

Interviewee: Robert "Bob" Cornelius (BC) Part 12

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Working as a ranger at Grand Canyon, Glen Canyon and Curecanti in the 70s

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TM: Today is Saturday, November 17, 2018. This is Part 12 of a Grand Canyon Oral History series with Robert "Bob" Cornelius. My name is Tom Martin. Good morning, Bob, how are you?

BC: Good morning.

TM: Good morning. May we have your permission to record this interview over the telephone?

BC: Yes, you may.

TM: Thank you very much. We had talked just before we started this interview about an event with a helicopter in Grand Canyon and I was thinking I don't think we had that on the prior interviews. Would you mind telling me that story again?

BC: Sure. Yeah, we've done so many interviews I'm getting a little bit lost in my head, too, of what we've talked about and what we haven't. Yes, there was an incident, and I'm trying to think...probably around 1971-72, somewhere in there, where a helicopter flew through the telephone line that went across the Colorado River. The emergency phone line that went from the South Rim all the way up to Cottonwood, it crossed the river just downstream from Bright Angel Creek and the Silver Bridge a little ways. This helicopter flew through there. Somehow the helicopter didn't crash or anything but it knocked the line down, obviously. I took...I guess it was probably several weeks to a month to get that phone line replaced. They did it with a helicopter. They strung it back across and reattached everything, but during the period of time when we didn't have any phone service down there, the total communications for the Phantom Ranch/Inner Canyon area, there was no emergency phones. If people got sick on the trail or something like that, the only way you found out about it was if someone came in to Phantom Ranch or Indian Gardens or Cottonwood and reported it. So that was kind of a difficult time. The ranch manager, his name was Bill Shelton, S-H-E-L-T-O-N, he would come down a couple times a week and get on the radio, I had a base station on top of the refrigerator in the ranger station there, and he would order steaks and potatoes and extra pies and all the different things they needed at the ranch. That went on for a short period of time and then they got some kind of radio system up at the ranch. I don't know if they used a CB radio or just what, but they were able to communicate somehow. Probably someone went out on the rim at a certain time and they communicated back and forth. So they had kind of a hybrid system there that they used. Bill was probably in his mid-to-late 60s and his legs didn't work like they used to and he was getting tired of the walk. It was about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the ranch, or $\frac{1}{2}$ mile maybe, down to the ranger station where the radio was. He was getting tired of that, so I think that's why they did it that way.

TM: So the helicopter that hit the phone line, was that a Park ship or was...do you know?

BC: You know I don't remember. I think it was probably the Jet Ranger that they had there at the time.

TM: And that would have been new. I mean they had Halverson helicopters...

BC: It might have been a construction helicopter. It could have been a construction helicopter. Probably what was more likely it was a construction helicopter, someone that wasn't familiar that there was a phone line down there or a new pilot with the Park ship or something.

TM: Did they put an orange ball hanging near there so that pilots could know there was a flight hazard?

BC: No, not that I'm aware of. No, there's nothing like that there. It's pretty invisible.

TM: Yeah, yeah. I think it's been moved down now isn't it? I don't know that there's cables still swinging across the canyon.

BC: Well, I don't know what the phone system is like now there. The other thing that happened after this is they had a couple of guys from what was called Mountain Bell at the time, Southwest Mountain Bell. They got on mules, they had a Fred Harvey guide, actually, at that time. He brought them down to Phantom where they met with me and then they repaired that phone line. They were there. There were just two guys. They were like old cowboys and they had been all over rural Arizona for years doing this type of work and had used horses and mules. I guided them up the North Kaibab Trail, we checked all that phone line and I worked with them. They came down once or twice more to kind of spruce up the phone line because one of the things that was happening down there is that the system was so old that they had the old turquoise glass insulators on the poles. People would steal those because they were kind of like antiques. I was going around to antique stores in Flagstaff and seeing turquoise insulators down there and I got to think, "Well that's why those are disappearing." The other thing is people would take rocks and throw at them and break them. The worst place was right in the narrowest part of the Bright Angel Canyon near the...I think it was the second bridge. It gets really, really narrow there and the phone line went from the east side across the creek to the west side. It was a really long span. If someone busted an insulator there, and it happened at least 2 or 3 times, the copper phone line would flip across the other 3 lines and it would knock the system out.

TM: It would short out. Yeah.

BC: So that had to be repaired fairly quickly. I think the first time that that happened, we called the phone company. These two guys came back down and we located what the problem was and we repaired it. But then they got tired of coming down there or decided it just wasn't economically feasible and they weren't going to do it anymore. So their last trip down there... I was away from the ranger station when they left and I came back and here's this box on the front porch of the ranger station with about 30 or 40 glass insulators in it. So they had turned their job over to me. At least that aspect of it. A couple of times I had to go up and that one place was really, really bad, like I said, because the line would flip over and it'd be way over against the creek. I had a lariat and I was able to tie it on to the phone line. Then I'd be able to get someplace to put the rope around and I'd pull on it and tie it off and get it back in position. You kind of got zapped, too, while you were messing with the line. You'd get this little tingly electrical charge which was very uncomfortable. So it was really difficult to do, to get that up

over the other lines the right way and around the insulator. It became one other unusual ranger job that you did down there.

TM: Add lineman to your resume there.

BC: Yeah, I was head lineman for the park [chuckle].

TM: Yeah. Very cool. In the end of Part 11, we had talked about wrapping up your time in Dinosaur and heading off to Glen Canyon, but we also talked about the image consciousness of the Park. Especially as that related to handling administratively infractions that might occur. Can you talk to that a little bit?

BC: Yeah, I think the first time that I remember this coming up... I think it probably came up a number of times at the Grand Canyon, but I don't remember any specific incidents there that affected me. I was part of a very small little group of people down in the canyon. I know there was a lot of drama going on on the South Rim, but I wasn't really involved in that. At Dinosaur, I had an incident. I was in the boat shop, which was in the maintenance yard near Dinosaur, Colorado. I walked across and started to go in... There were 3 bays. There was the bay that had the fire cache. There were 4 bays. Then there was a bay that had a lift for where they could work on vehicles. Then there was a large bay that had all of the carpentry equipment and that sort of thing in it. Then the 4th bay, and this is going west to east, was the river boats and they'd park the dump truck and stuff in there. So I was in there working and this one guy came into the bay. He saw me working in there and he kind of did a 360 and went back out. He did that I think twice over about an hour's period. I thought, something's very peculiar about this. I knew who the guy was. He was one that we suspected of poaching wildlife up on Blue Mountain between the headquarters and Harpers Corner, that 25 mile road there. It's just a right-of-way over most of that distance. He was a local kid from Dinosaur that they routinely hired seasonally every year. But it was off season, he was not working, he was like visiting. So I thought this is peculiar. So I went over to the dump truck. I got inside the dump truck and started looking around. Behind the seat I found a 30-06 rifle with a scope on it. I thought that's kind of unusual, as I would. So I pulled the rifle out of there and then I paraded through the carpentry shop where all the guys were having their morning coffee about 10 o'clock. They're having their break. Took this rifle and went straight over to the administration building and went into the superintendent office and said, "Look what I found in the back of the dump truck in the maintenance yard." We unloaded the rifle on the superintendent's desk and then I asked him, "Do you want me to write him a ticket of some kind?" He said, "No, we'll handle this administratively." Well, the superintendent took possession of the rifle. There were two guys that were really involved in this. What they were doing was taking the dump truck, going up on the mountain, and shooting coyotes or rabbits or whatever they could shoot I guess. The one man was doing it on duty, because he was driving the dump truck. The other guy was just going along as a ride-along rider. He was the gunman I guess. The permanent employee was really worried he was going to lose his job, I know. The other kid, well, I think he was probably just banned from the park for the time being. The park, I suspect, all they did was put a nasty-gram in the guy's file, because I don't know of any suspensions or anything else that took place. I really wasn't aware of the final outcome of that. I didn't ask. It was being handled. I was the one that found the stuff, but I wasn't really the one that was doing any of the punishing. So that was one case I had. There was one at Curecanti, a very similar one, where a guy, he was the boat mechanic, came down to Cimarron which is about 20/30 miles from the headquarters. As he left, he took a route up along the mountain and he shot a rabbit. The way I found out about it is I went into the shop, my office was someplace else but I happened to go into the shop to get something. I went in to use the bathroom and there was blood in the sink of the bathroom. The bathroom sink had blood all in it. I thought, what's this? I looked all around and I could see some rabbit hair. I put two and two together and I called up to

headquarters and talked to the district ranger up there and I said, "Mario is coming up there. He was shooting rabbits down here on duty in the park truck. If you can confront him when he gets there to the maintenance yard, he needs to be dealt with." Well, word got out that this had happened somehow, so they didn't want anyone to get a ticket or anything. Again, I don't know what the end result was of that, if anything occurred as far as any kind of punishment or anything like that. Little things like that they kind of stick in your craw a little bit because you feel like there should be a little bit more justice than just administrative stuff. Then the other thing the Park Service did that was... Well, this happened at Grand Canyon a lot, I know, is if someone screwed up as they'd say... My old boss used to say, "If you want to get ahead, screw up." [chuckle]. What he meant by that is if you make a mistake and it embarrasses the park or it makes the superintendent angry or whatever, they may give you a choice: retire or move. That's one of the things that could happen or they would just transfer people to less desirable parks. I used to talk about, "Well that guys going to go to Tuzigoot." I had one boss at Curecanti who got this message and they sent him to Death Valley. He did, he went out to Death Valley and looked it over and came back and said, "I think I'll retire" [chuckle]. There were a couple at Grand Canyon. One of the rangers there I think he discharged a weapon when he wasn't supposed to at a cat.

TM: Right. You told us that story.

BC: Yeah, I think I talked about that one. He ended up at Saguaro, where he wanted to go anyway.

TM: Right. Right. So sometimes it could all work out.

BC: Yeah, it could. It's not always a bad thing.

TM: Yeah, yeah. Well, it's good to have some sort of mechanism where if things aren't going right there's a way to deal with it. It's just not the normal route of, well, here's a ticket.

BC: I think it probably works out. It keeps the park from being embarrassed I suppose. I always said our worst enemy is ourselves because a lot of people would do things that the public couldn't do. Some of it was even criminal.

TM: So how was it that you found Dinosaur a place you wanted to leave? This is a remote park. It's an incredible geographical area with a couple rivers and some river running involved.

BC: Sure. Dinosaur was my favorite park. It was the favorite place I ever worked.

TM: Oh my gosh. Okay.

BC: I left there because I was a Park Technician. The Park Service had different series of employees. They had Park Aides, they had Park Technicians, they had Park Rangers and so on, so forth...different series. I started as a Park Technician. The Park Technician series was developed to have people that sometimes were local or people that spent a long time in an area, knew the area very well. The theory was we'd have these lower graded employees and when the Park Rangers came in, who were going to be the Park Managers, they would have some sort of base of knowledge that they could tap into in the form of these Park Technicians. And the Park Technicians could do the normal grunt work day to day. There were some rules with them. They didn't let people transfer between regions. You were kind of like you were going to be in this park the rest of your life. I mean, that was kind of the theory behind it.

TM: And some people would actually like that. I mean, local people who say I've got my mom and dad and family, I always lived here, so I'm going to work at this park for my career?

BC: That's right.

TM: And they would be then resources for the more transitory 'I'm going to come in for a couple years then I'm going to move out' and I'm going to use this person as a resource because they know the place.

BC: Right. That's part of it. But it didn't take into account human nature. Human nature is 'I want to advance in my career and I want to go other places and I want to make more money.' All these things. The Park Technician series for a while was kind of a back door into the Park Service to become permanent. There were always these jobs around. Jailers at Yosemite, for example or guides at Carlsbad Caverns, and so on and so forth. You heard about these positions that people would get permanent status and after they got status they could become a permanent employee. It didn't take into account human nature as I just said. Anyway, Dinosaur, I was a Technician, and I was thinking, "Well..." I think I was a GS-7 Park Technician running the river program there. I decided, when the superintendent made the offer, well, I love Dinosaur but I don't want to stay here the rest of my life as a GS-7. So I got this opportunity to go to this park ranger intake program at Glen Canyon. Was assigned a mentor down there that I would spend some time with. Of course, he would check with other supervisors and see what type of job I was doing and that sort of thing. Eventually I got to full Park Ranger status. So that's what I moved there for, was a career move to Glen Canyon. Really Glen Canyon was probably the last place in the Park Service I wanted to go, because I had been there prior to the filling of the reservoir and I just didn't know if I wanted to go back and see that area that had been drowned by the lake because it was so beautiful. So that was a really difficult move for me from that standpoint.

TM: Hey, Bob? I'm going to jump in here just to clarify. You'd been working now for the Park Service for I kind of want to say 5 or 6 years maybe and you were still a seasonal? You weren't a...

BC: No. I was a seasonal at Grand Canyon for about 2 years. What happened is they re-organized the park. They went from the old system to a park manager system. Let's see when would that have been? 1971, I guess. When they did that they took the permanent employee, Ken Hulick, out of the Inner Canyon and replaced him with myself, who was the seasonal ranger, and a couple other seasonal rangers. They did away with a permanent position and then they moved it up to the South Rim as a manager. I was a seasonal for a couple years and then I became a permanent Park Technician at Grand Canyon. So I was a permanent employee.

TM: So a seasonal is seasonal and technician is an annual position then?

BC: Right, it was a permanent position. Then I moved to Dinosaur as a Park Technician because that's the way the position was described. Then I moved from Dinosaur to Glen Canyon and became a Park Ranger, in that series.

TM: Okay. So for you this move would be a way then to have a ladder to climb financially and in a position framework?

BC: That's right.

TM: Okay. Just trying to clarify that.

BC: It was a selfish move.

TM: Well, but it was a move to a place you weren't necessarily keen on going, especially since you'd seen Glen Canyon before the reservoir impoundment behind it. But it was a career move. Okay.

BC: Right. Right. Philosophically, I guess I just had to say to myself the whole time I was there we have what we have now. It's a beautiful lake. It still is beautiful regardless of whether a lot of the beauty is drowned underneath. It's still a beautiful place. It's a different place. You had a few river runners going down the Colorado River through Glen Canyon and now you got a lot of people enjoying it. So philosophically you could make that little leap I guess. Well I pretty much had to. [chuckle]

TM: So where were you assigned at Glen Canyon?

BC: I had an assignment at Wahweap which was the area down by Glen Canyon Dam within the park there. We had tours. We would go on a 10 and 4 schedule just like I did at Grand Canyon. We'd work 10 days, you'd be off for 4 days. During that time I would go up to Rainbow Bridge. The Rainbow Marina at that time was back up in Forbidden Canyon, a couple miles off of the main lake up that arm toward Rainbow Bridge. The marina was tied into the cliffs with a cable system so the marina floated independently there in the middle of this bay and was subject to a lot of waves and stuff by boats passing. That was always a problem. Wakeless speed was something that we dealt with continually there at Rainbow Bridge. I had a house at Wahweap. I had a houseboat at Rainbow that I would stay at. I'd pay rent on the house. That's kind of an interesting thing, too, about the Park Service. When I first joined the Park Service, rent on housing was extraordinarily cheap in retrospect. It didn't seem like it at the time because I started out making what, \$2.36 cents an hour. By the time all the taxes were taken out and everything you'd get a couple hundred dollars a 2-week period. Then they would take your rent out. But the rent was only like... I think the one bedroom house I had on the South Rim was like \$15 a pay period. \$30 a month. If you used more than a certain amount of electricity or fuel oil or that type of thing, they might charge you extra for that. I didn't pay for the ranger station down at the bottom of the canyon. They wanted to do that. At one time they wanted to charge me and actually wanted me to move full-time down at Phantom. I think they wanted to do that [chuckle] but my supervisor didn't think it was a good idea emotionally for somebody to be down there all 365 days a year.

TM: Interesting.

BC: When I moved to Glen Canyon they had a... One of the other things is in the U.S. Tax Code there's a thing called "required occupancy." So all the rent that you would pay for your quarters you could then write off of your income taxes. So everybody in the park from Administrative Officer and Superintendent, Secretary, everybody had required occupancy. They started to do away with that by the time I'd got to Glen Canyon. They decided that the Administrative Officer doesn't have to be on call or some of these other people, so we're going to take away that benefit. Then also we're going to do a comparability study to see how much houses in Page or other communities rent for and then we're going to have that as kind of a base for the park housing. Then we will take percentages off for like how far it is to the hospital, or how far it is to town to get groceries, or different isolation factors, or those types of things. They would reduce your rent and come up with some kind of formula and that would be your pay. So the amount I paid at Glen Canyon was several hundred dollars a pay period rather than what I'd been paying at Dinosaur and at the Grand Canyon. It was really a big hit in the pocket book so what people started doing was buying houses. They thought, "Well, shoot, I'll just go buy a house if I

have to pay this much money and I will then gain some equity. Then when I get ready to leave I can sell the house." It started making people stay longer I think in parks, too, because if you own a house, you're kind of tied to the community, you can't just jump up and sell a house overnight. I think they had a program where they would buy the house from you.

TM: So I'm going to head off on a little tangent here and ask you when you buy a house for equity you buy into a community and your next door neighbor owns a pizza store and the neighbor on the other side of you works for the post office. It's a great way for the Park Service to imbed itself in the local community.

BC: Right.

TM: Was there any kind of thought about that as well? I mean, that kind of stuff just happens.

BC: I think so. Yeah that probably came into a play a little bit. The other aspect of it is that you're not living next to your supervisor or other people within the park. I think it enriches people's lives to be part of a community. Now some communities don't like [chuckle] the government very well. There's ups and downs with that also. A larger community... When I moved to Montrose it was a fairly large town at the time and I was just another person. Nobody knew what I did unless I wore my uniform home, which I usually did. But if they didn't see me they didn't know who I was as a neighbor necessarily.

TM: Right. They'd see you at the supermarket and, "Oh, there's Bob."

BC: That's right, yeah.

TM: Interesting. I'm also thinking as you got into the Ranger Intake program at Glen Canyon that could have been a pay raise from Dinosaur.

BC: Mm-hmm. I went from a GS-7 to a GS-9.

TM: Okay, so the rent was higher, but you were paid more so it was kind of a wash.

BC: I was paid more. That was one of the big advantages. But then they took it all away with the rent, basically. So my standard of living didn't change a whole heck of a lot. Or it didn't feel like it did. But I had a very nice house both at Dinosaur and at Glen Canyon. The one at Glen Canyon was out by the Wahweap Marina, sat up on the hill above the marina. You'd hear the PA system of the marina all the time down there. They were always calling somebody. What was the guy's name? Mayo Wyatt. I heard his name [chuckle]. I don't know how many times I... He was a boat mechanic. They were always calling this guy. I heard him over and over and over. Mayo Wyatt was his name. I remember hearing him all the time, hearing his name over the PA system there. Glen Canyon was a much different place than Dinosaur. Dinosaur was kind of laid back and quiet and Glen Canyon there was always something going on.

TM: Like what?

BC: There was lots of medical emergencies. There were the drunks in the lounge at the Wahweap Lodge. There were boat fires. We had some monumental boat fires there. There were speeders out on the Lakeshore Drive. There were kids that were leaving trash all over the place out at various places around

the park. It was really just a super busy place. From that standpoint it was really good for my career because I learned a great deal there. I mean, it wasn't just taking a first-aid class, you ended up having to give first-aid quite often there. I think boat fires were probably the thing that were the most surprising. I had never seen anything like this. They usually started at the fuel dock. You have a nice hot day, not a lot of wind, and vapors from the gas get into the bilges of the boats. The operator doesn't use his blower and doesn't get the fumes out and he turns the engine on/the ignition and there's a spark and all of sudden you've got a boat on fire. We had one there one time at Wahweap where... One of the things that the guys would do that were trained at the fuel station is if a boat caught on fire, you untie the ropes and you push the boat away from the fuel dock so you don't have a huge explosion. Well, on this particular night, there was just a slight wind and it started to drift over toward the main marina.

TM: To the other boats.

BC: To the other boats and it went right into a slip, right next to a couple of, I don't know, they were \$100,000 boats easily, or more. We had a Park Service dock that was right below our maintenance building, I guess it would be the west side of the little bay there where the main marina was for Wahweap. We had several patrol boats there. We went down and we had grappling hooks with ropes and we also took... We had a guy there named Eldon Cohlman, he was the Acting District Ranger. He was a pretty smart guy. He had come up with a plan because as the lake goes up and down the marina had to be moved. Sometimes it would be right up next to the shore and sometimes it'd be quite a ways out from the shore. When it got quite a ways out, firefighting was difficult. You couldn't just bring the firetruck down and run hundreds and hundreds of feet of hose out. So what we decided is we could hook on to a fire hydrant, there was one near the base of the ramp there, and you could use the boat then as a means of delivering the hose. We put the hose back in the boat and we would go over toward the fire with the hose.

TM: Reel out the hose.

BC: Then they'd charge the hose. Then you've got a 2.5 inch hose line that you can put a lot of water on a fire with. So that's what we did on that particular night. I think we also had a little pump. It was called a Waterous pump, it was like a plastic donut that had a gas engine in the middle. The hose came out one side of it. You kind of tow it behind your boat and this little portable pump would pump water on the fire. I think we used that that night. Because there were actually a couple of boat fires at the Wahweap Marina. One was at night and one was kind of during the day. I know we did this stringing the hose at least twice there.

TM: So let me just back up a minute. This is a houseboat that probably has a flammable fiberglass hull and sides and roof and it is full of fuel, which is why it was at the dock in the first place and now it's...

BC: No, this was a regular boat in this one incident.

TM: This wasn't a houseboat, this was a regular speedboat type...

BC: Not a houseboat but they are made of fiberglass. They melt and burn very hot and they're hard to put out.

TM: And they're full of fuel.

BC: They're full of fuel, too, yeah. So you could have secondary explosions.

TM: Right. I was heading in that direction, which is wait a minute, there's a very flammable hull with basically a couple hundred gallons of fuel on board. Now what?

BC: Well, what we did in this case is that you'd try to cool the fire down. Get somebody out there to cut the lines and then push the boats back away from the marina. It was quite a miracle the marina was saved on a couple of occasions. Rainbow Marina was isolated forty miles up-lake from Wahweap. They had a standpipe system and we had a 40-horsepower pump for pumping water. It would really pump a lot of water. And they had these hose reels on the Rainbow Marina. Eventually they got those down at Wahweap, because it was pretty obvious that you might end up in a situation where you didn't have enough people to even man any kind of firefighting capability there at Wahweap at any one time so it was better to have something on the docks that they could then fight the fire more immediately than having to wait for the hose to be laid out and everything.

TM: How would you turn on the pump? I mean, basically it's a reel on the side of the building with a bunch of hose on it. Was there a button you'd push next to it that would send electrical signal over to fire up the...?

BC: Yeah that's right. I forget what the system was. I know they could turn it on. I don't remember if it was done remotely or if you had to go down to the building and turn the pump on, but I think it was probably done remotely. The first boat fire I ever had was on Memorial Day up at Rainbow Marina. This guy went into the fuel dock and he started his boat and there was this explosion. I was right out on the dock and I heard this boom. I saw the cowling over the engine go flying way up in the air and it landed back down in the boat. The guys at the fuel dock, they pushed the boat away from the marina, but the way the wind was blowing it kept blowing back toward the marina. I got in my patrol boat and got out there. I had a grappling hook. I was by myself. I threw the grappling hook and the guy is still on the boat. I mean, he was...no, let's see. We finally got him to jump off the boat into the water and someone picked him up, because he was going to stay with that boat till the last. Someone got him to jump into the lake, they picked him up and took him away from the boat. Then I went up to the boat and I threw this grappling hook over the bow rail. It had a bow rail on it. I took off, and of course I was kind of in a big panic myself, because this thing is really... There's smoke going clear up over the cliffs 500-600 feet in the air. I gunned the boat a little bit and tore the bow rail off.

TM: Oops.

BC: Yeah, that was an oops situation. So I made another pass and fortunately this boat had a hatch on the bow. I dropped the grappling hook into that hatch and was able to start pulling the boat out. We knew about this explosion problem and so we had 300 feet of line in the boat. I let all that line out and started slowly pulling that boat out. It got about halfway out in the middle of the marina there and it exploded. There was debris falling all over. I had a cover over my boat, over where you sit and everything, and stuff was hitting that and cascading off. I'm lucky it didn't set my boat on fire, I guess. So I pulled the boat out of the bay there over to...what'd we call that? No Name Canyon, I guess. It was a little canyon between the main arm of the lake and where the Rainbow Marina was. It was kind of a little hook armed little bay. I took it back in there and got it to a position where it would just sink near the shore, so it was still semi out of the water. Then went back and did the investigation and everything. We had several others. The same type of thing where boats blew up. Probably the worst fire at Rainbow, I wasn't there for. It was a guy named Wayne Landrum. He was the Lees Ferry ranger. He came up for a

pay period, I think I was either gone for vacation or I stayed down at Wahweap or something, and he spelled me up at Rainbow Marina. They had a fuel tanker that they would transfer fuel from down at Wahweap up-lake to... It was a regular sea-going oil tanker. I don't know, it must've been 40-foot long or something. It would bring the fuel up and then they would use pumps to transfer the fuel off of that into the floating fuel tanks that they had for the public use. They did this, especially in the summer, they're going all the time, back and forth up-lake. The boat was tied up next to the marina kind of in back of the store and stuff, and all of a sudden it caught fire. Poor Wayne, he was able to get there and I guess get water on this and get this thing pushed away from the marina. I don't know what all the firefighting went, but it burned part of the marina as I recall. It was really a bad situation. This was kind of a weird situation. Several years later, after I'd left Glen Canyon, I was talking to somebody who'd worked at a park up in like South Dakota, maybe Roosevelt or one of those places. Oddly the name of the manager of the Rainbow Marina came up. We got to talking about this guy. He had, several times they said... At that time he was like a Fire Control Aid or something. Fires would break out near where he was. He put out a couple of fires all by himself, or was the first responder I should say. Then the same individual, I don't remember his name any more, he worked down at Mesa Verde. I think he was a naturalist at Mesa Verde. He reported, this is shortly after Ken Patrick was killed, he reported that someone had jumped out of the brush with a shotgun and blown a hole in his windshield or something. So this was really odd. I thought this guy's been in some really bad situations and here he was the manager of the marina at Rainbow and the marina caught fire. How odd is that? So I called down to Glen Canyon and I tried to get ahold of the Law Enforcement Specialist down there. Left him a message, told him what I suspected. Like a lot of things, it was another park. Nobody ever called me back, nobody ever asked any questions or anything. I'm wondering whatever happened. Other than just speculation, I didn't really have any evidence that this guy was an arsonist, but it sure seemed like it.

TM: Interesting. Yeah.

BC: You never know what's going to happen.

TM: You really don't think about the troubles with fuel and confined spaces and sparks.

BC: Oh right.

TM: And as you say on a calm day when you're fueling up a boat and boats typically don't... Like your car at the gas station, there's a little hole and there's a nozzle. You fill that up and you're not supposed to smoke and your vehicle's supposed to turn off. You cap everything up, you turn the machine off. Then you're clear to start your vehicle. If there's a spark, chances of ignition... I mean, we just don't have these kinds of explosions at gas stations.

BC: No you don't because the fumes... Sometimes you'll see the shadow and you can see the fumes on the ground. They're going down and they're dissipating in the natural air, but at a boat fueling station they go down into the spaces underneath the decking of the boat and they get trapped in there or in the bilge of the boat and that's when the explosions occur. We didn't have the same problem... I was worried about it at Curecanti, but there the wind's always blowing and it dissipates that. Of course, the volume of boats is so much smaller there also and the deckhands aren't rushed and they can be sure that things are done properly. But a place like Rainbow, I think we would have...on a busy weekend there might be 600 boats come in there. I mean, just a huge number of boats. There'll be people waiting out in the bay there for everybody to finish up so they could get in and get their fuel. I forget how many fuel stations they had. They must've had a half dozen there. They'd all be full, people fueling up.

TM: Yeah, yeah. So another thing when I think about boats and water and people are speed, of course, but Glen Canyon as a geographical area is pretty twisty and windy. It's not like Lake Mead where you can have long periods of high rates of speed. Was that a problem as well, people kind of bumping into things that they shouldn't have done?

BC: No, it's a pretty big lake and people get out and go full blast. I remember when I moved to Curecanti, I lived at Elk Creek which is on Blue Mesa Lake. I was in a trailer, I looked out the window like the first or second morning we were there and I told my wife, I said, "You know, somethings really odd about this place." She says, "What do you mean?" I said, "It's a lake but it's different than Lake Powell." Then I said, "You know what it is? The boats aren't moving. Everybody's out fishing." At Lake Powell, as soon as they hit the end of the wakeless buoys, boy, they're going a hundred miles an hour in their boats there. It's full out. One of the problems that we would address is that people would pass, I mean, within feet of another boat full blast. So you did have those types of issues that you were dealing with. One thing peculiar about Glen Canyon is that there's a state line there. Not too far up-lake from Wahweap, you go from Arizona to Utah and the boating laws are different. Kids have to wear their lifejackets in Utah, they don't have to in Arizona. They just had to have them available at the time. So there are different rules. You have to have a fishing license for Utah and you have to have one for Arizona. So some of the laws were different. When I was there the lake was really high. It came about as high as it'd ever been. There was a shortcut. You could go right next to Castle Rock there, Wahweap Bay and Castle Rock, and you could shortcut. You didn't have to go way around through Antelope Canyon and that way. So boats would go racing up there. You'd go from Arizona to Utah in a matter of seconds.

I had a thing happen at Rainbow Marina and this is just kind of funny. I was standing on the marina one day and this woman and her husband and a bunch of kids came into the marina and none of the kids had lifejackets on. If they were under the age of 12, I think, they had to wear their lifejackets all the time. It's really hot, you know, it's like a hundred degrees, it seems kind of ridiculous, but the law's the law. I went over to this woman and I told her, "I'm sorry, but you've got to have lifejackets on your kids all the time." "But it's hot!" and we had a bit of an argument. She was upset about it. I said, "Sorry, it's just the way it is." About that time, this houseboat comes into the bay there and on top of the houseboat are these two women that are buck naked. This woman turns to me that I'm talking to about the lifejackets and she says, "Well, what are you going to do about that?" I said, "Well, I'll take care of that." I knew they were coming in to the fuel docks, so I walked down to the fuel dock. Well, these two women saw me coming, because I had my Smokey Bear hat on or my ranger uniform on anyway. I didn't have my Smokey Bear hat on because they would blow off in the Glen Canyon wind. But I went down and as I was approaching, they got covered up. They put on coveralls, so they still weren't all that covered up but they were covered up enough that I figured that was good. I went up to them and I told them, they were standing up on the railing on the upper deck, I said, "You're going to have to keep your clothes on while you're in a developed area like this. There's a lot of kids around." I talked to the guy who was the captain of the boat so to speak. So I thought everything was copacetic.

I walked back down toward the little ranger station area, it was about halfway down the marina, and I was talking to this man. About that time this houseboat's coming over, they're coming over toward the dump station which is near the ranger station. They'd gone from the fuel dock over there, they're moving over there. I'm talking to this guy on the dock and he kind of got this funny look on his face and then he sort of turned around and walked the other direction. I turned around and this woman is standing there, one of these women. She still has the coveralls on. She looked at me and she said, "Hi Mr. Ranger." I said, "Hi, how are you doing?" She said, "I'm dressed." I said, "Well, that's good." She

said, "I'm going to pinch you on the ass." I said, "You're not pinching this ranger on the ass, lady." I said, "You go get on your houseboat." She called me a couple of names and then walked over toward the houseboat. So I followed her. All of her friends now, they're all up on the railing watching, because I think this was a planned event. So walked up and I said, "Don't believe a thing she says." She turned around and laid into me with all kinds of bad words. They left the marina and went up to Rainbow Bridge. I thought I better go up to Rainbow Bridge, so I did. I went up there and I made sure that they were decent up at the bridge and then came on back down to the marina. Stuff like that went on occasionally, too. [laughter]

TM: Well, it's hot there in the desert.

BC: Yeah, it's awful.

TM: Yeah, those poor kids. You should put them in lifejackets and then throw them in the lake. They can cool off.

BC: Yeah, that's right. That's right. I had one where a guy was...probably the worst, the thing that got to me the most of all the injuries I saw. There was a group from Salt Lake City. They had a brand new boat and they went up one of the side canyons, I don't even remember which one now, up-lake from Rainbow and it was real like super, super narrow. The dad who was operating this boat for the first time, he meant to put the boat in reverse, but it he put it in forward and on the bow he had his 2-year-old son who had his legs dangling over the bow of the boat. He ran the boat into a cliff and it broke this little boy's leg, a compound fracture to the leg. You'll see these situations where the people are coming into the marina way too fast. If they come in above wakeless speed, the marina would just buck like a bucking bronco. I see this boat coming in, I mean it's just roaring in. I'm waving my arms yelling "Slow down! Slow down!" They came right up to the marina. The mother was just in hysterics. So we got the little boy off the boat and I put an air splint on his leg. Straightened his leg as best we could, poor little kid, and put some dressing on, put an air splint on him. I think I took him to Wahweap with his mom, I believe. Yeah, I know I did. I put him in the patrol boat, because I figured it'd be faster and I knew the way. Took him down to Wahweap and they air-evaced him down to one of the big hospitals. I guess they took him to Children's Hospital in Salt Lake City and they were able to save his leg. That was one I followed up on.

TM: Cool.

BC: That was pretty neat deal.

TM: Would you ever call a helicopter into Wahweap or Bullfrog or other remote places on the lake for that kind of evacuation?

BC: They probably do now. We didn't at the time. I don't remember if they used the park plane for anything like that. I don't remember hardly any helicopter use at Glen Canyon. I know the several years I was there, I only went on a helicopter one time. We were just doing an evaluation of moving the marina down to Dangling Rope Canyon, flying around looking at that.

TM: The wind never blew there and never blew big boats up against walls and never did things like that.

BC: [chuckle] No, the wind was ferocious there at times. The heat and the lack of wind was a problem at fuel docks, but when the wind really blew you got some mega waves up there. The first week I was there, Eldon Cohlman grabbed me and said there was a boat in distress out on the Wahweap Bay. They had called in on their CB radio or something. So we went out into Wahweap Bay in our 20-foot Bertram, and boy, it was scary because you would dive down in these big troughs and the water would come up over the windshield. It was a scary situation. I think we went and rescued somebody off of Antelope Island where their boat had either crashed or sunk, something like that. That was really a common thing. People would have boat trouble or even lose their boat and they would get stranded on some place along the edge of the lake. On the slickrock or Antelope Island which was more rocky than slickrock. Stuff like that. I remember one couple...I don't know if I mentioned this earlier or not. The people that came in with a beautiful Chris-Craft boat into Rainbow Marina. They had restored this boat. It was just spectacular. They brought it in to the... It was an outboard boat. Brought it into the marina, fueled up. I went down and was talking to them.

TM: So this was an outboard. It wasn't one of the Chris-Craft inboards like a speedster or a runabout, something like that.

BC: No, it was an inboard. Did I say outboard? No, it was an inboard.

TM: Okay. Mahogany.

BC: It was beautiful thing. It must have been from the 50s or something.

TM: Piano finish.

BC: Yeah, it was beautiful. So they take off and they go out in the main channel and this windstorm came up. I was at the marina and this guy comes in and he says, "There's a couple of people standing out on the rocks out outside of the main channel out there." So I get in my patrol boat and I go out and there's this hellacious storm out there. Huge waves. They would get so big that you couldn't turn around. You'd have to go down to where you could find a cove to get in, make your turn, and then come back to do it safely. So here are these two people and their out on this slickrock in this tiny little cove. They had taken on water in this Chris-Craft. The Chris-Craft had gone to the bottom and they had been able to get out and get on the slickrock. Of course, they were just sick with that. Another time up Last Chance Bay... We had a guy come into the office at Wahweap and he told the District Ranger that he had lost his boat, the boat had burned. They had started a little barbeque on the back of the boat and the barbeque had fallen over somehow. Drunkenness does play a part in a lot of things going on in Glen Canyon unfortunately. The boat had burned up. It was a great big thing, like 28-foot cabin cruiser. I went up to Last Chance Bay and found the cove where this boat was. The only thing that I could see was just a little bit of the railing sticking out. The guy was sick because he had just restored the boat and refurbished it and he had no insurance on it at all. It was a total loss. That's why he was crying at the ranger office, we decided. He lost everything. We would just have the marina guys come and salvage this stuff if they could. If there was any way, they might tow a hull back to Wahweap or get parts off it. They might take the engine out of it or something like that as salvage. A lot of times if boats caught fire at Lake Powell they generally went to the bottom. They reach a certain point where they no longer were able to stay afloat and they'd go down.

TM: And the weight of the engine would just take it down.

BC: Yeah. We had a funny thing happen one time. We were in a training session at the Wahweap District Ranger Office there out at the lake. There were about...I don't know, there must have been about a dozen rangers. We were all in it and there were two FBI agents and they were giving this training session. It was pretty neat to have FBI agents come and talk. They were always interesting. The whole group was in there listening very intently and all of a sudden there was a radio call. Something to the effect that there was a boat fire in the harbor and all the rangers jumped up in unison and ran out the door. These two FBI agents were just standing there dumbfounded. They didn't know what in the world had happened. We went out and dealt with that. Another time I [chuckle] went into the bathroom, was using the bathroom, and I left my radio out in the lobby of the building...or actually in my office. When I came out of the bathroom, there was a maintenance man there. He said, "Are you guys doing anything about that fire over on Antelope Island?" I said, "What fire?" I stuck my head out the door and there was this black plume of smoke. I had left my radio for five minutes to use the restroom and you got a boat fire [chuckle]. That's the way it always went at Glen Canyon.

TM: It just sounds like it was a much higher visitation park than Dinosaur combined with water and alcohol and fuel and speed and a watercraft that people aren't necessarily real conversant in operating. It's a recipe for excitement.

BC: Yeah. It was. It just went on continuously. Yeah, it was continuous. I was going to mention one little thing that happened that we were talking about communications earlier I think. When I first got to Glen Canyon, they still had the Reclamation police in the town of Page. They did all the enforcement of laws. They didn't have a local police department. It was still a federally run city basically. That changed and when that changed we no longer had radio communications with them. Like most units, they want to get paid for their dispatcher. I guess it wasn't budgeted or something. We ran around for a while there at Glen Canyon with no nighttime dispatch at all. During the day we had our headquarters and we had a secretary there that would answer the radio, but at night, there was nothing. Not only that but they didn't tell us that there was no radio communications. That was kind of a sore point. We had a meeting with the superintendent, Temp Reynolds was his name. He came out to Wahweap because we were all angry about a number of things. One of them was this radio communications. I remember telling Temp, I said, "I haven't done a car stop for a couple of weeks out there on Lake Shore Drive because I'm not going to stop somebody in the middle of the night and not have some kind of communications with somebody." It's just too dangerous. I'm not going to commit suicide out here.

TM: With no radio backup. Sure.

BC: Right, with no radio backup. He said he thought maybe they could fix that. They'd work on it and blah, blah, blah. The other thing was we did have *some* communications. We might have one person that would be on call but that was usually for nighttime. What we had in our residences were these red phones that were emergency phones. If someone dialed the ranger station at night for an emergency, the call would be sent to your residence. You were expected to be home and answer the call.

TM: So you were off, but you were on call.

BC: On call, but we weren't paid anything for that. The chief ranger was out there, too, and he said, "Well, how do you know you're on call?" I said, "Because there's a little asterisk by our name when we're on call." That's the way that we were doing it. We were wanting to get paid for our on call status, get like 15% of your paygrade or something like that. He said, "No we're not going to do that." We said, "Well, okay." What we started doing, at the direction of the district ranger, is at night rather than

putting the emergency phone on to the ranger residence, we started putting the emergency phone directly to the chief ranger's house or the assistant superintendent's house. That was pretty effective. In fact, the first night that we did that, the Acting District Ranger, Eldon Cohlman, he says, "Let's all go to town and have pizza." So everybody, the entire law enforcement staff, left Wahweap and went into Page and we had a big pizza party. So we were playing kind of a political game with the managers who had control of the purse strings, to get their attention that there were some real safety issues that they needed to address or they weren't going to have proper law enforcement at the recreation area. It was an interesting set up.

TM: I'm assuming that fairly quickly there was a change in that.

BC: Right. They did change and they did give a certain amount of on-call pay to people. People would volunteer for it then, rather than opt to stay home. Things did change and we did get radio communications with the city of Page. Then we also, of course, would use their jail in Page to house the few prisoners that we did arrest. We had the same problem at Glen Canyon that we had a Dinosaur. You had the state line and really no federal judges in Utah. You had Judge Ritter and that was it. So we had a very poor judicial system. All the cases we wrote were Utah state boating law or game law and we would tell people that they had to appear before state Justice of the Peace. Where the heck was the one? There was one in Blanding, I think, and there was one in some little weird town up in Utah.

TM: Yeah, Monticello or where would it be? Hanksville?

BC: I can't remember where that... There was probably one in Hanksville, but I don't remember. There was one really weird one, Mount Caramel Junction or something, I don't know, they had this Justice of the Peace. There wasn't a lot of follow-up on this stuff. It was all dealt with down at the administration office. We were too busy to follow-up on our cases, I guess, or something. We did use federal system down at Wahweap. In fact we got in trouble for it in that someone gave us the authority to write the ticket and then place an appropriate bond with the violation because the bond schedule was so low. That went on for a little while and then the chief judge down there found out what was going on and said, "You cannot do that." [chuckle] We were judge and jury up there for a while. We did also handle things through a Justice of the Peace there in Page so there was law enforcement for traffic violations and stuff like that that we dealt with a lot. And for other things. We had some burglary cases that we took down there and stuff like that. There was always somebody stealing from somebody else. On payday, people would find the money they had cashed their check with disappear or something. It was usually roommate on roommate, and the roommate who had done the bad deed disappeared.

TM: So this would have been the concessions employees at Wahweap?

BC: A lot of concessions. A lot of it was the concession employees.

TM: Okay, so that was similar problems to Grand Canyon...

BC: That's right.

TM: ...with again concessions and concession employee issues.

BC: Yeah, you had a real transient group of people. The people that were there long-term, generally you had less troubles with them. It was the transient folks that were just coming through. I know at Grand

Canyon... Phantom Ranch, for example, we didn't have a lot of law enforcement problems from the people that were down there necessarily. There were some, but they would be very transient in nature. They'd go down there thinking it was going to be a big vacation. And then they'd work them to death and then they'd be gone within a week and a half. So it was hard to keep enough staff down there, then they'd burn out the permanent staff they had, so it was a really bad situation.

TM: Okay, Bob, we have been yik-yaking here happily for about an hour and 20 minutes.

BC: I know!

TM: And I have a ton more questions for you about Glen Canyon, which is good.

BC: Okay, well we'll have to meet again, I guess.

TM: Is there anything else you'd like to add as we wrap up this Part 12 interview?

BC: Well no, I guess I've talked enough [chuckle].

TM: Okay. Well, this is the end of Part 12 Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Robert "Bob" Cornelius. My name is Tom Martin. Today is Saturday, November 17, 2018. Bob, thank you very much.

BC: You're welcome.