bryant, six weeks. Anyway,

Dennis Burnett:        Because I did your summer hiring that summer.

Ginny Rousseau:        You did.

Dennis Burnett:        For your candidates.

Brenna Lissoway:        And you went back to work full-time after six weeks?

Dennis Burnett:        I was permanent intermittent, and I took over her job.

Ginny Rousseau:        While I—

Brenna Lissoway:        Okay, so they just—

Dennis Burnett:        As luck would have it, we would just reverse roles and we just kept rolling.

Brenna Lissoway:        Wow. Ginny, you went back to work and did you (to Dennis) go back to being the house spouse?

Ginny Rousseau:        We had a newborn and a two-year-old.

Brenna Lissoway:      Oh, my gosh.

Ginny Rousseau:      He cut thirteen cords of wood that summer.

Dennis Burnett:        Every summer because it was soft wood, so you need a lot of wood up there. So, I'd put Bryant in a wind-up baby swing, if you will. The woodpile was right across the street from our house, so Linsay and I would go across the street and start splitting wood. He'd sit there and swing to sleep and then he'd wake up and we'd do something and back and forth. When the next winter rolled around, she's (Ginny) up at Wolverton, so it would take me about three to four hours to prep two kids, get them fed, get them changed, get them dressed, get the lunches made, our lunch, her (Ginny) lunch, drive to Wolverton, which wasn't more than five miles, if it was that.

Ginny Rousseau:      About twenty minutes.

Dennis Burnett:        And then we'd ski all day. Linsay was almost skiing before she was walking.

Brenna Lissoway:      Wow.

Dennis Burnett:        I'd have Bryant in the backpack skiing until he fell asleep and I'd stick him under a pine tree and we'd just ski around him until he woke up and then we'd go do something else.

Brenna Lissoway:      Wow, you made it work.

Dennis Burnett:        Yeah.

Brenna Lissoway:      So, you mentioned earlier that you were probably – you were the only, uh, stay-at-home father at that point in the park.

Ginny Rousseau:      We never heard of anybody that did it.

Brenna Lissoway:      So, what was that like for you?

Ginny Rousseau:      That's why he cut thirteen cords of wood.

Dennis Burnett:        Yeah, the frustration of – we'd both put in for the same job, I thought I was more qualified, she thought she was more qualified. I wasn't the selecting official so that's basically how it worked out. Um, one screaming match in the bathroom one evening and that was it; I got it together. I was bitter, probably for a couple months. When I was doing her job, it was fine, when it switched back and I was not doing much of anything other than wildland fire, structural fire, I finally got over it. That's what you have to do.

Ginny Rousseau:      I forgot that screaming match—

Dennis Burnett:        Yes.

Ginny Rousseau:      —in the bathroom.

Dennis Burnett: And I don't think we've had an issue since as far as duty—

Ginny Rousseau: Well, I did in St. Louis.

Dennis Burnett: Ah, well okay.

Ginny Rousseau: But that's a little further down. Okay, so that worked well. Tom Tschohl was extremely tolerant. Dennis would bring Bryant over to the office and I'd throw a blanket over my shoulder, he'd nurse. Not a big deal. Everybody would – again, we made it work. If the fire alarm went off, I came home, Dennis went. We took Bryant to – he had his first structural fire course at about four weeks old. He sat in the back and he got a little certificate.

Dennis Burnett: Burnt a few houses at Ash Mountain.

Ginny Rousseau: I twisted a knee skiing and I was in a knee brace and I wanted to go into the structure – nobody would do this now.

Dennis Burnett: For the flashover.

Ginny Rousseau: I wanted to see the flashover and the fire in the house.

Dennis Burnett: Because the gases just build up and build up—

Brenna Lissoway: What's a flashover?

Dennis Burnett: —and then they explode into flame and you're on the ground watching this.

Brenna Lissoway: Ah, okay.

Dennis Burnett: These two instructors were outstanding. In fact, one just died this year. (Tony Bacon and Duane Campbell)

Ginny Rousseau: But we put Bryant in the cab of the fire truck, he stayed there and watched out the window. Linsay was with somebody else, I think, because we only had him. But I had a knee brace on and I said, "Look just let me crawl in, so I can see this and go through it, and if you have to grab my feet and pull me out, do." Anyway, they probably wouldn't let you do that nowadays.

Brenna Lissoway: Doubtful.

Dennis Burnett: So, we're at a point where Linsay now is three and a half or four and we lived two hours from school. Bob Smith was the chief ranger, and we were trying to figure out, is there a possibility that we could move within the park.

Ginny Rousseau: To Ash Mountain.

Dennis Burnett: To Ash Mountain, or somewhere to where we could get her to public schools the next year. We were hoping preschool but specifically for kindergarten—

Ginny Rousseau: Kindergarten.

Dennis Burnett:       —which would have been the following year. And things weren't looking promising; there were no vacancies. So, it was nobodies' fault, it was just the way it was.

Ginny Rousseau:       But Dennis, bless his heart, would drive two hours to Visalia twice a week with both kids and go put her in preschool, go walk the mall with Bryant—

Dennis Burnett:       In a backpack—

Ginny Rousseau:       —in a backpack—

Dennis Burnett:       —hike trails—

Ginny Rousseau:       Until she got out—

Dennis Burnett:       In the park

Ginny Rousseau:       —get her and take her back.

Brenna Lissoway:      Wow.

Dennis Burnett:       She was not potty trained the first day she went. We came home that night, she said, “Dad, I want some big girl pants.” She potty rained herself in a day, because—

Brenna Lissoway:      Because she saw—

Dennis Burnett:       —going to preschool, if she wanted to continue going, which she liked, and said, “I want some big girl pants.” End of discussion.

Brenna Lissoway:      Wow.

Dennis Burnett:       Life of a parent (laughs).

Ginny Rousseau:       Okay, so, we're stuck.

Dennis Burnett:       What do we do?

Ginny Rousseau:       What do we do.

Dennis Burnett:       You went to several wildland fire trainings at Santa Monica.

Ginny Rousseau:       Oh, that's right!

Dennis Burnett:       Because we had a pop-up trailer, we had bicycles. And so, you're in class, I'd already had all these classes. So, you're in class doing 200 and 300-level wildland fire classes, this was at some ranch, [Paradise Ranch]—

Ginny Rousseau:       Um—

Dennis Burnett:       Paramount Ranch—

Ginny Rousseau:       Yeah.

Dennis Burnett:       —within the park. And so, we're staying in a pop-up trailer on parklands there and I've got a bicycle with Linsay on a bicycle seat and Bryant in a backpack, so we'd go biking for the day. So that's

how we spent our time, yeah. Or drive to the beach, yeah.

Ginny Rousseau: I'd forgot that.

Dennis Burnett: I did too.

Ginny Rousseau: Again, what do we do? We need to get kindergarten for this child. Again, not going to make the mistake of both applying for a job. The way we kind of looked at it was, okay this is his turn.

Brenna Lissoway: Okay.

Ginny Rousseau: I'd had the sub-district ranger job at Sequoia.

Dennis Burnett: Great place to work for both of us.

Ginny Rousseau: Oh, absolutely.

Dennis Burnett: But we had to do something for Linsay.

Ginny Rousseau: So now it was kind of his turn.

Dennis Burnett: So, I'd look at vacancy announcements and put in for the assistant chief ranger job at the [Gateway] Arch in St. Louis. The chief ranger was Ivan Tolley who I had worked for as a seasonal on Isle Royale for two years. Talked to him on the phone, asked him what was going on, what's the job, this, that and the other, and got hired.

Brenna Lissoway: Would part of that conversation be what would be available for Ginny?

Dennis Burnett: Yeah.

Brenna Lissoway: Okay.

Ginny Rousseau: And they put me on permanent intermittent. Again, that—

Dennis Burnett: Did they, or did the region? Flo Six.

Ginny Rousseau: No, they did first.

Dennis Burnett: And then it became an issue?

Ginny Rousseau: And then region picked me up.

Dennis Burnett: About a year later – yeah, I guess it was.

Ginny Rousseau: No, I'm not sure that region ever picked me up.

Dennis Burnett: No, it's the wrong place – I'm in the wrong park.

Ginny Rousseau: Okay. Region didn't pick me up. I stayed permanent intermittent, but I didn't work that much for the Arch after a certain point, then the region picked me up.

Ginny Rousseau: Okay, so we've got this move to St. Louis. It's December and we've two kids driving cross-country, stopping in shopping malls along the way to let them run, because that's the only place it's warm enough to. We get to St. Louis, there was a storm coming, so

we really pushed it to get there before the storm hit. We always watch weather – park rangers always watch weather, that’s the first thing you do in the morning is, What’s the weather going to be? So, we knew this storm – major storm was coming. So, we beat feet, got there before the storm, checked into a motel. The next morning when we woke up it was minus sixty-two degrees.

Dennis Burnett: But the wind chill factor was minus seventy-two, I don’t know what the air temperature was, but it was down there.

Ginny Rousseau: The inside of the windows had ice on them, we had every sleeping bag we owned on the bed and the car wouldn’t start. And they said, “Oh that happens all the time. Wait till it thaws out”—

Dennis Burnett: “Once it gets up to zero it should start.” So, it was like four days later.

Ginny Rousseau: And we went, “What are we doing here?” (laughs).

Dennis Burnett: Leaving the Sierras and its moderate weather.

Brenna Lissoway: Right.

Dennis Burnett: We were leaving ten feet of snow at Lodgepole and going to St. Louis for four inches of ice.

Ginny Rousseau: Okay, so that was kind of our introduction to St. Louis. All of the sudden I’m in the, very abruptly, house spouse mode. Not working right away because we didn’t have a house, it took us—

Dennis Burnett: Six months to find something—

Ginny Rousseau: It was six.

Dennis Burnett: —in the school district we wanted to get into.

Ginny Rousseau: Six months to find a house. We housesat for one ranger – or we rented one ranger’s condo; it had no furniture. We housesat for some people—

Dennis Burnett: Yeah, we found in the newspaper.

Ginny Rousseau: —we found in the newspaper and finally bought a house. That was pretty trying. I was home with these two kids all day and had no clue.

Dennis Burnett: Because all the—

Brenna Lissoway: Because—

Dennis Burnett: —all the summer clothes were in storage and we had to buy summer clothes because all we had were winter clothes.

Brenna Lissoway: Right, and this was really your first full-time taste of what Dennis had been doing for the last couple of years.

Ginny Rousseau: I don’t think I dealt with it very well.

- Dennis Burnett:        So, she got a job at Schnuck's, the grocery store (Ginny laughs).
- Brenna Lissoway:      Oh, interesting.
- Dennis Burnett:        Oops.
- Brenna Lissoway:      Why was that an “oops?”
- Dennis Burnett:        She was more sick that year than any other year—
- Ginny Rousseau:        Because all the germs.
- Dennis Burnett:        —because the people who go to the grocery store—oh my goodness.
- Brenna Lissoway:      Oh yeah.
- Dennis Burnett:        I think she always had a cold.
- Ginny Rousseau:        But we got the kids into some activities, into preschool. Interesting thing was, Linsay would have started kindergarten in California, but in Missouri the age limit was different, so she had to go another year to preschool. So, it was like, Really? Okay. So, we got both kids into a really good Montessori preschool (“A Growing Place”), and a good community school system that we were pleased with.
- Ginny Rousseau:        I remember the first time that I was home on Fourth of July and Dennis was working the Veiled Prophet Fair, which is a big fair on the Arch grounds for what – two weeks? Is it?
- Dennis Rousseau:      No, it was just the July Fourth weekend. It is now called Fair St. Louis, but they would get anywhere from two hundred to six hundred thousand a day, per day, whatever the length was, main stage under the Arch, huge performances, whoever is the top of the entertainment field would usually show up.
- Ginny Rousseau:        But I remember taking the kids to a little local carnival and doing the Ferris wheel and looking out, seeing the Arch and going, “This is one of the first holidays I have ever not worked.” So, actually we went to some family counseling there because I wasn’t – again some issues. I wasn’t dealing well with being the stay-at-home mom; it was tough.
- Brenna Lissoway:      That’s a big change too, going from living so rurally to right in the middle of one of the largest cities in the country.
- Dennis Burnett:        Our first urban – my first urban experience.
- Ginny Rousseau:        Webster Groves where we lived was a very nice small community within the metropolitan area, really nice, a good place for kids: parks and all that. But again, it’s like, okay, what am I doing?
- Dennis Burnett:        Isn’t that when Flo Six in the Midwest Region started bringing you onboard more in the training capacity?

- Ginny Rousseau:        Yeah, first I was working permanent intermittent, so I would work different shifts. We had a babysitter, that was the first time we found a lady to babysit, if both of us were working.
- Ginny Rousseau:        And I was permanent intermittent, so I was working shift work. Well, having gone from a sub-district ranger to shift work, that's a little difficult, because you have ideas on how to make things better and honestly, they didn't want to hear it, especially from a permanent intermittent. So that was a little frustrating, it was like, Really? You couldn't help make it better. Patrol the arch grounds, that gets old, but it was interesting dealing with all the homeless, you kind of got to know them.
- Ginny Rousseau:        That was the first time I think I realized that there becomes a point where you can only drop back so far. Going from say, sub-district ranger to a patrol ranger, or DR – how far can you fall back and still deal with it because once you've had some responsibility and supervised and helped make things better and been able to organize, to drop back to a position where you just do what you're told, that's a difficult transition. So—
- Dennis Burnett:        So, you started doing a fair amount of work for the region.
- Ginny Rousseau:        So yes—
- Brenna Lissoway:        So what is – you mentioned Flo Six, what is—
- Ginny Rousseau:        Flo Six is married to John Townsend.
- Brenna Lissoway:        Oh so this is a person.
- Ginny Rousseau and Dennis Burnett: This is a person.
- Brenna Lissoway:        I thought it was a program (laughs), okay.
- Ginny Rousseau:        She was a fabulous, uh—what was she?
- Dennis Burnett:        She was a training officer.
- Ginny Rousseau:        (Ginny and Dennis speaking at the same time) Training officer for the Midwest Region.
- Dennis Burnett:        You had known her prior, I'm pretty sure.
- Ginny Rousseau:        No, actually Bill Wade comes in to play again. He was a big supporter of us throughout our career. He was my instructor at Albright when I went. Again, he hired—
- Dennis Burnett:        He was the assistant chief of the Smokies when we moved there.
- Ginny Rousseau:        Yeah, so he was good to us.
- Dennis Burnett:        Uh-huh.
- Ginny Rousseau:        So, they were putting together a regional teaching team and it was to teach situational leadership and they wanted instructors – people from each region so that they'd have a teaching cadre. Well, Flo



wanted to put together one, so I raised my hand, because my background was an education major at college. I taught school before getting in the Park Service and I taught defensive tactics and all this. It looked like a good fit. I was available. There were four of us and I can think of – who’s the guy from Indiana Dunes, the big man, he’s dead now?

Dennis Burnett: He was the assistant superintendent. (Glen Alexander)

Ginny Rousseau: Yeah. Art Eck, myself – what was the maintenance guy from Sleeping Bear [Dunes National Lakeshore]? Okay, I’ll have to look up some names for you. (Chris Case)

Dennis Burnett: We’ll have to get some names for you.

Ginny Rousseau: There were four or five of us on this team and they sent us all to Albright, did a weeklong training. Rick Tate and Bill Wade taught it and basically came out with a cadre to teach within the region, so I became one of the instructors. Usually two of us usually would go, sometimes three but usually two of us for a three and a half, four-day training session. Great. Loved it. That was, I mean, my bread and butter, I really enjoyed doing that.

Brenna Lissoway: That probably required a lot of travel.

Ginny Rousseau: Oh, yeah.

Brenna Lissoway: So how did you handle that?

Dennis Burnett: We had a babysitter if we needed it, yeah, or I took leave. (Kathy Green's parents [who lived in Webster Groves] found her for us. Kathy is retired NPS ranger).

Ginny Rousseau: There was a lady who kept them at her house.

Dennis Burnett: Oh, could have been, I’m thinking of Cape Cod, there could have been one there too.

Ginny Rousseau: Anyway, we made it work. That was a real bonus for me, it got me out, it got me involved. My passion for teaching, I think, really came out. So then—

Dennis Burnett: I’d spent three weeks or four weeks of that second summer there with the Alpine Hotshots, they’d just started a crew boss trainee training session nationwide – service wide, and I was selected out of the Midwest Region to attend this in which you hooked up as a crew boss trainee, for me it was with the Alpine Hotshot Crew, one of two of the Park Service teams, and spent two or three weeks with them in Yellowstone [National Park], worked our way down to Zion [National Park] to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. With that under my belt I was able to go out on a couple wildland fires when you weren’t teaching. I was a crew boss on the Stanislaus Fire, which is a complex fire in central California. I’d

put in for a job – district ranger job on Cape Cod and Ginny runs me down through the base camp at fire camp—

Ginny Rousseau:

No, at the airport.

Dennis Burnett:

Oh, was I going or coming? I was going, that's right.

Ginny Rousseau:

We got a phone call. Dennis had applied for a job, Cape Cod National Seashore as a South District ranger. We decided it was time to leave the Arch. So, I get this phone call saying, "Chief Ranger wants to talk to Dennis Burnett about a job." I said, "Well he just flew out on a fire." Going, holy shit what do we do? So, I said, "Give me an hour" – or two, whatever your flight time was, and called the airport he was supposed to land at and had him paged.

Dennis Burnett:

This predates cellphones (laughs).

Ginny Rousseau:

Had him paged at the airport, he calls me, I say, "You just got a call from Tony Bonanno at Cape Cod, he wants to offer you a job as the Cape Cod South District ranger. He goes, "Well, what do I do?" and I go, "Call him!" (all laugh), so he called and accepted. By the time he came home I had the house sold.

Brenna Lissoway:

Wow.

Dennis Burnett:

Sold in six days.

Ginny Rousseau:

Sold it in six days.

Brenna Lissoway:

Oh, my gosh.

Ginny Rousseau:

So, here we go again.

Brenna Lissoway:

Before we move on to the next phase I wanted to ask you (to Dennis), because it was a rare thing, to be a stay-at-home father for those years, what was it like for you to transition back into the work force? It sounds like it was really difficult for Ginny to go the other direction, but what was it like for you?

Ginny Rousseau:

They'd been working you enough in Sequoia.

Dennis Burnett:

They utilized me enough to where I kept my fingers involved. Like I said, Art Partin took care of me as far as getting the training that I needed. ICS [Incident Command System] was just getting off the ground. So, I was sort of on the ground floor of all that ICS training. I'm currently a planning section chief because I stepped out of operations. Going up mountains and cleaning up the oil spill, I lived in Mobile, Alabama for two months as a planning section chief. It didn't seem to be – I didn't think it was that difficult. Once I got used to being home, which we had that issue. I said, Okay, this is where I am. I think my culinary skills got a little bit better.

- Ginny Rousseau: First on a microwave and cooking microwave – not microwave dinners, but cooked dinners in the microwave because it was fast—
- Dennis Burnett: Time was everything. You got two kids doing who knows what, so you can't spend all your time in the kitchen, but you need to cook. I became fairly proficient at cooking meals using a microwave.
- Ginny Rousseau: He still cooks all our meals, but not necessarily in the microwave (laughs). I'm not sure I transitioned as well to being the stay-at-home expert.
- Dennis Burnett: So, we moved to the Cape and she continued with the Omaha – the Midwest Region in their teaching cadre.
- Ginny Rousseau: And I have to say, in St. Louis, when we were moving to the Cape, that was the first time somebody made an attempt to help out a dual career couple. Nicky Lindig was that AO (at the Arch) and they'd just come out with this – I wish I'd saved one – a dual career brochure talking about accommodating—
- Dennis Burnett: Some of the things that a park could do.
- Ginny Rousseau: —some of the, yes. He got St. Louis to be willing to put me on a year's leave of absence so I didn't have to resign, or a leave without pay, basically.
- Dennis Burnett: Leave without pay.
- Ginny Rousseau: So, I still held the position, but I was on leave without pay. So hopefully when we got to Cape Cod at some point something would come up. He really helped facilitate that and he had me do some admin work for him as well. Instead of just patrol, I helped do some admin work, which was totally not my expertise, but all I had to do was type on a computer. Okay, I can do this. But, yeah, he was very accommodating there. We got to Cape Cod and I was on a year's leave of absence or leave without pay, I was still getting paid if I worked for the Midwest training, if I went and did training with them, but—
- Dennis Burnett: When your dream job came open—
- Ginny Rousseau: Oh, God. We got to Cape Cod, living in park housing—
- Dennis Burnett: Lived for a year.
- Ginny Rousseau: In Wellfleet and built a house in Eastham.
- Dennis Burnett: That was after you got back.
- Ginny Rousseau: That was after I got back? Okay. We got to the Cape and this year's kind of ticking by and I'm working a few angles. That Olmstead home, what's his name was thinking of—
- Dennis Burnett: Rolf.
- Ginny Rousseau: Rolf—

Dennis Burnett:       Diamant.

Ginny Rousseau:       —Diamant was going to think of picking me up to do something but that would have meant a five-hour round trip commute into Boston, but I was looking for something. But as he (to Dennis) said, my dream job came up.

Brenna Lissoway:      What was that?

Ginny Rousseau:       An instructor at Albright Training Center, in the protection function. Doug Morris was leaving – no, J.T. Reynolds was leaving—

Dennis Burnett:       J.T. was leaving it.

Ginny Rousseau:       —J.T. was the – because J.T. followed Doug.

Dennis Burnett:       J.T. was moving to Boston as the regional chief.

Ginny Rousseau:       Yeah, and we looked at each other and it was like, okay, because Dennis certainly was not ready to leave the Cape at all.

Brenna Lissoway:      How long had you been there?

Dennis Burnett:       Just a year.

Brenna Lissoway:      Just a year, okay.

Ginny Rousseau:       I remember—

Dennis Burnett:       Talked to a lot of people.

Ginny Rousseau:       I remember Dennis looked at me and he said, “If you don’t take this, you’ll always regret it.” We talked to school counselors about the kids, “What if we do this? What will the effects on them going to be?” We talked and talked and talked. I put in for the job and I got it. So, went to breakfast in Orleans, put me on the airport or wherever it was(??)—

Dennis Burnett:       (unintelligible) Put you on the bus at Barnstable for Logan airport in Boston.

Ginny Rousseau:       Put me on the bus, and there’s Dennis and these two little kids waving goodbye at me as I leave the Cape.

Dennis Burnett:       Heading for Logan.

Ginny Rousseau:       Heading for Logan Airport. That was really hard. It makes me tear up thinking about it (Ginny and Dennis laugh).

Brenna Lissoway:      So, what was your plan at that point?

Dennis Burnett:       Well, we found a lady – both kids were in school, Linsay was in kindergarten—

Ginny Rousseau:       Kindergarten.

Dennis Burnett:       Bryant was in preschool. And so, I would drop them early each

day, which was no problem and I would go to work. It was an all-day preschool, all-day kindergarten. Then after school they got transported to this lady and I would pick them up when my shift ended. I had enough flexibility and Tony was very amenable to it. We didn't have all that many emergencies; if we did, we would deal with it. We had a game plan in place, at least for a while.

Dennis Burnett: When they both got in to elementary school in Wellfleet it became a little bit more difficult to where I came up with the idea to talk to a few parents who were not unlike me, they weren't park rangers, but they were gainfully employed, and what do we do with the kids. I, by myself with a little help, started an afterschool program at the elementary school, Wellfleet Elementary School, and got pro bono work from an attorney who got us 5-C status, non-profit, drafted a position description for a program director, and that got that person hired, came up worked with a principal to get a room dedicated for afterschool purposes, play things, that sort of thing, hired a director and got the announcements out. Went to town meeting, in New England they have town meetings instead of town councils, so that's where everything – twice a year they have these meetings, so we put our proposal together, asking for, I think, just \$2,000 of seed money to get us up and running. And then just with the payment of the parents and that many kids they put through there got established. And so, they went from school to afterschool right on site, then I would pick them up when I got off work.

Dennis Burnett: Half a year later they asked me to run for the school board and I said, "I've got enough doing right now. I don't need this." And so that's how we functioned. We'd get together maybe every eight weeks, I'm thinking.

Ginny Rousseau: Probably every ten or twelve.

Dennis Burnett: I think it was a little less.

Ginny Rousseau: A little less.

Dennis Burnett: Ginny would generally fly back, or we would meet somewhere in between: Chicago relatives, South Bend, Indiana relatives, that sort of thing. I had one trip (Ginny laughs), we met in Disney World. You'd just finished up a session.

Ginny Rousseau: See, I had sessions – ranger skill sessions, or the facility maintenance session. We would teach for these long blocks of time and then have several weeks off. So, I would fly back to wherever we would meet. (to Dennis) Tell her about that one.

Dennis Burnett: Works out well when you have two kids when you start driving at 8:00 at night. They sleep for twelve hours. I'm taking NoDoz and I'm taking coffee and Coke and driving in a major snowstorm in North Carolina. I-95 is open, but you can only drive, like 20 miles

an hour, at the most, just beaten, just to death. So, we pull off somewhere, I can't even remember where it was, trying to get into a motel and all the motels are booked. But we're ready to go right to sleep, so we're in the motel parking lot asleep in sleeping bags. Left a message for you somewhere because, again no cell phones. Or is that where I found you in the bar?

Ginny Rousseau: That's where you found me in the bar. Somehow I had enough contacts that I ran her down to the Museum Club in Flagstaff, Arizona (Ginny laughs), driving from the [Grand] Canyon to the airport of Phoenix where she was going to fly out the next morning and meet us in Florida.

Ginny Rousseau: Well, the facility maintenance guys were all at the end of their class. They were all going to the Museum Club for one last bash. Sue McGill was the only woman in the class, so she and I were together. Then I was getting a ride from there down to Phoenix to catch the airplane.

Dennis Burnett: So, she's in the bar dancing and the kids and I are in a major snowstorm in our sleeping bags in the parking lot hoping that we survive until morning. Telling her, "We may not be at the airport when you get there, we may still be in North Carolina." (all laugh)

Ginny Rousseau: So, they announced in the bar, "There's a phone call for Ginny Rousseau."

Dennis Burnett: So, her first thing is, "How did you find me (all laugh)." And I go, "Don't go there."

Brenna Lissoway: You knew each other well, right? (Ginny laughs)

Ginny Rousseau: Anyways—

Brenna Lissoway: Well—Oh, go ahead.

Ginny Rousseau: Go ahead. That's the—Go ahead.

Brenna Lissoway: I was going to ask, when you went to Albright was there any discussion about trying to get you (to Dennis) out to the Grand Canyon?

Ginny Rousseau: We thought it was a perfect opportunity. She was at Albright, which is not associated with the Grand Canyon; Grand Canyon has a large staff. We figured, "Gosh, I should be able to get a job there." Didn't work out. I put in for three jobs over the two years. I don't know if I was considered, but I never got one.

Ginny Rousseau: There was some real friction between the Grand Canyon and Albright, for whatever reason. (please don't publish)

Brenna Lissoway: Yeah, so he got caught up in—

Dennis Burnett: He had some issues with, "Oh, she's in Albright housing, she's not

in Canyon housing.”

Ginny Rousseau:        That would be perfect.

Dennis Burnett:        I would be living in Albright housing I could work in the Canyon and you’d have another house to play with.

Brenna Lissoway:       Right.

Dennis Burnett:        Well, they didn’t see it our way. We were, I don’t want to say naïve, but we thought that if there’s going to be an opportunity for dual careers in the National Park Service this has got to be it. Albright. Grand Canyon. Dual careers. Can of corn. No discussion.

Brenna Lissoway:       And at that point, the official Park Service policy about—

Dennis Burnett:        Was, we’ll try to accommodate, but you don’t have to go out of your way, should you choose not to. My opinion, our opinion is that the Park Service will do what is in their best advantage, number one; if they want to take care of you they will, there were a few dual careers while we were doing this, they had no issues, they were moved several times together into good jobs, to where opinion was, gosh, it shouldn’t be this hard. But like I said we spoke to folks we knew from the State Department and they move couples on a regular basis because that’s how they like to move them to foreign assignments.

Brenna Lissoway:       As a couple.

Dennis Burnett:        Yeah, we told them our story and they were just aghast that the Park Service would do absolutely nothing.

Ginny Rousseau:        Or, help people very sporadically depending on who the superintendent was.

Brenna Lissoway:       So, it was really personality-driven, it wasn’t—

Dennis Burnett:        Absolutely. It was absolutely.

Ginny Rousseau:        Absolutely. Like we said, Bill Wade accommodated us a number of times.

Dennis Burnett:        Nobody was asking for people to create positions; we would just like to be considered. And I can assume that I was considered for positions on the South Rim. I can’t see why I would not be qualified. I had worked Yosemite Valley, I had worked Lake Mead, I was a district ranger at Cape Cod, supervisor in two of the primary law enforcement parks in the country, probably more so than Grand Canyon, and was not considered – not selected.

Ginny Rousseau:        We had also felt very strongly that in dual career situations somebody should never be forced on anybody because a lot of times there may be one person who’s very skilled and the other one is maybe not. Somebody should not be forced, but they should be

able to compete. That's kind of our philosophy is you should be able to at least compete on a level playing field for a job.

Brenna Lissoway: Did you—

Dennis Burnett: Go ahead.

Brenna Lissoway: Did you push that at all?

Dennis Burnett: Oh no.

Ginny Rousseau: No, not at all.

Dennis Burnett: We were not trying to make an issue; we just thought this would be a good opportunity. It just didn't work out. So, two years into this, I'm house spousing with two kids, run an afterschool program, getting together every eight to ten weeks and then what do we do? So, two years later the chief ranger position of the Atlantic Region came open.

Ginny Rousseau: Well actually, who was it, not Bob Stanley – Herb Cables? – came to Albright to talk.

Dennis Burnett: Would have been Herb.

Ginny Rousseau: Herb Cables was the regional director—

Dennis Burnett: Yeah.

Ginny Rousseau: For the Northeast region.

Dennis Burnett: North Atlantic.

Ginny Rousseau: North Atlantic region, it was when there were two regions.

Dennis Burnett: No longer there.

Ginny Rousseau: Right. There was North Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic, and they combined. He came to Albright to speak to the ranger skills class. At some point he became – he talked to me and he became aware that I was an instructor here and Dennis was back on Cape Cod. It had been two years and we were a little frustrated with that. He seemed to take that to heart and seemed very concerned about it. I didn't think much of it. Then the regional chief ranger job in the North Atlantic region came open and I don't remember, he didn't call me, but somehow, I was encouraged to apply for that. Or did we just see it?

Dennis Burnett: No, you may have – I don't think it was a direct reassignment.

Ginny Rousseau: It wasn't,

Dennis Burnett: You were encouraged to—

Ginny Rousseau: But—

Dennis Burnett: No, you couldn't have been because you were a 12 and it was a 13.



- Ginny Rousseau: I was a 12 and it was a 13. And so, I figured, okay this would at least get me back closer to the Cape.
- Dennis Burnett: Same time zone.
- Ginny Rousseau: Same time zone, that's important. So, I applied for the regional chief job. I was selected. So that got me back to the Cape, but with a five-and-a-half-hour commute to Boston, which I did on the bus and in carpools.
- Dennis Burnett: It was doable.
- Ginny Rousseau: I had a friend in town I would sometimes stay in town with at the north end and spend the night if I needed to stay in. But now we're back under the same roof; problems come up when you do that. You have a daughter who has been the lady of the household and so that was an interesting factor – "Dad doesn't do it that way" – and taking great offense to mom being there and suddenly trying to step in and give direction.
- Brenna Lissoway: How old were they at that point?
- Dennis Burnett: Linsay would have been ten. Bryant would have been seven and a half.
- Brenna Lissoway: Wow, interesting (Dennis laughs).
- Ginny Rousseau: It wasn't terrible, but it certainly got my attention of, "Whoa"—
- Dennis Burnett: "What do you think you're doing?"
- Ginny Rousseau: I'm the outsider here. So then started the commuting thing to Boston. Good job, long job, hard job. We made it work. We ended up building a house in Eastham, kids were again getting up in school where they had activities and they were easier to figure out afternoon things. So then what?
- Dennis Burnett: A chief ranger position Delaware Water Gap [National Recreation Area] came open and it was written as a 12/13; I was an 11. Put in for it, didn't get it. But during this process the Pennsylvania district ranger position, which was a 12, did come open and was asked if I would consider that. I was not going to get the chief's job, but "We're very interested in you as a PA district ranger."
- Ginny Rousseau: So, did they do a direct reassignment?
- Dennis Burnett: No, they may have announced it again, I can't remember exactly.
- Brenna Lissoway: So, this was a promotion for you?
- Dennis Burnett: Yeah.
- Ginny Rousseau: See, again we're – I think I spent ten years as a GS-9 in our dual career, kind of nudging our way up the ladder.
- Dennis Burnett: We'd been on the Cape for five years.

Ginny Rousseau:        Yeah.

Dennis Burnett:        Hard place to leave.

Ginny Rousseau:        Oh, yes.

Brenna Lissoway:        Was it?

Dennis Burnett:        Yeah, it was a great place. There was little promotional opportunity. So, we moved.

Ginny Rousseau:        You moved.

Dennis Burnett:        At least three of us did (laughs).

Brenna Lissoway:        And you (to Ginny) kept your position with the region.

Ginny Rousseau:        Uh-huh, regional chief. Rented an attic apartment from a friend's place in Quincy, closer to the office. We sold the house on the Cape. I would drive to Delaware Water Gap on Thursday evening after work and stay until Sunday night – or Sunday afternoon and drive back to Boston. It was a five-and-a-half-hour drive.

Dennis Burnett:        Yeah.

Ginny Rousseau:        I would be home for four days and again, Linsay would go, “Who are you?”

Brenna Lissoway:        What was that transition like for your kids, because that sounds like it—?

Dennis Burnett:        Well, we talked to them about that a lot, too. I think we talked to some other folks at the Gap about school districts. The school district where we would be living in government housing was fairly highly regarded.

Ginny Rousseau:        One of the interesting things when I was at Albright and Dennis was on the Cape was the kids at school told them, “Your parents are divorced because they don't live together.”

Brenna Lissoway:        Interesting.

Ginny Rousseau:        And we had a child psychologist school counselor tell us, “Keep communication open. They will be just fine as long as you talk about things.” The kids wrote me letters. Tell them about your—

Dennis Burnett:        I'd go and make fry bread for the kindergarten class. They'd have sessions where they would do this sort of thing. So, I would bring a little compact stove, a little frying pan, and I'd cook up fry bread for all the kids. (speaking at the same time) For the police officer day I'd go in and read to the kids, they'd have that for police officers to come down.

Brenna Lissoway:        So, they didn't see you (to Ginny) coming in as often—

Ginny Rousseau:        Ever.

Brenna Lissoway:     —or ever. That’s interesting.

Ginny Rousseau:     But tell them about the letters you wrote me, the e-mails, which I still haven’t read all of them.

Dennis Burnett:     I kept a diary or two that you haven’t read.

Ginny Rousseau:     That’s what I mean.

Dennis Burnett:     You have not looked at it, you refused to read it.

Ginny Rousseau:     I know.

Dennis Burnett:     I kept a diary for two years, daily entries. I haven’t looked at it in over ten years. I think it is still in a format that I could retrieve it. She’s afraid to look at it.

Brenna Lissoway:    What inspired you to do that?

Dennis Burnett:     I needed to keep a diary because I’ll forget this at some point and mainly for you and the kids. The kids haven’t seen it either.

Ginny Rousseau:     It was hard because, you know, am I abandoning – Okay, we would get together with my stepfamily or people for Thanksgiving or things like that. And they would say, “How can you do that?” “How can you abandon your”—

Dennis Burnett:     “Family.”

Ginny Rousseau:     —“children?” “How can you abandon your husband?”

Dennis Burnett:     “When are you going to get a real job?” (Ginny and Dennis laugh)

Ginny Rousseau:     A lot of family pressures and nobody around who understood what park rangers did anyway.

Dennis Burnett:     No, nobody did.

Ginny Rousseau:     But it was hard, looking back I know I missed a lot. Would I have changed it? I don’t know because I wouldn’t be the person I am. I mean, now if I hadn’t done what I needed to do, but there was certainly a price to pay.

Dennis Burnett:     But conversely had you not taken the job, where would you be also?

Ginny Rousseau:     I get teary thinking about it.

Dennis Burnett:     You’re angry one way and you’re angry the other way. What’s the right thing? We did a lot of homework on this and it was not an easy decision, it really wasn’t.

Ginny Rousseau:     And I know I missed a lot with my kids.

Dennis Burnett:     Overall, we computed the months, it was seven years living apart. We had two fully furnished three-bedroom houses.

Ginny Rousseau:     Two microwaves, two washer dryers, you know.

- Brenna Lissoway:    Have you talked to your kids about this?
- Ginny Rousseau:    Oh, yeah.
- Brenna Lissoway:    What is their attitude? What do they say to you all about the way that they were—
- Dennis Burnett:    Bryant was sort of a ho-hum.
- Ginny Rousseau:    Well, they didn't know any different and that's one thing, kids if they don't know something's supposed to be a certain way then how can they say, "Gee, I didn't have this." What did you say, Linsay went to how many preschools or schools?
- Dennis Burnett:    Well, she lived in six states.
- Ginny Rousseau:    Six states before—
- Dennis Burnett:    Before high school.
- Ginny Rousseau:    —before high school.
- Brenna Lissoway:    Wow.
- Ginny Rousseau:    An interesting thing is, we felt it was important to teach them life skills. When I was leaving from the Cape to go to Albright, we looked at what is it the kids have to know how to do. We wrote up directions to how to use the washer-dryer and taped them on the dryer. Bryant was so little he had to jump to see if anything was in there. They did their laundry.
- Dennis Burnett:    From about age six or seven on.
- Ginny Rousseau:    Yeah.
- Dennis Burnett:    You don't worry about the small stuff, the clean clothes pile is over here, the dirty clothes pile is over here, yeah you have a dresser, "don't need it, going to pile it here, I'm good." Shut the door.
- Ginny Rousseau:    We put duvets on the quilts on the bed. To make their bed all they had to do was pull it up and their bed was made.
- Brenna Lissoway:    So, you really tried to simplify your life as much as possible.
- Ginny Rousseau:    Bryant is an excellent cook. They are both very independent. They both don't think there is one way of doing things. I remember we were on a trip to Hawaii when Dennis was investigating a homicide there and Bryant calls us on the cell phone and says, "How do you make pasta?" So, we had to give him directions over the phone on how to make pasta. But they never felt – I think they never felt there was one role a parent had.
- Dennis Burnett:    But I found out after the fact that they got tired of fish sticks and chicken breasts with Lawry's [Seasoned] Salt. I didn't – I wasn't quite the proficient cook that I could have been at that point (all

laugh).

Brenna Lissoway: But you were feeding them (all laugh).

Ginny Rousseau: Oh, God, the chicken breast. I think that's why Linsay is vegan today. It wasn't something we did in a cavalier manner. We really gave it a lot of thought. We really tried to say, what are the pros and cons and how can we make it work. It wasn't "Oh! (unintelligible)" We gave it a lot of thought and talked it through.

Dennis Burnett: We really did. And whether it was the right decision, wrong decision, we'll never know. It was a decision.

Brenna Lissoway: Right.

Ginny Rousseau: It is what it is.

Brenna Lissoway: Talk to me about this new – You were at Delaware Water Gap Park and you guys were still apart, what was the next phase like?

Dennis Burnett: After Delaware Water Gap? Was when she took, Bill Wade, again, called – (talking at the same time). Actually, you had left the region and you were acting superintendent.

Ginny Rousseau: I was in an acting superintendent job at Morristown. They were doing away with chief rangers in the regions. It was when they went to the cluster kind of organization and did away with – which have now been reinstated – but they were doing away with chief rangers. But to go back, when he was at Delaware Water Gap, I would get phone calls, like, "Hi Mom, we're at the emergency room. Dad just broke his finger (thumb)." (from Linsay)

Dennis Burnett: Playing softball.

Ginny Rousseau: Playing softball, things like that.

Dennis Burnett: That was a cell phone, wasn't it?

Ginny Rousseau: That was a cell phone.

Dennis Burnett: One of the first ones.

Ginny Rousseau: But anyway, so it was just kind of, "Oh. Okay. He's alright, right? You're talking to me, so I know." But again, little things like that.

Dennis Burnett: So, Morristown was less than an hour east of Delaware Water Gap. She's living at home.

Ginny Rousseau: I could live at home. I'd commute, other than snowstorms. I'd stay down there a couple of nights. Fabulous opportunity, I loved the acting job. I made it known that I would have loved the superintendency. Didn't work out.

Dennis Burnett: Was told, "No."

Ginny Rousseau: Was told, "No." I was there sitting in the office, beautiful wood paneled office in Washington's headquarters and I get a phone call

from Bill Wade in Shenandoah and he said, “Ginny, I’ve set up a new organization and I need somebody to come in and be a district leader. I said, “What is that?” “Well, we’re setting up three district leader positions, they are like mini little parks. You’ll have your own admin staff. You’ll oversee interp, maintenance, protection, resources. Every little nucleus has one. I need you in the central district.” Sounded great. So I said (laughs) – I did call you (Dennis) and ask.

Dennis Burnett: Well, after they said no to Morristown, you would go back to Boston.

Ginny Rousseau: But there was no position in Boston. He got me right out of there. I mean, it was a gift. He really hit us at the right time. Okay, I’m headed – South.

Dennis Burnett: Living in seasonal quarters in Shenandoah—

Ginny Rousseau: So, I move to Shenandoah. Six-and-a-half-hour commute, a little long. I got sciatica in the back of my leg from driving so much. We started saying, “Okay, we can’t do this every week. Let’s do it every two weeks.” So, every two weeks I would take time off and drive up. So, Dennis started looking for positions.

Dennis Burnett: Yeah, I was only at Delaware Water Gap two and a half years, I believe, when one of my dream jobs came open in DC. Which is a Regulations, Jurisdiction and Special Park Uses program manager for the Ranger Activities Division. Jim Brady who hired me in the [Yosemite] Valley and he was very cagey. He didn’t know if I was going to be qualified for it. I thought I was, and I had done a fair amount of studying stuff and it fascinated me and they selected me.

Ginny Rousseau: And wasn’t the work you did on 209, that legislation?

Dennis Burnett: That legislation wasn’t still pending. It was in place—

Ginny Rousseau: But you didn’t want to work on that—

Dennis Burnett: It was already in place. We were trying to get it to wind down and what are we going to do with it, but it probably wasn’t that much.

Ginny Rousseau: Was he aware of your situation?

Dennis Burnett: Oh gosh, yeah.

Ginny Rousseau: Yeah.

Brenna Lissoway: So, do you think this was a dual career effort?

Dennis Burnett: No.

Ginny Rousseau: No—

Brenna Lissoway: What about Bill?

Ginny Rousseau: I was in Shenandoah. There was nothing in Shenandoah.

- Brenna Lissoway:    There was nothing open?
- Ginny Rousseau:    No.
- Dennis Burnett:    No.
- Ginny Rousseau:    And again, we didn't push it. Because again, I'm a GS-13, at that point; he's a GS-12.
- Dennis Burnett:    That wasn't the issue. It was that promotion is always good, wanted to be chief ranger at the gap, didn't work out. District ranger at a dynamite district, double the workload I had on Cape Cod. Probably triple the staff, 24-hour operation, big, big operation. If you haven't been there, everybody that I know that's anybody in the Park Service has probably gone through Delaware Water Gap at any time. It was a really fun job. This was one of my dream jobs, number one, and number two, "Wow, we could probably live in the same house, maybe."
- Brenna Lissoway:    Were your kids still in the house—
- Dennis Burnett:    Still in elementary school. There was a weekend when Ginny attended a State Dinner at the White House with her stepbrother (Jim Kolbe), who was a Congressman from the First District of Arizona. While Ginny was at the White House having dinner in the Rose Garden, Lindsay, Bryant and I were having dinner at Wendy's in Milford, PA. I asked the kids; do you know where your mother is tonight?
- Brenna Lissoway:    Okay, okay, okay. So, you took this job in DC.
- Dennis Burnett:    So where are we going to land?
- Ginny Rousseau:    Okay, we have a summer of when—
- Dennis Burnett:    The kids were already lined up for summer activities, based in Pennsylvania.
- Ginny Rousseau:    So, we're driving back, one of us, to Pennsylvania to put them on a plane for here or get them there.
- Dennis Burnett:    An activity there, YMCA camp, music camp, gymnastics camp, Olympic camp—
- Ginny Rousseau:    Visits with friends in Wisconsin—
- Dennis Burnett:    —et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Small price to pay to be in the same state. We're going to land in northern Virginia.
- Ginny Rousseau:    Same time zone—
- Dennis Burnett:    Where are we going to look to build or buy? You had done a fair amount of legwork on school districts. We knew we were going to be in Fauquier County. Which middle school out of three— somehow you figured it out, you made some contacts.

- Ginny Rousseau: Kathy \_ Pegus \_\_\_\_\_ actually.
- Dennis Burnett: Put you in touch with Kathy, Kathy Kolbe.
- Ginny Rousseau: I don't remember but we figured out which school we wanted.
- Dennis Burnett: "One middle school you need to consider, don't consider this other one." We only looked at houses in the boundary for that school district, the middle school. And couldn't find anything, so we decided to go ahead and build. We were six months again out of house—
- Ginny Rousseau: No, it was more than six months.
- Dennis Burnett: Eight months.
- Ginny Rousseau: Okay, two moves (Dennis laughs). I'm in temporary quarters in Shenandoah, so my move hasn't taken place yet. I move with – what's the time frame they give you?
- Dennis Burnett: It's like three months.
- Ginny Rousseau: Three months.
- Dennis Burnett: There is something that they will pay you for temporary housing—
- Ginny Rousseau: They will pay you when you're looking for housing or a temporary lodging. So what we basically did was backed my move up to his move and combined it and we were in a motel for six months with two kids, two cats, and a bird, and having not lived together in a long time.
- Dennis Burnett: I did say seven years, didn't I? (Ginny laughs)
- Ginny Rousseau: So that was another challenge. A car came and picked the kids up for school.
- Dennis Burnett: Unbeknownst to us. I didn't know what our work schedules were going to be, but as it turned out, as we told you earlier, she would take the late shift to drop them off and then work late, I would go to work early and then come home early to pick them up. It turns out, the school district, if you're a resident of the district and you're enrolled in the school, regardless of where you live, we will send a car to pick you up.
- Brenna Lissoway: I've never heard of that before.
- Dennis Burnett: Car pulls into the motel every morning. 7:30, kids get in, and it's twelve miles to the school, I think. Pick them up and brought them every day.
- Brenna Lissoway: Wow, that must have been a real—
- Dennis Burnett: Blew us away.
- Brenna Lissoway: —blessing for you all. Yeah.



- Dennis Burnett:        Yeah. So, we built a house.
- Brenna Lissoway:      Okay.
- Dennis Burnett:        In the school district. So, the house is coming to completion in October, I believe, we're getting ready to move in, get a letter from the school district saying, "We had to redraw our lines. You're no longer in this middle school district."
- Brenna Lissoway:      Oh, geez.
- Dennis Burnett:        We said, "Time out." (Dennis laughs)
- Ginny Rousseau:        "Wrong."
- Dennis Burnett:        Went to see the principal, he used to be a lineman for the Philadelphia Eagles, very squared away. He says, "Well, I understand the situation. What you need to do is just write a letter, requesting an exemption to the boundary and we'll get you in here." The only problem is there's not a bus route that comes this way, from where our driveway was. The base of our driveway goes to town, twenty-minute + drive, 6:20 or 6:25 a.m. to go down to catch the bus. It is dark out; I don't care what time of year it is. But the bus going to the other school, the middle school they went to – cross-country walk of probably ½ mile to the bus stop. So, guess what they did?
- Brenna Lissoway:      Your kids walked.
- Dennis Burnett:        They did.
- Ginny Rousseau:        They cross-county skied, they rode little go-carts, they walked.
- Dennis Burnett:        Uh-huh.
- Ginny Rousseau:        They're the kids of park rangers, right, they're intrepid.
- Dennis Burnett:        Put their skies behind the telephone pole, wait for the bus. There was a time when there wasn't any snow on the ground – it was three lots (4+ acres), we had the first one and the one next to us was seven acres – I would mow a pathway on the riding mower down and back and then we got a go-cart, covered it in plastic for the rain. Our son would drive it to the bus stop, get out, get on the bus, get home, get on the go-cart, come back home.
- Brenna Lissoway:      Wow, that's a whole new meaning to the school commute (Ginny laughs).
- Ginny Rousseau:        But the interesting thing, son and daughter would go to school together and catch the bus. Bryant always led the way. One-time Bryant was sick and so his sister had to go to school alone and we get this phone call—
- Dennis Burnett:        I thought you were still there, I had already left, but I think you were still there.

- Ginny Rousseau:        I was still there?
- Dennis Burnett:        Because she came back to the house in tears, “I can’t find the bus stop.” She was the kind to read a book and follow her – brother to the bus stop (all laugh).
- Ginny Rousseau:        We spent thirteen years in the Warrenton area. That’s the longest we’d ever lived but we made a conscious decision that when the kids hit middle school, high school, we wanted to stay put. Let’s leave them in the same place for that time period. Teenager, with everything else hitting, let’s just keep some consistency. Basically, I took them to school in the morning and headed to Shenandoah and he headed out early.
- Dennis Burnett:        Usually they’d have activities after school so after the school would get out at 2:30 they’d have activities until 4:00. It was no big deal.
- Ginny Rousseau:        So that was probably the easier way.
- Dennis Burnett:        And they were older.
- Ginny Rousseau:        And they were older.
- Dennis Burnett:        Basically, morphed into a car and that’s the scariest thing you’ll ever do.
- Ginny Rousseau:        Yeah, back roads with no stoplights – no streetlamps. Another milestone was when I was going to turn fifty-seven and have to not be chief ranger at Shenandoah. I was so angry about having to leave my position because I could still run up mountains, I could still shoot, I could still beat anybody defensive tactics-wise, and yet because of this arbitrary age I had to stop doing what I loved, because the chief job at Shenandoah was a gift. I had gone from Albright as an instructor. I had missed that district ranger, kind of, position. I had gone from that to a regional chief ranger. I missed the chief ranger, district ranger job. I was a sub-district ranger, but I really felt I had missed a piece of a career. To get to go to Shenandoah as a chief ranger was like—
- Dennis Burnett:        You went as a unit manager.
- Ginny Rousseau:        I went as a unit manager.
- Dennis Burnett:        Bill Wade left.
- Ginny Rousseau:        Then Doug Morris turned it back to—
- Dennis Burnett:        Doug Morris came in and went—
- Ginny Rousseau:        “What is this?”
- Dennis Burnett:        “What the hell did they do here?” (Ginny and Dennis laugh)
- Ginny Rousseau:        And what was lucky, is the three district leaders, one was maintenance, one was a PIO, and I was the protection. That

- worked real well to go back to a—
- Dennis Burnett: Traditional park, chief ranger, chief of maintenance—
- Ginny Rousseau: —traditional park, and the PIO [Public Information Officer]. He wasn't a deputy, but he was like the PIO special assistant to the superintendent. That worked well to shift it back. It was still a gift, I got to get back into supervision and to managing people and to dealing with the public and all the complexities that are just fun.
- Brenna Lissoway: Right, right.
- Ginny Rousseau: That was – I spent ten years at Shenandoah as chief and it was just fun—
- Dennis Burnett: And my thirteen, and then DC, but the commute will kill you. Nobody goes to DC for thirteen years, but the jobs were great. I did every job in Ranger Activities, starting with the regs job. When Jimmy Lee left, I got to take over the Search and Rescue program. I did the EMS [Emergency Medical Services] program for a while. Eventually I was asked to take over the Law Enforcement program, this was about the time we were coming up with a reference manual, versus the NPS-9, it was a reference manual-9, and Directors Order-9. I was involved in getting those written and established. We had to establish, interior said “Each agency has to have a law enforcement manager, otherwise you can't.” I was designated the law enforcement manager. I was acting chief for nearly two years during the vacancies of those people. By the time I left it sort of morphed into an assistant chief, because I was doing the evaluations for the staff.
- Brenna Lissoway: It sounded like you both ended your careers in really, really good places because you both retired—
- Ginny Rousseau: Mine didn't end.
- Brenna Lissoway: Okay, okay.
- Ginny Rousseau: Okay, I was still too angry to look at jobs, because it's like, “I don't want to take time away from Shenandoah to look for a new job.”
- Dennis Burnett: She's much older than I am so she had to retire first. I was still employed in protection (Ginny and Dennis laugh).
- Ginny Rousseau: So, we went out to lunch—
- Dennis Burnett: It was a get-together for some team, a team that Dick Powell put together and—
- Ginny Rousseau: We got invited to dinner somewhere.
- Dennis Burnett: They wanted to talk to us about this new—
- Ginny Rousseau: New project that had been funded by the Park Service and

eventually taken over by Interior, but to come up with an incident reporting system.

Dennis Burnett: Automated.

Ginny Rousseau: Automated, for the whole National Park Service. And we were at this restaurant—

Dennis Burnett: Nice Mexican restaurant.

Ginny Rousseau: [Dick Powell] says, “Can I talk to you outside Ginny?” And he had been my first supervisor at Lassen National Park when I worked there. We’d kept in touch. He said, “Would you come to Washington to be the project coordinator for the IMARS [Incident Management Analysis and Reporting System]” – well, it didn’t have a name.

Dennis Burnett: It didn’t have a name.

Ginny Rousseau: —“for the incident reporting project.”

Dennis Burnett: He and Sue Hawkins talked to you. Sue was the IT guru out of Denver.

Ginny Rousseau: It scared me shitless. I went, “Holy cow.” I mean, it took my breath away because it was so totally different from anything I had done. I certainly had the protection background to know that. It was like, “Oh wow. Oh dear.”

Dennis Burnett: This was within two months of your retirement.

Ginny Rousseau: Yeah.

Dennis Burnett: And Dick was chief of risk management in DC; we’d known each other for years.

Ginny Rousseau: So, it was like (gasps), “Ooh.”

Dennis Burnett: It was him, if you don’t know the story, that led to the arrest of Charles Manson in Death Valley.

Brenna Lissoway: He found Charles Manson?

Dennis Burnett: Dick Powell’s investigation led to the arrest of Charles Manson in the park.

Ginny Rousseau: It was like, “Holy cow, I don’t know about this.”

Dennis Burnett: Didn’t have many options.

Ginny Rousseau: Didn’t have any options. So, we figured it out and he said, “You work on my floor.” And I can commute in with Dennis. Ooh, novel, novel idea.

Dennis Burnett: She can sleep.

Ginny Rousseau: I can sleep in the car while he drives (Dennis laughs), which I am not a morning person. So, I took it, and that was scary though.

- Dennis Burnett: Yeah.
- Ginny Rousseau: But basically, I was the project facilitator, not as much coordinator, I guess. There were three of us on the team. This is stupid to have a project team made up of three people. I mean, this is a national program, which eventually went Interior-wide.
- Dennis Burnett: Office of Management and Budget (OMB) took money from the FBI to give to Interior to fund this program, they were so enamored with it and it's working.
- Ginny Rousseau: It's now what they are using.
- Dennis Burnett: It's ten years into it, but we just met with Cathy Clark who is still on that team. She says it's there. What took forever is that there's nobody in the United States that could do this. We had to get to a Canadian company and until they built an office in the States, we couldn't consider it.
- Ginny Rousseau: So all of the sudden I'm commuting in to DC – and I wore my uniform, there were people who didn't think I should, but I said, "I'm a ranger, I wear my uniform," – working on the eleventh floor in a cubicle, that was a little tough. But it was Lorna Gunning, who was the deputy for contracting, she's now with BLM [Bureau of Land Management] because—
- Dennis Burnett: Can we make sure this doesn't show up in print?
- Ginny Rousseau: .
- Dennis Burnett: Lance Gridley.
- Ginny Rousseau: Lance was the IT person and Dick Powell and Sue Hawkins were the two leads for the whole thing, and myself. And basically, what we did is we pulled together IT people and law dogs from every bureau in Interior and we brought them all together. My job was, "Let's hold hands and jump together, guys," I'm the cheerleader. They had to come together, number one, and trust each other: IT, law dogs. Not necessarily the trust there, build that, but build the trust and camaraderie and partnering between all the bureaus. So basically, I had that job for three and a half years. Lance, and Lorna, and I at two points – one point, we're in Lorna's living room in Massachusetts, it was a stormy night, we had flip charts all up on every wall and we said, "We've got to cancel this contract. These folks can't do it." The FBI had just announced that they had spent millions—
- Dennis Burnett: Seventy-two million dollars on a program that didn't work.
- Ginny Rousseau: —didn't work, so we went, "Okay,"—
- Dennis Burnett: That was front page news.
- Ginny Rousseau: — "we've got somebody we could reference saying, 'you don't

want us to go this far' and then call it quits." So, there were two times we called it on the contract. But we had IBM, we had everybody coming in and there's Lance, Lorna, and I sitting there facing this wall of—

Dennis Burnett: Suits.

Ginny Rousseau: —suits (Dennis laughs) and Lorna brought them to their knees every time.

Dennis Burnett: Oh, it was embarrassing.

Ginny Rousseau: Probably the best contracting person I've ever known in my life. Lance would just nod and I'd just nod (Ginny laughs).

Dennis Burnett: They'd say, "Can we take a break?" and you guys would go out and say, "God, what just happened?" (all laugh)

Ginny Rousseau: It was a tremendous way – if I didn't want to quit, didn't want to stop working – so completely different from rangers. It really gave me something I felt I could grab ahold of. It was worthwhile. I could contribute. The fact that it's the program that they're using now, it's evolved, it's getting there—

Dennis Burnett: It's getting there how we wanted it to get there.

Ginny Rousseau: Yes. We made up the name. Incident Management – I put the "Analysis" word in there, because you have to be able to analyze data.

Dennis Burnett: And they were finally able to contract with a company that had written a program for the Canadian Mounties and the Canadian parks, very similar to what we do: isolated areas, lack of connectivity, power down on a regular basis. Once they opened an office in the states, we were able to go. And you (to Ginny) had run into them early on.

Ginny Rousseau: At a trade show.

Dennis Burnett: And said, "This is it! Where are you guys from?" "Ottawa."

Ginny Rousseau: Because the first mistake we made with the whole thing was they said it would have to be an off-the-shelf product.

Brenna Lissoway: Oh, right.

Ginny Rousseau: Well, guess what, there was none. And IBM was very open—

Dennis Burnett: They were.

Ginny Rousseau: —they said, "We'll build it for you."

Dennis Burnett: They told us it doesn't exist.

Ginny Rousseau: It doesn't exist.

Dennis Burnett: But their track record at the time was sort of like, "Mmm."

- Ginny Rousseau: The point was the requirements said it had to be off-the-shelf, we couldn't revise the requirements at that point, but they finally realized it and they did revise them. But working with all the bureaus, working with the IT and law enforcement – Park Service had the biggest team, there were five of you—
- Dennis Burnett: Park rangers and park police
- Ginny Rousseau: BLM, USFWS, BIA, and BOR
- Dennis Burnett: I was representing the Park Rangers and Dale Dickerhoof, who was the major for US Park Police who had worked for you (Ginny) in Boston was the rep for the Park Police. And we'd always gotten along.
- Brenna Lissoway: That's really interesting, that here you are, at the end of your careers and you kind of come full circle. You are living under the same roof—
- Dennis Burnett: Go figure.
- Brenna Lissoway: —working together—not directly necessarily, but—
- Dennis Burnett: There was no nepotism. I just happened to be the team leader for the Park Service.
- Brenna Lissoway: Right, right. So unfortunately we are kind of to the end of our time, but I wanted to give you guys an opportunity to reflect back and say if there are any final thoughts you have about the journey that you took as a dual career couple, Park Service, you know. Maybe, what do you think was the highlight of being able to – both of you stay in the Park Service?
- Dennis Burnett: The mere fact that both of us were able to continue doing what we loved doing. Yes, we sacrificed, but we didn't sacrifice what our true passion was, which was what the Park Service means—the Park System, not necessarily the Park Service. It is so important to both of us.
- Ginny Rousseau: And it still is. That's why Rendezvous is catching up with people, working at NAU [Northern Arizona University], we're both teaching—
- Brenna Lissoway: Northern Arizona University.
- Ginny Rousseau: Northern Arizona University Park Ranger Training Academy, we both teach there. Again, I think from the very start, when we first got married or before we got married, we both had this passion and we didn't give up on it. A lot of people say, "Well gee, I had to get divorced to be a superintendent." And we just said, as Todd Burkenfield said, "How can we make it work?" I'm not saying it was easy, you know, family counseling at times and yelling matches at time.

- Dennis Burnett: But then when I was approaching fifty-seven and getting out I had already put in, I'd spent about a year and a half putting in for superintendencies, but I was basically told, "You're a park ranger. You are too single-focused, you're not qualified."
- Ginny Rousseau: But the reason I retired, and we had a joint retirement party, was sitting on the front porch and he's talking about retiring and I said, "Well, whose going to drive me to the Metro at 4:30 in the morning in the HOV [high-occupancy vehicle] lane?" and I went, "Well, I guess I am retiring too." That was probably a good way to end it, we had a joint retirement party for both of us. It was in Warrenton at the church parish hall. People came that cared to come; it wasn't just "We have to have a luncheon for you at the office." It was really representative—
- Dennis Burnett: No, we had to coordinate it—
- Ginny Rousseau: We coordinated it.
- Dennis Burnett: No, J. J. (Jennifer) Martin helped a lot long distance. She was at FLETC [Federal Law Enforcement Training Center], she is a sweetheart of a lady. We rented the hall at the church and set up everything, I think our son ran the bar (laughs).
- Ginny Rousseau: Again, it was just an extension of how we've lived our life. We've worked it together we know each other's strengths, weaknesses, we step in when we need to. It's been very satisfying. Would I have liked to, at some point, have been a superintendent, or Dennis? Sure.
- Dennis Burnett: Maybe.
- Ginny Rousseau: Maybe.
- Dennis Burnett: I've heard too many people say, "Why? Why would you do that?" But because of our logistical expertise, she coordinated the Smokies Rendezvous, I coordinated the two at the Showboat [Hotel] in Las Vegas (talking at the same time).
- Brenna Lissoway: Do you have any advice for dual couples at this point in the Park Service?
- Ginny Rousseau: Say, "How can we make it work?" not, "You can't."
- Dennis Burnett: Whether you are in the same discipline, whether you have kids. How passionate are you?
- Ginny Rousseau: How passionate are you?
- Dennis Burnett: We know a handful, at least one of them had to leave the service because the opportunities just weren't there – there was the young lady downstairs (at the RRX on "Dual Careers") yesterday when Mike Reynolds was talking. She says, "You know, I see a lot of lip service to this, but I don't see a lot of action." Mike says, "I



thought we put something out on that.” And I said, “Yeah, about twenty-five years ago.”

Ginny Rousseau: But there’s no follow through and—

Dennis Burnett: There’s no blame.

Ginny Rousseau: No.

Dennis Burnett: It is what it is.

Ginny Rousseau: And I know a number of people who have made it work because they’ve been happy to go to other bureaus or agencies or other things, and that’s fine. But for us, what we had to do for ourselves was be true to ourselves – our own path.

Dennis Burnett: Too obstinate to change, something like that.

Ginny Rousseau: Well, we didn’t get married until late.

Dennis Burnett: Yeah, you were pretty old (laughs).

Ginny Rousseau: And on that note—

Brenna Lissoway: Thank you both so much this has really been so interesting and valuable to hear about the way that you made it work together. Thank you for being so frank as well.

[END OF TRACK 1]

[END OF INTERVIEW]