

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Charles “Butch” Farabee (BF)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Butch recounts participating in Police and Fire Olympics and transferring to the Grand Canyon

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TM: Today is Tuesday June 23, 2020. This is Part 11 of a Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Charles “Butch” Farabee. My name is Tom Martin. Good afternoon, Butch, how are you today?

BF: Good, Tom. Yourself?

TM: Good. Thank you so much for carrying on this amazing series of interviews of your life with the National Park Service. May we have your permission to record this interview over the phone?

BF: Yes, you may.

TM: Thank you very much. At the end of the last interview, you had talked quite a bit about some of your duties there at Yosemite, as far as your administrative duties. What are the sort of things that you did for fun?

BF: Okay, so I did a lot of climbing. I had a family, although I talked last time about sort of ignoring that, I suppose. Ignoring is not the right word, but not doing as well as I should. But one of the things I thought about since the last talk is that in high school I was an all-state swimmer, freestyle mostly. I was a pretty fair swimmer so I actually was able to get myself, and then other rangers at least temporarily, into a Police & Fire Olympics community. In California that’s a pretty big deal, actually, with so many municipalities and agencies. And, of course, there are a lot of avocational and maybe semi-professional athletes among policemen and firemen as you can imagine. So, as much law enforcement as we did in Yosemite—and I was right in the middle of all that and anybody that knew could understand how much law enforcement we were doing—I made a real effort and was successful. I went to the various board members of the California State Police Olympic Committee. I’m not sure if that’s the exact title but close to it. There was a board of maybe eight or ten. I got hold of a policeman from I believe it was Oakland. Since Oakland’s fairly close to Yosemite and there’s a lot of stories that would be in the San Francisco area newspapers about all the mayhem and police kinds of activities in Yosemite, I thought that person would be pretty understanding and would have some sense as to what rangers did in law enforcement. But this had nothing to do with the Park Service per se, it’s just that I was able to capitalize on that. So I went to him and he said, ‘Yeah, I don’t have any problems if you can convince these other guys.’ I said, ‘Do you mind if I use your name?’ and he said ‘No, that’s fine.’ So, I ended up spending an inordinate amount of time over a period of several weeks, getting all of these guys and after the first four or five that said, ‘Yeah, but if you can get the other guy to...’ I ended up getting however many, eight or ten of these guys to allow rangers to compete.

TM: Were they on some sort of oversight board or something?

BF: No, they were just the committee, the board that managed several thousand—three or four thousand at least—competitors. Everything from track to skeet to equestrian stuff, which I'll tell you about in a moment, baseball and swimming. Almost every sport you can think of. Probably not football or anything like that, mostly individual sport stuff. Archery. So, an oversight board might be...but it was a brevetting board. They had to give permission, which they ended up... I don't know if they sent me a letter or something, but I ended up having permission. It wasn't me so much per se as much as permission for the law enforcement ranger part of me to be considered sufficiently law enforcement in order to compete. Anyway, I went, and I competed there and...

TM: Did you bring anyone else from the park with you?

BF: Yes, but not on that first occasion and maybe not even the second occasion but pretty early on. I believe it was 1976, there was a competition in Santa Ana, and I think it was like the fourth or sixth, maybe even longer, annual gathering. This would be a week-long series of events putting together competition with maybe ten or twelve different venues by several thousand competitors who had come into town from other parts of the state. It was really kind of a big deal for them. I mean it was a lot of effort, it wasn't something you would just do overnight. And sponsorships and professional liaisons with the various chiefs of police and sheriffs of various big counties and that sort of thing. And of course, that's a national and international thing now. To some degree it probably was then, but on a lesser scale.

So, about 1976 or '77, I conned my other ranger friends, three of them that I worked with: Rick Smith, Mark Forbes, and Tim Setnicka, into competing with me. We all went to Santa Ana. We took our wives or girlfriends with us. Tim was an all-American swimmer in Indiana in high school. I wasn't all-American, but I was pretty fair, and both Rick and Mark had swum in college. So, we were a relatively strong team. We went down mostly just for me to get a t-shirt really. We put together two relay teams, and then Tim and I swam independently as well. Mark and Rick just were part of the two relay teams. We walk in and we've got our pine pig t-shirts on that... It's probably not as prevalent now as it was in the seventies, but P-I-G, pig, was often a derogatory term for police, then over time it got turned around and pig started standing for Pride, Integrity and Guts, P-I-G. So, we got our pine pig t-shirts on and it's a caricature of a pine pig which you have to sort of see in order to understand what it was. So we've got our matching pine pig t-shirts on and we think we're sort of hot stuff. We go into the swimming venue, which is a nice pool and there's probably a couple hundred people in the stands, including our wives and their wives and everybody else's wives. Women could compete as well, but there were more men competing. We're in good shape and we think we're pretty hot stuff and we walk out there. Here I thought we were doing good until the team from the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Harbor Patrol... These guys all look like they are about seven feet high and broad shoulders, and they were probably were starting quarterbacks on their college football team or something. They've got their t-shirts on that say Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Harbor Patrol, or Orange County Harbor Patrol, something like that. There were I think ten teams. Not counting individual swimmers, just ten relay teams of various things. We did okay. I mean, we didn't embarrass ourselves. We came in about number five, about middle of the pack. I continued to do that swim both in California and then once I got to the Grand Canyon, both in Arizona and Nevada.

The one last thing about the competition in California was, I think roughly 1979 or so I went through a National Park Service horse-back riding/equitation school that the park put on for six weeks. Pretty much eight to five I was riding and working with patrol horses. I've mentioned several times about the

patrol horses that we had at Yosemite which were pretty not unique but very... I can't even think of the right word but they were very well-considered. They actually worked with the President of the United States on occasion, so they were thought of pretty highly. When I was on the trail crew in Sequoia-Kings Canyon while I was still going to school and then I owned my own quarter horse, and again I thought I was pretty good as a horseman. I was okay but I wasn't any great shakes, not as good as I thought I was. So, I went to this six-week school hosted by the park's old cowboy wrangler, a guy by the name of Walt Castle. I go through this school and the guy that's the horse patrol supervisor at that time, his name is Charles "Butch" Wilson. He and I had this wild hair of I'm going to go swim in Oakland and why not take one of the patrol horses and compete in the California Police Olympics equitation thing. So we got permission from the chief ranger, we took a patrol horse over. I went to swim and he trailered over. He brought his family and he trailered over one horse. We didn't take two horses, just one horse and the horse was the Cadillac of our patrol horses. I mean, you could just think about doing certain moves and that horse would respond. We meet the night before where we're supposed to stable the horse where the competition is, which is in a rodeo ring. The first guy we talk to that night when we were putting the horse up, "so what sort of a deal...?" We really had no idea what we were doing and we thought we should be doing this in our uniforms. So we've got our green Levi's and park service grey shirts and badges and stuff. He says no, the competition is by professional rodeo standards. That's not the right title, but there is a certain requirement/certain level that we had to adhere to. One was we needed to dress the part, sort of. So we ran down to Walmart and we got some cowboy button shirts with pearls on them/pearl button shirts.

So we met the next morning. These are all policemen. We thought it'd be policemen who used their horses on duty. I guess I wasn't paying much attention, but it turns out they're policemen who are just cowboys on the weekend or competitors. I don't want to say quite cowboys like that, but they were competitors. They were full time sheriff's deputies and policemen and what have you, but they were there because they liked horses and liked to ride and what have you. So that's okay. So, we show up the next morning. There's a group of about thirty riders and not everybody's gonna ride in every event, but we get permission from these thirty other policemen. One of us, either Butch or myself, asks the group in this group meeting, sort of laying out the rules and the things we're supposed to know about, "Does anybody mind if we use the same horse?" Everybody said that's fine because they really didn't know who the heck we were and they could see the hay sticking out of our hair, you know, the 'hayseeds' that had come in. They said that's fine. So then we borrowed a cowboy hat, one hat, from one of these guys. I sort of found out who the fastest gun in town was, the guy that had done the best, say, the year before, and I'm engaging him in a little conversation. He knows about the rangers and the parks, but he doesn't think we're much of a threat to him. So "What do we do on this first event? What are the tricks of the trade?" He gave me some shortcuts and things to keep in mind and what have you. Everybody drew numbers. I was like number eight and my fellow ranger was maybe number fifteen. So, whatever the event was that we were both going to be in, I would be first and he would be after me. We agreed that we would cue the horse—say like riding the barrels or keyhole race or whatever—the same way so that the horse already had some remembrance of what I did so he could do it better. The first time out of the gate, literally, practically, almost, we were in like first and third. Butch is number one and I'm number three or four. Well, to make a real long story short, we end up, after each of us have competed in maybe eight to ten events we had won four or five first places, a number of second places, a whole bunch of thirds and fourth. After about the second or third time of asking this fastest gun in town, "What's some of the tricks of the trade?" he pretty much wouldn't give us the time of day. Then Butch

and I would switch... We only had one pair of spurs between us so we ended up switching spurs and we'd swap hats. We'd go out and the announcer would announce, you know, "Number one from Yosemite National Park is Butch Wilson, number three is Butch Farabee from Yosemite National Park." It almost became embarrassing. We actually did very well for ourselves. In my garage I've got a small box full of medals from all these Police Olympics, not only California but from Nevada and Arizona. I just thought that was kind of a fun thing to mention. You asked about...

TM: Did that get written up in any way so the rest of the staff at Yosemite could kind of be proud of what you guys were doing representing the park there?

BF: Not that I really remember. Other rangers knew about all of this stuff. I did write an article for our in-house magazine on the pine pig t-shirt. The subject was these pine pig t-shirts are sort of a look back in time kind of thing. But I did have a photo of the four of us swimming in our swimming suits with our pine pig t-shirts on and told the story about these seven feet tall...

TM: ...harbor guys...

BF: ...quarterbacks. I don't know if they all were quarterbacks, but they looked like they could have been, right. Okay, I'm gonna shut up about that.

TM: It was fun. How was it that you ended up leaving Yosemite?

BF: I'd been there nine and a half years. I was up at Mather district and Mather's named after the first director of the National Park Service, Stephen T. Mather. As much as I knew I liked being in the field, I also knew that I got to keep sort of working my way up the management totem pole. At the time, I was a GS-11. Dick Marks I had interacted with while in Yosemite, but he moved on and I never had any real contact with him. I mean, it wasn't like we were buddies or anything. I went to a gathering in Grand Canyon, this is while I'm still in Yosemite, but I went to a training, I think. One of the staff of the training center, the Horace M. Albright Training Center at the Grand Canyon, had a gathering one night and Marks was there/the superintendent was there. He pulled me aside and he said his current assistant chief ranger, a guy by the name of Dick McLaren, who actually, in Park Service circles, he and his two brothers all were rangers. He was the assistant chief ranger and his background really was in fire. That was his forte. Pretty well respected in those days as a firefighter. Would be on what now would be an incident management team at a high level. But, there were some other things that he was doing that weren't all that good and he was retiring. So Dick Marks pulled me aside at this little party and said, "I want you to apply for this job." Well, there's nothing wrong with Grand Canyon, right? I'm in Yosemite. I've been there nine and half going into ten years. It's a promotion for me, it's a GS-12. It's got a whole lot of other responsibilities. It's a good time to move on and take on bigger and better responsibilities and what have you.

TM: How old were you at the time? This was 1979?

BF: No, this was actually 1981. It might have been late 1980 when the actual request came through but at the time I was out at Mather. So I would have been... What would I have been? 38, I guess. He says, "I want you to apply for this job." So the job announcement came out, I applied. I was told later on by my boss at the time, the chief ranger... I had two bosses/two chief rangers while I was there. The second was Ken Miller, but that's not the name I'm trying to come up with right at the moment.

TM: This is at Grand Canyon or at Yosemite?

BF: Grand Canyon.

TM: Okay.

BF: He told me years later, he said, “You were like a one-name selection. Marks told me to pick you.” That sort of thing wasn’t unusual, but it wasn’t typical either. It wasn’t like anybody that applied for a job, it was already a foregone conclusion. But there was some of that.

TM: And Marks was new to Grand Canyon... Did he show up in ‘79 or ‘80, so he was still building his team?

BF: Yeah, he was pretty new. I think you’re right. I don’t know, I can look it up, I think, but I don’t know for sure. He was fairly new to Grand Canyon at that point, and he was building a team. But he was also, in this case, his assistant chief ranger, which had... I oversaw both wildland and structural fire; the aviation program, we had a helicopter full time 24/7 which was a contract with the Grand Canyon Helicopters, but our helicopter was stationed in the park; and I had search and rescue; I had a couple of paramedics; I had EMS; I had the communications center; and I had the law enforcement office. Not so much law enforcement that other rangers did, but the law enforcement specialist who was an investigator if you will. He had another person that worked for him as well. It was a pretty key operation. The only thing I didn’t really do was oversee the district rangers, and the district rangers would oversee the actual patrol and fee collectors and backcountry operations and the river. The chief ranger oversaw those and I oversaw the rest of what I just mentioned a moment ago. So, Marks asked me to apply for this job. I got the job and in March of 1981 I moved to the Grand Canyon. My family and I moved. My son was in kindergarten. My youngest son, Adam, was not in school yet and at that point was small enough that he didn’t have any real close friends. Nor did my oldest son either, so that part wasn’t that much of a hardship. It was a promotion. It was, with my thinking, if I don’t make a move to get out of Yosemite pretty quickly, I may not get out of here. As much fun as I was having there I did know that I wanted to broaden my horizons a little bit. So anyway, that’s how I got to the Grand Canyon, I guess.

TM: What were your first impressions of Dick Marks? What can you tell me about him as a superintendent or as an individual?

BF: I thought Dick had an interesting reputation. He had some reputation as like a field ranger background, and he used to tout that. I think he took some pride in that and probably justifiably so. I don’t pretend to be any expert on Dick Marks. I do think that he was a pretty fair manager in many ways. He was a pretty good politician. He knew which side the bread was buttered on. But on a day-to-day basis, I didn’t have too much interaction with him. Having said that, I had enough visible programs that I oversaw and was involved with—and I was really a hands-on manager and supervisor—that I was in his eyes a fair amount, I think. But on a day-to-day basis whenever we would see each other, either socially sort of or at least off duty... And it wasn’t like we socialized in the same circles, probably, but when you live in a little community like the South Rim, there’s a lot of overlap with going away parties and Christmas parties and various meetings that I participated in. He was very pleasant, was socially very good. His wife Haz—and I don’t really know, maybe Hazel, perhaps, I’m not sure—she was a real sweetheart. She was a nurse by education and I think, actually, while they were working, although I don’t know about the Grand Canyon but she had been a nurse along through her life as well. I don’t know if I’m rattling about...

TM: No, I was thinking this is good for background. Who was your boss? Who was the chief ranger when you showed up?

BF: His name was Gary Kuiper, and he was my first immediate supervisor. He was the chief ranger at the time. Have you heard that name before?

TM: No, not at all. What can you tell me about him?

BF: He'd been there for several years, for sure. He was a good guy. I thought he was a pretty fair manager. We got along very well. The only thing that I know of any real controversy that he created was sort of unknowingly. There was a fatality on the river. He went in with somebody else and they ended up moving the body. The sheriff at the time, this is a guy by the name of Joe Richards, got pretty upset about that. The sheriff and the county and the park always had this love-hate relationship. Sheriff Joe, who I interacted with a whole bunch, and this will probably come out here at some point, he really didn't like the fact that Gary had moved this body. It was totally inadvertent, but it was not very professional either on Gary's part. It wasn't malicious in any sense, it was just sort of sloppy, I think, on their part. Now that I said that, I don't know all the details.

TM: You guys had been trained in death investigation and if he'd missed that class, maybe they thought there was a reason... I don't know, I'm speaking out of turn.

BF: No, not really. I mean my training I mentioned before was really OJT [on the job training]. I put together that death investigation class for a week, but by absolutely no stretch of any kind of imagination were any of us in Yosemite, even though we were deputized as coroners, any kind of an expert. At the Grand Canyon, it's a different jurisdiction. In Yosemite it was exclusive, or essentially exclusive, and at the Grand Canyon it was concurrent. That's a big deal in the Park Service from a legal standpoint and how laws and rules are adjudicated and reviewed. It's all done within the jurisdictions that you have. The park had an agreement/an MOU with the two counties...

TM: Mohave?

BF: Mohave and Coconino on what to do in this sort of thing. Who has what jurisdictions and who has what authorities and whatever. At this time Gary moved this body, and I'm not trying to make a big deal out of it, but in a small circle that was kind of a big issue with the sheriff. It certainly didn't help the relationship between the county and the park. So Gary, I thought, was a good supervisor and I think a pretty good manager. Then about a year after I got there he ended up becoming superintendent up at what is now either Lake Roosevelt or Roosevelt in Washington State. It's a big lake recreation area. But Marks was my superintendent the whole time I was there.

TM: Yeah, who replaced Gary?

BF: Ken Miller replaced Gary. Ken, I actually met him when I went on about a week-long detail up to Lassen National Park, which actually has some real interest at some point for you, I think. So, I met him. He was the law enforcement specialist in Sequoia, at one time. I'm not sure he came from there to Grand Canyon. He had more of a law enforcement background. I think he actually was one of the very, very, tippy-top first five rangers to go through a federal government sponsored police school, which when it started out was under the United States Park Police. We would shorten it up and just say park police school. It was held in D.C. The United States Park Police has sort of come under hard review lately, but at the time, and I don't want to denigrate them particularly, but he was one of the first five rangers

to go through this school. So, he had come up through a law enforcement field background. He was there the whole time I was there and then when I moved on to Washington D.C he was still there. I'm pretty sure he ended up retired from there. What else can I tell you about Gary or Ken, or do you...?

TM: Just as we go along, it'd be good to know more of them as you remember things. I was also wondering, who was the special investigator at the time?

BF: Lloyd Hoener was the park's law enforcement specialist. I don't know that that's all capitalized, but that was his position. He was the person that would coordinate training and law enforcement.

TM: Was he an older gentleman?

BF: Yes. Tall, thin, quite a runner. I think running was his primary interest and then working as a ranger was a secondary interest. I inherited him and he was not all that effective. The superintendent was willing and sort of interested in trying to have me help him move along or retire. I oversaw him, I supervised him. Then there was another ranger after that, Dave Swickard, that I supervised that took his place, but initially it was Lloyd Hoener. Lloyd just wasn't very effective. He was sort of an old school ranger that had somewhat semi-retired in place. So after I left, and probably some shortcoming that I performed, he ended up getting himself in real trouble after I leave.

TM: This is Lloyd, or this is Dave?

BF: No, this is Dave Swickard.

TM: Let's go back to Lloyd for a minute, who is not very effective. So then what happened?

BF: I just would look over Lloyd's shoulders. I take some pride in that I was a fair manager, a probably more than tolerant kind of a supervisor. In the terms of a ranger, I wasn't really a hard ass. But I would make sure that Lloyd's T's were crossed and the I's were dotted and he was doing what he was supposed to do. He was probably pretty close to retiring anyway, so within I'm guessing maybe six months or so, he ends up retiring to Flagstaff. I think he's still in Flagstaff. I think he's still alive. Although I wouldn't swear to that either, of course. I don't know anything about his real background. I didn't know much about his family. Although I'm sure at the time I knew, but I certainly don't recall much of that at all. But anyway, Lloyd ends up retiring. His assistant at the time was this Dave Swickard, who was married, no kids, of course lived in the park. I guess I promoted him, I'm sure that I did. He became the law enforcement specialist, a GS-11 I believe, in that function. Dave oversaw the communications center, as well as one other investigator or criminal...somebody more focused on law enforcement than regular rangers did. Dave was a very sociable person. Had a lot of contacts. Knew people in the sheriff's office and knew people in the company, which I thought was a pretty good benefit for the operation. I enjoyed his ability and I enjoyed his council. I was pretty open about saying, "Dave, what do you think about doing this?" He'd give me his answer, then I might make a decision pro or con, but I certainly wasn't against any of his advice or his council, which I thought was pretty fair. I didn't have any real questions about his abilities. His interest mostly was in law enforcement and guns. He was a gun guy. I'm not much of a gun guy.

TM: Didn't he have a lathe? He would repair weapons.

BF: You sort of cut out there. What was that?

TM: I was thinking didn't Lloyd...wasn't he a gunsmith as well?

BF: Lloyd might have been, yes. That sort of rings a bell, it's not something that jumps into my mind firsthand. I'm not sure I have too much to add onto whatever...

TM: You were just talking about Dave Swickard.

BF: Dave was married, no kids, nice guy. Mostly his focus was in law enforcement. Perhaps had worked in one other park before Grand Canyon. Didn't have much of a real broad view of the Park Service, but that wasn't really a hindrance of any sort. He ends up being my go-to person when I would need some advice or council on law enforcement matters. He wasn't a politician. If there were any politics involved, I was the one that would be handling most of that. He had good broad relationships with some key players with the company at the Grand Canyon at the time, the main concessioner. He probably had a few good relationships with some of the sheriff's deputies that worked for mostly Coconino County. He wasn't really interested in guns. I mean it wasn't like that was his main life, but he would set up the training. We would have to qualify with our handguns and with a shotgun twice a year and he would set up those training exercises.

Years after I left, he ends up getting himself into real trouble. He ends up getting some real malfeasance involving guns, and maybe sales of guns, and doing some things that were very shady. I think even illegal. If he had been doing this while he was working for me, I did not see it. Perhaps I should have. I guess I'm assuming if I did see any of this kind of wrongdoing, I would have pulled him up short and dealt with it at the time. But I don't recall seeing it. Sometimes I am naïve and have maybe too much faith in my fellow people. He ends up getting himself removed. I don't know that he ever did any time in a prison. I do know that his, I'm pretty sure I know this, that his pension, the years that he put into the Park Service, were done away with. He lost that. So, it was a serious enough set of circumstances to promote him being removed and prosecuted sort of internally, at least, from the Park Service.

TM: Butch, you mentioned dispatch, what I sort of called the communications center. Where was that at the time when you showed up?

BF: I don't know what the term is anymore, but in my days in the 80s and the 70s, it was at the visitor center which was also park headquarters in those days right next to the cemetery. I think now it's not a visitor center anymore, it's strictly business offices. But, dispatch was back in the rear part of that building. It was a 24/7 operation. This was before 911. Not only was it a dispatch center, but it was a telephone operations thing where people would call looking for information and a receptionist would send that phone call to wherever. I don't remember how many people worked in there. Let's say roughly for 24/7 there might have been seven or eight people assigned in there.

TM: And your offices, were they at the ranger operations building?

BF: My office, the chief ranger, and the assistant chief ranger, and the backcountry supervisor or district ranger, the district ranger for the South Rim were all in ranger operations. I can visualize it, I can't tell you what the name of the street is anymore.

TM: This is Center where the stop sign is, where the end of the train tracks are, next to...?

BF: It's on the south side of the train tracks directly opposite of the El Tovar.

TM: Right across the street from the general store.

BF: The old general store.

TM: Yeah, from the old general store, and the old post office and the old magistrate's area.

BF: Yeah, that's correct.

TM: Okay.

BF: I had an office on the first floor. The chief ranger on the first floor. Barb Horning was the secretary for most of that time was on the first floor. The district ranger for the South Rim was on the first floor. Second floor was head of the river unit and the backcountry, which is sort of just getting off the ground a little bit, were upstairs. It's a really neat building. I can't remember, is that a CCC building?

TM: I thought it was the original park kind of headquarters.

BF: No, I think you're correct there as well. That would make it before CCC though.

TM: Who was the head of the river operations at the time?

BF: I knew you were going to ask me that. A couple people that come to mind, but these are not necessary chronologically correct. Marv Jenson was one, was the unit manager. Oh, jeez. It's almost on the tip of my tongue as well...was the first one when I was there, that doesn't help you at all because I can't remember his name. I can't tell you right now, Tom.

TM: No worries. No worries. I'm drawing a blank, too. I can see the guy's face.

BF: Who I'm thinking about is Bob Yearout. I think he was the... Then Steve Martin was right behind him in there. Steve was a sort of river runner himself at the time, a ranger river runner. But I think Bob Yearout was first, and then I think Steve might have been before, and then Marv Jenson was there. Marv ends up being my immediate supervisor between Gary Kuiper and Ken Miller. This is also the time that I'm going into a divorce and I turn into just a real mediocre employee. I'm keeping my head above water from several different perspectives. At that point I'm a single father, my wife has left me, etcetera. I'm really pretty devastated so I'm having a hard time balancing all the balls at one time. Marv was good to me. I think he understood what the hell I was doing, or not doing. I think of all the many, many, however many, thirty years worth of employee evaluations, that's the one time in my life when I end up getting like a level three, which would be just passing. Just mediocre grades if you will. But Marv was there. Then Kurt Sauer would have been in there as well. And again, as I said, these are not necessarily correct chronologically, but those are four of the names that are right there at the top, that I recall.

TM: Yeah, no, that's good. Just kind of who was there and sort of where dispatch was, because dispatch now is over at the fire clinic area which is where the science center was at that time.

BF: That's all grown up a lot since I was working there. We had a much smaller operation.

TM: Yeah, yeah. Backcountry. So, were you overseeing roughly the same number of people or did that number go up?

BF: You mean as the park grew?

TM: No, from Yosemite coming to Grand Canyon?

BF: I think when I went out from the Valley District to Mather at Yosemite in terms of my involvement as a supervisor, I probably went down in sheer numbers supervising people at Mather but my

responsibilities sort of, in theory, broadened. When I went to the Grand Canyon I was overseeing probably the same number if not more, but I had six or seven more major balls to keep in the air which I enjoyed. I mean, the more I liked it. I was the fire chief, wildland and structural. In Yosemite I actually had developed a fair expertise, certainly in ranger circles, in structural fire. I would be a sheer rookie on any metropolitan fire department elsewhere, but in ranger circles I was pretty competent.

TM: The engines that you used for structural residential fire control, were they housed at the maintenance yard?

BF: The old maintenance yard.

TM: Yes, what is now the old maintenance yard, but at the time, for you guys it would have been right across the street from the Albright Training Center.

BF: Correct.

TM: Was there an old maintenance yard at that time, which was...gosh, would have been just up the hill from ranger operations. I'm just trying to think about...because there was...

BF: You mean up by the school someplace?

TM: No. Across the street from the gas station and up the hill there. From your offices if you hiked south up Center.

BF: Yeah, I know what you're talking about, like where the corrals were?

TM: Yeah, the corrals and the blacksmith shop in there, and there was a little warehouse in there. I think that was the first maintenance area.

BF: That was the first warehouse for sure. Probably there was some maintenance aspect to it as well. That was always one of our big concerns, was what happens if we get a fire in this old warehouse, which at the time was the only warehouse. We were still using it but it was dry and probably... This would have been 1981 or '82. This building was fifty or sixty years old at that time and was a fire trap waiting to happen but that's what the park had. So we'd go over there and periodically try to do some preplanning on fire; if a fire starts, who's doing what to whom on this deal. The company had a little fire department, which they combined into the security... Tom Doerr was the head of it while I was there.

TM: This would have been Fred Harvey being run by Amfac?

BF: No, I don't think so. I think it's still Fred Harvey. You would know better than I, but I don't remember Amfac at that point. Maybe.

TM: Or TRW Services, some...

BF: You don't think it was Fred Harvey itself?

TM: I thought they took off in the 70s or 60s.

BF: Well, I would never...any of it.

TM: I don't know, I'm not sure. Tom Doerr, what do you remember about Tom?

BF: Tom was a retired ranger. I think he retired as a GS-9 in the park. Good guy, intellectually fun to be around. Drank way too much. He was a competent river runner. He was one of the early Park Service ranger boatmen. I think he really enjoyed that. I think he spent a fair amount of time on the river, rowing the river. I think he was very competent that way, and he was a good field ranger. He had sort of, I think, lost his edge partially because of the drinking. He lived in the park, of course. I liked Tom. In fact, Tom and I would get together. I don't drink, but I would go up, maybe after hours, and he'd still be around his office and we'd sit and just gossip and talk about things to do both professionally as well as avocationally. I liked Tom. Tom was a good guy.

One thing that whoever might read or hear this but... The helicopter operation used to run out of the old maintenance yard. It was right next to the firehouse. This is a long building across from the training center. The gas pumps were behind the building. Then there were the roads shop; and plumbing shop; and the carpenters had their operation out of there; and the paint/the guys that painted were there. At the other end of this long building, at the very end was a little firehouse. We had sort of an old-styled, but still very good fire truck that was in there. Then next to that we housed the helicopter. At the end of the day, not every day, but most every day, we'd put the helicopter up on rollers and three of us or so would wheel it into this long building into this room and that's where the helicopter would be stationed overnight. This yard is where the helicopter would land. Again, by today's standards it was pretty minimal. It didn't have the real safety specs for clearances and what have you that we should have. I got permission to take down a few trees in the area. The pilots had to come in from a certain direction in order to land safely. Every time we had to sling load stuff down to Phantom or sling load things in for the water pipeline or any of that sort of thing, we did all the sling loading and loading right there in that maintenance yard. I mentioned I was a hands-on supervisor, there were any number of times when I would tell... I had a couple people working for me in the helicopter operations, in addition to the pilot, that they'd want to do something or we'd be shorthanded, I'd say, "Well you go do it. I'll cover for you on Saturday." It might have been my day off—now at this point I was divorced—but I'll go up and take care because we got some sling loads coming in, whatever.

TM: When people came out of the canyon on search and rescue missions, say they were ill or somehow hurt themselves, would the helicopter land right at the clinic or would it land there in the maintenance yard and then a ground ambulance take them over to the clinic?

BF: Both. If it was really sort of a life and death hurry up thing, we would land at the clinic right in front of the clinic, right in front of the front door. There was a little landscaped island in front of the clinic which used to have some trees in it. I got those cut down. It wasn't like I necessarily asked permission, but I did let people know this is what I'm going to do. "Speak now or forever hold your peace, because those trees are coming down because they're way too dangerous." It wasn't like they were three-hundred-foot ponderosa pines, but they did pose a real danger to the helicopter group.

TM: The clinic had an emergency entrance on the side, on the west side, and it had a pharmacy and a waiting room entrance I want to say on the south side, if I have it right. Did the helicopter then land on the emergency door side?

BF: I'd have to actually see a real diagram to make sure, Tom, but it was more towards the real front door if I remember right. Cause we were going with what kinds of spaces we had. We had a parking lot and pretty quickly, I think, we started trying to get cars to park, particularly employees, to park a little bit off to the side so we could use that open space for a landing spot. All of that landing was really pretty

iffy, again, by today's standards. I think the pilots felt okay about doing it. Since I oversaw the helicopter operation, as well as the fixed-wing for that matter, I was very interested in making sure the pilots were comfortable because they're the ones doing the hard work and I didn't want them to feel any more jeopardized than they were. But on many occasions we would just land back at the regular heliport and transport if we needed to.

TM: Who were the pilots, do you remember?

BF: No. This is where you need to get a hold of Mike Ebersole. No. I mean if I thought about it for a while, I could probably come up with... Actually, one was Tom... He got killed in a helicopter crash in Flagstaff, a midair collision, long after I retired. It'll come to me. Then John Thybony was a pilot for a little bit. He's the one that was the pilot during the midair collision over the canyon. His brother is Scott Thybony. So, John would fly periodically. We had two pilots, at least two and they'd rotate. One would be pretty much five days a week, perhaps, and the other might be two days a week. One pilot we had, last name was Roman, he actually was a pilot for the Arizona Highway Patrol/Department of Public Safety out of Flagstaff. He was sort of moonlighting and we used him on some frequency. His previous wife had worked in the park at one time.

TM: You know what? I wonder if this is a good place to wrap up this interview, because I think the next question I'm going to want to know is what kind of ship you had and what kind of missions you made with that, and that might take us awhile. Is there anything else you want to add to this before we wrap this up and then we'll head off in that direction next time?

BF: No. The helicopter operation at Grand Canyon was really interesting. It was intense. It wasn't necessarily at night, but it was sort of a 24/7 operation.

TM: Well, I'd like to learn more about that next time.

BF: If we don't have phone trouble we can do that.

TM: In that case, we will conclude Part 11 Oral History interview with Butch Farabee. Today is Tuesday, June 23, 2020. My name is Tom Martin. Butch, thank you so very much.

BF: My pleasure.