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Interviewee: Charles “Butch” Farabee (BF)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

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TM: Today is Tuesday, June 16, 2020. This is Part 8 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, thanks.

TM: Good. Thank you so much for your continued participation in this Grand Canyon oral history series. May we have your permission to record this interview over the phone?

BF: Yes, you may.

TM: Thank you very much. Last time we were talking about some of the really horrific incidences that happened to you during your 10 years at Yosemite, and you started to mention the Parkmedic program. Could you tell me more about that, please?

BF: Well, okay. The Parkmedic program, which is— Actually, I'm not sure if it's spelled as one big word or if it's two separate words. I think I've seen it both ways. But in about 1970— Actually, 1976. January 24, 1976. I was looking it up as you were talking there. There was a cave rescue in Sequoia National Park in Soldiers Cave, which actually I have been in. And it's like most caves, you know. It's got all its twists and vertical things and what have you. And a guy was in there caving and broke his back.

TM: Oh.

BF: Or at least broke a femur. I mean, it was a serious incident, anyway. So, you know, they're quite a ways in, and the Rangers, although they were EMTs, which isn't that much more advanced than advanced first aid. That doesn't qualify you for a lot of things. They were faced with trying to get this guy out of there, and this was before the National Cave Rescue Commission had come to be. That sort of thing. Or it was about the same time, actually. And so, they had to go in, and Dr. Jakes was their medical advisor, and either they had to bring this guy out or leave him in there for three months while he recuperated.

TM: Right.

BF: That's not very viable. So, they ended up— They got a nurse who was, I think, a caver or at least an outdoors person, and John Chew was a real big into the EMS, early EMS programs that were just starting to evolve, not only in the Park Service, but nationwide. And Paul Fodor was a Ranger there and a number of other Rangers. So, they went in, and they took this a nurse in with them, and they were able to, you know, get the guy put on a, in a stretcher and immobilized him in the proper manner and able to give him some painkillers and that sort of thing. Anyway, they ended up getting him out of there. It took quite a while. We're not talking an hour. We're talking, you know, probably 24 to 40 hours in order to get him out of

there. And it was successful. Everything was fine. They eventually got him to the hospital. I assume that his recovery was just fine.

But at the same time, you know, I, along with other Rangers in Yosemite, we're starting to face these big-wall rescues and some really pretty interesting, challenging, complicated kinds of rescues where there were people injured but in weird places and in difficult places to access, and at the time, all we had were EMTs. I think I mentioned the other day that I was in that first class at Camp Lejeune, 1973. And other Rangers had been going to EMT classes at that time, and Dr. Wurgler was starting to teach EMT in Yosemite. But the truth is, you know, we had some advanced training, but it was really pretty minimal by today's standards, for sure. But because of the nature of Yosemite and Sequoia, because of their jurisdictions, which are basically exclusive— Now, technically, that's not the correct term, but for all intrinsic purposes, exclusive jurisdiction, which meant that we, the Park Service, did not have to necessarily abide by state laws and standards. So, we actually had some latitude when it came to certain things like the EMS, Emergency Medical Systems protocols and policies that existed in the State of California. And Dr. Wurgler was the Rangers' medical supervisor in Yosemite.

It was actually a Dr. Webster, who was, I think he's, like, the head of the emergency operations for Valley Medical Center in Fresno. He was the medical oversight for the Rangers in Sequoia and Kings Canyon. So, this rescue takes place in Sequoia. We're on a, sort of a daily basis faced with our own issues, and John Chew, who's also, as I said, big into EMS but also was somewhat responsible for the training, overall training for Rangers in Sequoia, and I was overall responsible for training of Rangers in Yosemite. We got together, and he approached me and said, "You know, we ought to think about some sort of advanced training besides EMT." And I don't know how exactly who mulled over what, but soon, though, he and I were meeting in Fresno. And we met with this Dr. Webster at Valley Medical Center, and we pitched the concept of something beyond EMT, which over time has evolved into the Parkmedic program. But because of the jurisdictions, he and Dr. Wurgler, this Dr. Webster and Dr. Wurgler, both knew that we could do certain things that people on the outside, you know, within just the State of California would not be permitted to do.

TM: Okay.

BF: Does that makes sense so far?

TM: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

BF: Okay. So, you know, as this concept is pitched, and we mull it around, and Dr. Webster starts adding his two cents' worth. And we end up, John and I going down there on a number of occasions, probably on my own time. We would meet, probably have lunch, and then talk to Dr. Webster and one or two of his coworkers, and they decided that they could put together— We explored with them— In fact, I remember giving him a slide program on some of the things we were doing in Yosemite on just some of the complications with the big walls and cliffs and stuff. So, they put together a curriculum with emergency room operations, pharmacy, some emergency room training, I mean, experience. You know, hands-on stuff. And we came up with what amounted to was 100, I think, 100, 110, 115-hour program. And John came up with the idea of calling it Parkmedic as sort of a play on words for paramedic, which wasn't all that old to begin with. Paramedics didn't really come about until the late 1960s. So, it was a play on words that everybody seemed to get really enthusiastic, coupled with the jurisdictional, you know, the ability to do certain things.

TM: Hey, Butch, I would assume that there were other national parks throughout the country that had their own jurisdictional abilities as well, outside of California.

BF: Well, yes, there are. There are other parks that have either partial legislative or exclusive kinds of jurisdictions, but they didn't necessarily have the isolation factor that we might have.

TM: Oh, I see. That's right. Okay.

BF: And sometimes the complexity of missions. I mean, Rocky Mountain, for sure, Grand Teton—

TM: Yellowstone. Grand Canyon.

BF: They have certainly major operations.

TM: Right.

BF: Not with the regularity that we had in Yosemite, but they certainly are complicated and hard when you've got these big cliffs in those parks.

TM: Right.

BF: But a place like Yellowstone, you've got a clinic within the park. The only real bad thing about Yellowstone would be, you know, hard to get to another city with a hospital in the wintertime. That might be a concern, as well. But at this point, it was— That's a long answer to your question, Tom. Yes, there are other parks out there that have got these kinds of concerns. In this case, you know, John and I are only worried about our two little parks.

TM: Okay. Well, I guess my question is, and it's a long way to get to it, at this time as you're talking to Dr. Webster and Dr. Wurgler, were you thinking this could have benefit outside of California to the National Park Service, or were you just thinking about Sequoia, Kings Canyon, Yosemite, and that's it?

BF: That's it.

TM: Okay, thank you.

BF: Yeah, I mean, in some ways we thought beyond our nose, but in other ways we did not. And our concern was really just taking care of our own in-house problems. And, of course, we're certainly glad that it expanded, but at the time, it was just, well, what we were doing.

TM: Yeah, okay.

BF: I had a much bigger Ranger staff in the park, in Yosemite, than John did in Sequoia and Kings. But finally, when Dr. Webster, and we sort of had to say, "Okay, this is what we're going to do," and we had to obligate some manpower and set some dates and start shooting for beginning. John said, "I can commit something like six or eight Rangers." And this is going to be one day a week for, I mean, one full day each week for probably 10 weeks or more.

TM: Right.

BF: Twelve weeks, perhaps. And that does not count emergency-room time, weekend time, but sort of, just share classroom stuff.

TM: Okay, and you would all have to then drive somewhere for that class.

BF: So, we were going to Fresno, a two-hour drive for us. For us, it was an all-day thing. We'd go down in the morning, and we'd drive home that night.

TM: Wow.

BF: Coming and going would be all on our own time. You know, you might get some compensated time at the end, but you weren't getting paid for it. So, I said, "I can get 12 or 14 Rangers." So, we had a class. We had roughly 20, 22 or so Rangers to begin with. And we were going to show up on a certain day, which is what we did, and we started our program. Well, about a week before we were to meet there in Fresno with Dr. Webster and his group, I realized that the Superintendent of Yosemite did not know anything about this

TM: Oops.

BF: Yes, oops. And I broke into a cold sweat when this realization actually hit my little brain.

TM: And who was the Superintendent at the time?

BF: Les Arnberger was the Superintendent.

TM: So, this is Rob Arnberger's father. Is that right?

BF: Correct. That's right.

TM: Okay, and Les Arnberger went through Glen Canyon before Glen Canyon Dam in the 1950s.

BF: Yeah. That's probably true.

TM: This is a long, long-serving Park Service Superintendent.

BF: Correct. And he was, I think he was a planner by mostly education way back when. I think he was a National Park Service's first— I can't even remember the right term now. I can visualize it. But anyway, he was a very prominent early manager for the Park Service. Very nice guy. Didn't necessarily know everything that protection Rangers did, but I think he mostly appreciated what we did.

TM: Okay.

BF: So, I remembered that all of a sudden, the big kahuna for Yosemite did not know what was going on. So, I wrote him a memo. Now, this has all been published elsewhere. I've actually talked to Les Arnberger about this long before he died. But I wrote him a memo, saying, "Pursuant to my first memo..."

TM: [*Laughs*]

BF: And then I proceeded to layout, you know, to refresh his memory on what we were doing, who was going, the benefits, sort of a cost analysis kind of thing. And I sent it to him. And I sent it directly. The relationships in those days were probably little more informal than they are today. A lot of it's all based on personality and stuff. So, I sent this memo directly to him and— You know, because I know that I probably could easily have torpedoed this entire effort.

TM: Oh, wow.

BF: And Dr. Webster's got nurses and other doctors and the pharmacists and, you know, people that were our teachers. They're all sort of on hold.

TM: Right.

BF: Of course, none of them know anything about this, that I've screwed this up.

TM: And they were going to be paid for this. Is that right? There was going to be some money involved here.

BF: Well, no, no, no.

TM: Really? Okay.

BF: No. I can't swear that Dr. Webster wasn't paying overtime to some of his workers himself.

TM: Oh, I see. Okay.

BF: But perhaps that was. But mostly, we were trying to accommodate people's schedules and—

TM: Right. So, it wasn't any more funding out of anybody pockets. It was just that this staff would not be available at the service units to do their duties. They'd be off doing something else.

BF: Correct. And that was my concern is that, you know, the Superintendent did not know that 12 or 14 or so of his key protection Rangers would not even be in the park one day a week for the next couple of months, which, you know, in the late winter/early spring maybe that's not such a big deal, but over time that could have been. So, I send this memo off to him, and I'm in a big sweat the entire time. And a couple days later, I got this nice, handwritten note on the memo that I sent to him, saying, "Thanks, Butch, for the update. Keep up the good work, and good luck to all you guys," or something, you know, pretty innocuous or something like that. But at least I was no longer on the hook, and the program was no longer on the hook.

TM: No kidding. Wow.

BF: So, anyway, we do our thing. And we are exposed to emergency medical techniques that, in theory, we might have known before, but this is all being pushed even further. We got into a lot of heart rhythm kinds of interpretations. And it was pretty intense. And so that program then— We had another class after that. Everybody, and I mean the park's staffs and ourselves and the park managers and stuff started seeing the benefit of this advanced training.

TM: Another class meaning another round of 20 or so more people or—?

BR: Yeah. I don't remember all the specifics to that, actually. I've not been able to find any kind of a roster that I put together for that first class. I've asked some of my peers over the years. I've said, "Did you go to that first class?" Some would say yes; some would say no. But I've been trying to resurrect or reconstruct who actually went. But anyway, that really launched a program that is not only nationally recognized by the National Park Service, but it's been adopted by other agencies, including FEMA. It's really become quite a well-recognized program with a need, and it's not that every park in the system has that need. It's not that every Ranger goes through this. People who have an interest, people who have a skill that might be required, you know, etc. But since this would have been roughly 1977 or so on, there have been classes. Valley Medical Center now in Fresno, and I'm not sure if that's— They may have changed the name on that a little bit. But it's a Level 1 Trauma Center for the San Joaquin Valley and quite prominent when it comes to emergency medical assistance. So, it may not be that exact name anymore, but that's what it was, Valley Medical Center, and it is currently the home to this Parkmedic program. There's a doctor there who is identified as the key person for that program, and training goes through him. Standards have been set. You know, I'm sure that things have been upgraded overtime.

TM: Sure.

BF: At least, I would hope they have been. And it's taken off. I mean, it's really quite good. And it's— It would be hard to define how many people whose lives have been saved or at least injuries have been mitigated, but it would be into the thousands, collectively anyway.

TM: Nice. Butch, I think of the Wilderness First Responder Course, which spends a lot of time on assessment, on sort of the general systems of breathing and circulation, and temperature control, and stabilization of injured tissues, packaging appropriately, and delivering alive during extended circumstances, just like this cave rescue you mentioned.

BF: Well, that's right. And this was actually probably the launching pad for the wilderness EMS programs. There are several of them out there now, and, you know, I've not stayed contemporary with them. At one time I was used to provide instruction and give guest live programs and that sort of thing down through the years, but I've lost all of that contact. But that's how this entire— And I don't know that I'm giving too

much credit to what we did, but close, I guess. I think that what we did there in Yosemite and Sequoia and John and myself, I think that it has launched this wilderness EMS, not mentality, there's a better word than that, a concept around the country. So, although I don't think about it very often, I think that I should take pretty much pride in having helped launched this effort over the years.

TM: Nice. Yeah, absolutely.

BF: One thing I might real quickly mention, just so it's sort of on the record. Prior to what we were doing with this Parkmedic program, you may recall there was a TV program called *Emergency*, and it would have to be— People would have to be old enough and a certain age to remember this.

TM: Right.

BF: But the two firemen in Los Angeles County are tapped to go to a, as an experiment to give outsiders, in this case, fireman, the ability to start IVs and do a lot of things that we all take for granted today, but which didn't exist in those days and took the California State legislature to finally get that off the ground. But there's a whole history there, which, of course, I'm not going into, but all of a sudden, the entire country recognized that, hey, you know, we can do certain things. I mean, we as the citizens, we as the tourists, we as the person travelling down a remote road, we might have benefit of some of these emergency medical procedures. But we need to have agencies, in this case, it turns out mostly the fire departments and then independent paramedic programs. So, this TV show called *Emergency*, which was really quite popular. I mean, it went on for a number of years. And it was nationally done, and by today's standards, it probably would be somewhat hokey, but in those days, you know, there was a lot of people that turned into it and said, "Why can't we do that in our own little county?" And so, this *Emergency* was on the horizon. It was about the same time as the ill-fated TV series called *Sierra*, which I don't think I mentioned that when we're talking about Yosemite, did I?

TM: No.

BF: I'll skip that for the time being but remind me to come back to the TV series in 1973 on *Sierra*.

TM: Okay.

BF: You know, the actors that were in *Sierra*, they crossed over and guest shots by the actors on *Emergency*, so we got to know those guys. So, it was a concept that its time had come. And today, you know, most places, lots of places have full paramedics that do a lot of things that, when I was a policeman on the Tucson Police Department and a young Ranger, we just never even thought this was possible.

TM: Right. Right.

BF: But I just remember the name John Chew.

TM: Well, that's exactly my next question. What can you tell me about John Chew? Can you describe him? Where was he from? What did he do?

BF: Well, I don't know where he was from, but I first met him in Sequoia. He worked a lot in the backcountry.

TM: Was he a backcountry Ranger? Or what was his position? Do you remember?

BF: Well, he was— I don't even think we had a backcountry Ranger in those days. If anybody, Paul Fodor would have been the backcountry wilderness Ranger.

TM: Okay.

BF: But, again, you sort of did everything that— Everybody did a little bit of everything. And so, John spent a number of years there. He spent time at Lake Mead as a patrol Ranger.

TM: Okay. Before he went to Sequoia and Kings Canyons?

BF: No, I'm pretty sure he went to Lake Mead after Sequoia and was, you know, just an area Ranger, did the boat patrol and the road patrol and whatever else you do at Lake Mead. He was there. He ended up transferring to Shenandoah National Park. And he then brings the Parkmedic program to Shenandoah where he finds a medical advisor there at the University of Virginia medical school, I believe, who was the godfather for EMS for Shenandoah.

TM: Okay.

BF: And, again, a lot of our efforts were personality-driven. You know, Shenandoah's got access to lots of little towns and little cities around. So, EMS was somewhat close, but because of John's interest and the fact that there was some wilderness with a small "w" around Shenandoah, this program got off. The doctor at that time at the University of Virginia, if I'm not mistaken, had been a seasonal Park Ranger.

TM: Doesn't Shenandoah have a highway going through it? I would assume there would be lots of accidents on that road that would need—

BF: Well, that's probably true, too.

TM: —would need help there, so. Hmm. Okay.

BF: So then, John ended up becoming— He was detailed to the Washington office to work on mostly EMS and maybe health and fitness, but still was a Ranger in Shenandoah. But because he couldn't get a promotion out of it and was ready to leave Shenandoah, but he could not get a full-time job in Washington, D.C., he ended up leaving and becoming the Department of Transportation's EMS coordinator. So, all of the flights for life that you see around the country, you know, based in various hospitals, helicopter evacuations, as well as the MAST program, which means the Military Aid to Safety and Transportation, I think, which is all military driven. There about six or eight bases, I think mostly in the West, that would provide premature baby transports, highway medical emergency evacuations kinds of things, so John ended up spending the next 15 or more years, at least, working for the Department of Transportation and ended up writing or helping to write or certainly orchestrating the various standards: OSHA standards and the standards that control—, and the policies for these helicopter evacuation programs around the country. And he got to be quite well respected and quite well known because of that. He ended up retiring, is back in Annapolis now, living in Annapolis with his wife.

TM: Okay. And we take it for granted that, you know, helicopters are flying every hour on the hour out of Flagstaff Medical Center here in Flagstaff. The concept of helicopters for patient transport is fairly commonplace today, but I don't think it was back in the '70s.

BF: No. Absolutely not. I mean, Miami-Dade in Florida started a program almost parallel to one of the big hospitals in Denver and, I think, maybe out of Seattle. I mean, there were only one or two or three, perhaps, a couple, three, and they all sort of came up with this idea at the same time. And how much interaction and coordination and talk they did between themselves, I'm not privy to, but it was all the same time roughly.

TM: Did Fresno have a helicopter?

BF: Not that I— No, not for us, they didn't. Now, we used Lemoore Naval Air Station all the time.

TM: Oh, okay.

BF: Eventually, there was a helicopter out of Modesto, which I think the park uses quite a bit now.

TM: What's the name of the Naval Air Station?

BF: Lemoore. And it's a 45-minute drive south of Fresno, California, and it's in the San Joaquin Valley. Its main job there is to train pilots. That's where they do the *Top Gun* kinds of stuff.

TM: Okay.

BF: And the helicopter group there who, while I was working with them, and I can't say enough nice things about these guys. There's an entire book that should be written about their exploits and their, you know, how they assisted everybody. But their primary job was to backup these Navy fighter pilots so that when, you know, if they had a wreck, a crash, then they were to respond. Fortunately, there weren't that many fighter pilots crashing. And in order to maintain their skill level and, of course, they certainly loved coming up into both Sequoia and Yosemite. And they were all Vietnam-era trained. They were looking for the excitement, you know. They were adrenaline junkies like the rest of us.

TM: Right.

BF: They loved coming up to the park. And, you know, I've got a thousand slides and hundreds of stories about just Lemoore Naval Air Station and how they not only helping us but just in general helping them.

TM: Can you share one of those or two of those stories with us here?

BF: I can. I have to think about some that would be of any, of any interest. You know, they crashed a couple of times. Well, okay, so I'll mention one of the crashes. So, I think in 1976, and I keep saying "I think..." You're sort of catching me off guard on some of the exact dates.

TM: Absolutely. Understood. No worries.

BF: If I have references, I can refer to that. But in this case, we had a climber and his partner, and his partner's named Dale Bard. I'm trying to remember the young man that ended up dying. They've hiked up to the base of El Capitan. I think it got too hot, and they realized they didn't want to go play on the, on the Big Cliff that day, so they're coming back down. You know, climbers, and in this case, particularly, the elite climbers tend to take things for granted and maybe aren't as cautious as they should be. This one climber, I think is about 19 years old, holds onto a branch, sort of swings out around a cliff in order to, you know, to keep moving. Well, the branch breaks off, and he ends up tumbling down quite a distance, 100 feet or so. Not vertically but sort of bounce, bounce, bounce, bounce down. His partner goes down there. Dale goes down there. And Dale, when he's able to get down for help, says that he's still alive. So, that puts everything into a higher gear. And I was the acting Search and Rescue Officer during this period of time, for about two weeks, and we had just had somebody killed the day before climbing, so this accident takes place, and I'm not responding this. I'm not part of this operation. But Dan Sholly gets in the park helicopter, and they fly over, and they look, and they see this guy down below, but they can't really tell for sure what's going on. But they can't find a place to land either. So, they come back down, land in the valley. And so now there's a team of about six or eight Rangers with stretchers and ropes and whatever EMS equipment we had at the time. They're on their way up, and at the same time, we've alerted the Navy at Lemoore, made a direct call to them and said, "This is what we've got going. We think he's still alive." And they pretty much said, you know, we're on our way. But we still had to get it cleared through their command, which, in this case, would have been the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center, which in those days was in St. Louis, Missouri. Or Saint Louis, Kansas, actually, I guess. And they were on their way. And because of the relationship, first-name basis, we could tell voices, and we would train with them, and they'd come up into the park and train with us, and it was a really pretty casual relationship in that way. Pretty informal, but everybody respected each other. So, they're on their way, even though they may not have total official clearance. They knew that they'll get clearance on their way up.

TM: Right.

BF: So, they get up there, and they put one of the Rangers on board, Paul Henry. They go in, see, you know, by this time, Rangers have gotten on scene. Well, the Rangers at the time on scene recognize that this guy is now dead. And the normal protocol is that the Navy will not respond to a deceased person because there is no emergency, quote unquote, remaining at this spot. So, they were appraised of this. They knew that, you know, we note that this climber is dead. But in order to bring his body down, there's really quite a danger to the recovery team, the rescue team, just from the sheer numbers of little cliffs they've got to go over in carrying the stretcher down through some really miserable talus and big rocks and trees and other kinds of junk. And they said, "Okay, we will left him out of there." So, they go in. They do a hover check, a power check above the site, you know, maybe 500 or 600 feet up. Then they lower down onto the top of this victim, who is now on a stretcher. He's in a body bag, actually, then a stretcher, and he's in a spot where there's no trees around, and it's pretty safe to pick him up. And it amounts to about a 30-foot hoist. We use Lemoore, largely because they had a 900-pound cable hoist on their helicopter. So, they could lower us down. They could raise people up kinds of stuff. Again, stuff that we take for granted in many ways, anyway. But in those days, none of the civilian ships had those. The Highway Patrol, the California Highway Patrol did not yet, although they do now.

TM: I'm going to jump in here for a minute for a point of clarification. You mentioned the park had its own ship. Is that right?

BF: Yes, the park had a ship for the summer. It was for fires.

TM: Okay. Got it. Thank you.

BF: It did not belong to the Park Service. It was on contract and was there maybe four months of the year. They were housed out at Crane Flat Lookout. There was a heli base there, a small one. So, the rangers flew and looked at the scene, assessed it. There's nothing they could actually do from the air.

TM: Right, because they had, they didn't have a cable hoist, and it was—

BF: No, and they couldn't land, either. There was no decent place to land.

TM: Right.

BF: So, thus the Navy was assisting us. And there was always some minor conflict between the civilians and the military in the sense that the civilians often thought that the military was taking an unfair advantage of money that could be made by them flying these kinds of missions. But, of course, they recognize also that they did not have a hoist. And we could justify using them because of the hoist. But they were also a larger platform. We could get more people in a Huey.

TM: And I'm also going to seek another little point of clarification. Basically, your job that day was the SAR shift supervisor. Is that—? Would that be—?

BF: Well, yeah. Well, no. Not the ship, no. I was for the whole, you know, 24 hours.

TM: Twenty-four hours.

BF: For a week or two at a time.

TM: Okay, but your job is to, kind of, coordinate all these different things that might happen throughout the park. You weren't on scene. You weren't there working with that. You sort of knew what was going on, but you were kind of the overseer of many different operations that day.

BF: Well, yeah, but I think that's a little bit of a stretch in the sense that the Rangers— There was a lot of autonomy by the Rangers. And if the particular Rangers on duty, which most of my peers were very capable of taking care of any of this on their own, they would just do this stuff and get it moving, you know.

Now, I might bless it. I might help oversee it. But I really wasn't there to do anything. But on this particular incident, because of the training that I mentioned at this Parkmedic, I oversaw the training stuff for the Rangers, as well. So, we were actually having a Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, BNDD, which is the predecessor of the Drug Enforcement Agency, or DEA. They came into the park, and they're putting on a several-day training on drugs. So, you know, some of my Rangers, some of our Rangers are in that room, in that auditorium. I'm coordinating it. And this body recovery is in good hands. They don't need me. I mean, to some degree, some of those guys have a lot more expertise than I did probably. So, you know, I might hear some stuff on the radio, but I'm basically ignoring what's going on up there.

So, they do this hover hoist 30-feet up. And just as the stretcher gets into the side door, this Huey HH1N, Huey Vietnam-era helicopter. It has two doors, one on either side of the cabin. Just as the stretcher gets into the opening, one of the engines quits. Now Tom Stout, Lieutenant Tom Stout is the pilot and he, you know— They got trouble. They turn around, and they end up trying to get back down to the floor. They're in the valley, but up to the floor of the, you know, the big meadow, which isn't too far away horizontally. It's about 500 or 600 feet vertically, but it's probably not more than half a mile horizontally. But they end up corkscrewing into the pine trees and the scrub oak. And they go in on one of their doors on one side. And the crew chief in the back had enough presence of mind to slam one of these doors closed. As it turns out it's the only door— One door was locked open, and one door was—you could close it. You know, I'm sure that he knew which is which, but he closed whatever he could as quickly as he could, and as luck would have it, that helicopter went in on that side. If that door had not been slammed shut— You know, the door is, what, five-feet wide or something like that. If that door had not been slammed shut, and the helicopter, which went in on that side, had that door been opened, everybody would have been shish kabobbed.

TM: Right. By the trees.

BF: And they weren't tall pine trees, but they were scrub oaks, junkie stuff. So, all of a sudden, that helicopter is burning, and that entire helicopter is now burned up, is burning, I mean. At that point, it's not burnt, but it's on fire, and ultimately everything is melted down to just pieces of metal. The body has been cremated. I think one of the crewmen maybe had a hairline fracture in an arm or a leg and fairly minimal, in many ways, but it could have been super worse. But it was not. And, you know, the next couple of days, of course, there were Admirals and big wigs coming into the park to see why their, at that point, like, a million-and-a-half-dollar helicopter crashed and burned.

The pilot was never— There was never any issue with the pilot. It wasn't pilot error or anything like that. It was an engine failure. And to this day, and I think this is pretty close to being true, apparently as I've heard the story that that particular engine had some issues in the civilian world, as well. And to this day, the Park Service has never seen a report as to why that engine went out.

TM: Oh, interesting.

BF: And that because, you know, potential lawsuits and that sort of thing. But the Navy, probably 40 times a year, would be in the park helping us out. I can't say enough nice things about their officialism, and their courtesy, and their interest to help, and their interest in what we were doing. And we made some lifelong kinds of relationships over the years. And then the Navy ended up doing away with that program somewhere in the '90s if I'm not mistaken, but then they resurrected it about 8 or 10 years later. So, I think it's back in operation. But in the interim, the California Highway Patrol now has hoist-equipped, larger helicopters that the park relies on a fair amount. And then the park now has a helicopter. You know, it's not theirs. It's just— It's always been a fire helicopter. But they do the long hauls. They do the heli-rapelling programs. They do the short hauls, you know, putting Rangers in on these cliffs, which is, we talked about it, incredibly brave and talented.

TM: Dangerous.

BF: That whole operation, you know, which one of my, this last book I wrote, basically, speaks to that quite a bit. And it's just evolved over time. It's like the EMS program. Of course, they couple that now with the helicopter and the short-haul kinds of programs. So, it's evolved, and I think that the general public, the people who are either witness or recipients of this talent should be terribly grateful and terribly appreciative and terribly impressed and all that stuff.

TM: Yeah, absolutely.

BF: Hey, I don't know how I got to this spot. You were asking about, I guess, a Lemoore stories. That was one.

TM: Yes. Okay, that's good. I'd ask you about John Chew, and you'd mentioned that he had started up this helicopter program or was very instrumental in the Department of Transportation looking at EMS, Flight for Life stuff, and so that got us off into Lemoore, and I was, like, well then, let's go for that. Anything else you remember about John?

BF: Well, John and I actually have been in conversations here over the last couple of years. He sent me his flight suit just a couple months ago because I told him that I wanted to put on paper some of this EMS history, this early Park Service EMS history. And so, he and I have pretty lackadaisically and without any real great precision have been compiling some information between the two of us on some of this history. We each try to giggle each other's memory. He still lives, like I said, in Annapolis, but he's sort of out of the business. I think for a long time he actually ran a consulting company for, you know, like a one-man consulting business where he would assist these Flights for Life kinds of programs, because he still knew the players. He still knew the policies. He probably wrote half of them, if not more. But I think even that— You know, he's— I'm 77, so he's probably 75, 74, perhaps in there, and so he's perfectly happy to go out and kill unsuspecting ducks with a shotgun.

TM: [*Laughs*] Uh-huh.

BF: Well, I guess I don't know what else to say really about John. I think that does bring up something I need to ask him about, which is a little bit of his early history, so I could, you know, put it in one spot for him.

TM: Good. Okay. That sounds good. I was also wondering about not so much the amazing events like, you know, Navy helicopter going down, but about that day-to-day, day-in, day-out things that were happening in the valley that you remember during the 10 years you were there. Housing or shopping or school, you know, just day-to-day life.

BF: So, there was a K-6th grade school in the valley. And I think, depending on the year, sometimes it was up to 8th grade. And it had been in the park since the late 1890s, probably at least. So, when I was there in the valley, there was a fair number of kids in the school, probably 50 or 60, at least. All, you know, different grades, of course. And then the kids from high school had to go to Mariposa, which was roughly about a 50-mile drive down along the Merced River Valley, the canyon, which in wintertime is actually quite hazardous. It can be. You've got snowstorms and ice storms and ice. Roads, one-lane wide each way, right alongside the water's edge. So, if I were a parent of a high-school kid, I'd be a little nervous about my kids going up and down that canyon every day, twice a day. So, some parents actually sent their kids off to a boarding school in Utah.

TM: To the Wasatch?

BF: Yeah, to the Wasatch Academy. And Wasatch was really quite a going concern in those days, enough so that I wanted to document it a little bit. I talked to them about some of their history and have got some of it written down someplace. But, you know, a lot of the parents ended up sending their kids. And that wasn't just from Yosemite. It was from other parks, as well.

TM: That's right.

BF: And I don't know how many percent, what the percentage would have been of their students were Park Service brats, but a lot of them were. So, there was this little school in the valley. And, of course, the Rangers and the other staff in the park would provide various programs, and they come over and see the fire truck kinds of stuff, and so we'd get a lot of that. During my era, there was not a— There wasn't a place where you could send your preschool kids.

TM: Like a kindergarten kind of thing?

BF: Well, no. I mean, you would put your kid there until it was time to pick them up.

TM: Oh, daycare.

BF: Yeah, daycare. There you go. There wasn't a daycare facility there in the park while I was there, but there is now. And it's been there for a number of years. But it wasn't there in the '70s. So, the television, we had a television station, but it wasn't— It was a repeater of some sort. It was beamed right to the valley off of Glacier Point, and that had some controversy initially when it was being put in, as you might expect. But pretty quickly everybody realized they wanted to know what the heck was going on, you know. But it was pretty mediocre quality. Maybe a couple channels at the most. That was there.

The community was much closer in those days while I was there. And I'll regress or digress or move back in time for just a moment to say that, you know, about the time that we've got there and prior, like, the '40s and '50s and '60s, the park was really quite formal from a management standpoint. The women would have these socials where the women would be having their white gloves on. The Superintendent's wife was the bigwig, was the one that would orchestrate some of these things, these gatherings. Of course, a lot of women were working at this point, but a lot of women were not. When I first got there in '71, they were sort of coming out of that era.

But you could not have a pet. You could have, I think, goldfishes, and you could have birds. But you couldn't have cats. You couldn't have dogs, whatever other pets there are. And that sort of got relaxed while I was there, as well. You know, there was a lot of people saying, "Well, I know that Mrs. Jones down the street's got a cat, but she doesn't claim it." People were tattling on each other. Sort of small-town politics in some ways. But collectively it was— everybody was willing to help each other and would jump in and do stuff for everybody else. It was very good from that standpoint. Parents didn't have to worry about where the heck their kids were.

TM: Right.

BF: They could, sort of, let them roam around, at least up until the hippie era sort of came into being. And then I think it became a little more guarded. But, you know, it was a safe environment. The kids had a great childhood. You've got a small river running through the middle of your backyard, if you will. And you've got the cliffs and places to hide and play and build forts and stuff. I know that you could go today— I bet I could walk into Yosemite Valley and within not too many minutes find some old tree fort that somebody had built the 1960s that has been abandoned and never been seen since, practically. So, it was a pretty comfortable environment. But we had the clinic, and that was good. But if you needed, you know, more serious stuff, you had to go outside in the park as a rule.

TM: I wanted to ask you as well, Butch, about the magistrate. Who was the magistrate?

BF: Judge Ottonello was there. If you bear with me for just one second. I could probably— I can't do two things at one time.

TM: No worries. Take your time.

BF: I can't talk and then pull up this one document that will give me everything you ever want to know about Judge Ottonello...

[Butch scans for the document.]

BF: Well, I don't know that I want to waste any more of your time. You know, I've got the dates that he was in the park and that sort of thing. But he'd been there for a long time. Some of his family had grown up there. And he was, he was pretty strict, actually. I think fair, but I also think he was kind of strict. And I don't know that he necessarily could quite understand this new generation, you know, the sort of long hair, hippie kinds of people that he was seeing more and more of. You know, there were times in the park— Tom, I'm not having any real luck. If I weren't talking, I could probably find it quicker, but—

TM: No worries.

[Butch locates the document.]

BF: Okay, I'm in business here.

TM: All right. So, what was his first name?

BF: Well, just a second here. I have to scroll down. There's a lot of magistrate stuff. So, it's Gene Joseph Ottonello... 1945 to 1975 in the park.

TM: So, 30 years.

BF: Yeah.

TM: So, just paint the picture for us. This is a federal facility. It is almost apart, meaning not connected to California. It's in California, but it's a federal facility, and in that federal facility is a federal magistrate—

BF: Yes.

TM: —that follows federal law. Not necessarily California law, but federal law.

BF: That's right. And so, this is what I've written a little bit. Of course, this is real dated now. But it says as of 2011, Yosemite National Parks has a federal magistrate judge who serves in a United States District Court. Magistrate judges are assigned duties by the district judges in the district in which they serve. Magistrate judges may preside over most phases of federal proceedings except for criminal felony trials. The specific duties of a magistrate judge vary from district to district, but the responsibilities always include handling matters that would otherwise be on the dockets of the district judges. Full-time magistrate judges serve for renewable terms of eight years. Some federal district courts have part-time magistrate judges who serve for renewable terms of four years. And then this is all based on some laws that give this kind of authority. In this case, the U.S. Congress established the role of federal magistrate judges with the Federal Magistrates Act of 1968. And that replaces some other earlier laws.

TM: Right.

BF: But, you know, they go all the way back into the 19—let's see here— the 19—

TM: Oh, yeah. I want to say '20s, but—

BF: Yeah, the first magistrate was actually 1920 to 1922. Degnan was appointed the first commissioner on July 1, 1920, until he resigned to go into private practice in 1922. But Degnan is also historically an important name in Yosemite Valley because of Degnan's delicatessen. I think that— I mean, it's obviously a relative, but I don't necessarily think that he was the original owner or anything because Degnan's had been around back in the 1890s, if I'm not mistaken. So, Ottonello was fair. He lived in the park every day, five days a week, pretty much, assuming there was somebody to be heard, he would have a hearing. Rangers would come in as a rule and give their side of the story. Generally, the person that was brought in

before the judge was usually found guilty. He could only assess up to, in those days, it was a \$500 fine or maybe six months in jail. So, the park in 1973, the U.S. prison system, and I say it's prison, whatever system it is, built this jail in Yosemite Valley. Nobody knows about it. No one hardly knows it's there. But it's about a 20 to 22-person jail. And in the summertime in the early 70s, we often had more prisoners in jail than the city of Fresno did.

TM: Wow.

BF: I mean, it was that busy because we had a lot of misdemeanor kinds of low-level petty thefts, fights, drunkenness, drugs kinds of stuff that would keep our jail full. But he would oversee this and there were any number of occasions—I'm not so sure I have a photo. I wish I did. But there are times when we would have 20 prisoners shackled with chains like a Southern-style chain gang, standing outside of this Magistrate's Court, which was then next to, close to the Visitors Center, and one by one, they would appear in front of a judge. And we had a Ranger who served as a prosecutor, and he would attend to the logistics and the various documents that needed to be presented to the judge. And it was all done by the book. And, you know, often these kids, mostly kids, would be fined something. Some of them could be, some of them could pay. Some of them couldn't. Some would get hold of their families, that sort of thing. But, you know, if they couldn't pay, then the judge might sentence them to week in jail. And there was a number of, they weren't patrol Rangers, but they were jail staff that worked 24/7 taking care of the prisoners in this jail. But again, you'd have to put yourself in the hippie era and some of the things that were taking place. It was really quite an interesting process. In 1970, not long— Let me think about this. About 1970, the park had a jail that had four cells in it and maybe two people per cell. But there wasn't anybody babysitting these people all night.

TM: Oh, wow.

BF: Which obviously is a catastrophe about to happen, which fortunately, it wasn't too bad. But somebody did pass somebody some matches, and they ended up setting a mattress on fire, and so the jail ended up being filled with smoke. And Dick Marks, in this case, bless his heart, and to his credit, abandoned that jail. We're not putting anybody in there now. And so, in the next two years, we ended up having this jail built. But in the interim, there are a couple things that would happen. One, we would, we had a Paddy Wagon. We had a dedicated vehicle that had been converted. It was like a big, sort of, a carryall van that had seats in it. You know, certainly no seat belts, but you could be probably handcuffed to the seat in some fashion. I don't remember that. But we would go back and forth to the jail in Fresno, not in Fresno, but in Mariposa, 50-minute, hour drive down, hour drive back. Then an hour drive back down at the end of the day, and an hour drive back. So, there was a staff that would be part of the jail operation that would do this as well. And sometimes the Rangers, whenever the jail will be shorthanded, the Rangers would be driving this Paddy Wagon back and forth, up and down this river corridor.

But the more interesting part of this is— Maybe. Maybe. Maybe not, depending on who you, I suppose. But in the Visitors Center, what is now the Museum, really, there was a room that was an internal room. It had no windows to it. It was probably 12 x 12, perhaps, in size, and it was nothing but blocks, I mean, you know, boulders. And this room had been built, and it had been painted white, and that was clean and everything. But if somebody was arrested at midnight or two in the morning, which is really— This is all very common in those days. They would end up being put into that room. And because there was no reason to spend two hours going down, two hours in the morning to bring this guy in front of the judge at 8 o'clock. So, there were mattresses on the floor. They would be put in the jumpsuits, orange jumpsuits. Their belongings would be put aside. I mean, there was actually a process for all this. We had that Ranger who was actually, who'd been an old bartender at one time, his name was Uncle Fred, and you know, if I'm 30 years old at that time, then Uncle Fred is probably 55 or 60.

TM: Okay.

BF: And Uncle Fred will take these belongings, and he would be there. And there were numerous times when there could easily be 20 people crammed into this 12 x 12 holding facility.

TM: Wow.

BF: And, I'm going again by today's standards, it would be, you know, we'd be sued, and we'd be all kinds of things. But I don't recall anybody ever being hurt or anything like that, but there was always that potential. So, you've got 20 people crammed into this room, and Rangers, including myself, probably half a dozen times that I did this, putting people into straitjackets, and, you know, I had no training. It was all OJT [on-the-job training]. You know, I'd watch somebody else do it, and because we'd have somebody high on acid, LSD, or in some ways— There's a California statute called 5150 CRS, California Revised Statutes 5150, and I think today, even today, the policeman in California might refer to a 5150, which is somebody who's crazy. Now there's a process today where people are assisted with these kinds of problems. But it wasn't as prevalent for us. It wasn't as convenient for us as it is today. And again, we just did what we had to do, which was take care of this issue. So, this magistrate— In this case, Ottonello until— What did I say? 1975?

TM: Yes.

BF: Sometimes he'd hear these people. You know, in order to have them, have somebody placed on a 72-hour psychiatric hold, we had to go through the U.S. Attorney's office, I think, in Fresno. All of our bigger crimes, the felonies that were taking place, and there are a lot of them, although they're felonies in the sense that it might have been drugs for sale. LSD, which was a felony, possession of LSD, although it could be reduced. These things could all be reduced down, which often they were. So, we had a lot of felonies, but you had to run the felonies by Assistant U.S. Attorney in Fresno. And that's what this prosecutor, this Ranger, in this case for the years I was there, his name was Scott Connelly, and he's just sort of grew into the job. It wasn't like he had any legal, real legal training or anything. Over time, of course, he went to different schools, training events, but it wasn't like he was a Master of Law. Although I might mention very quickly, just thinking about little history here. Of course, it has nothing with Grand Canyon, right? But there was a time when somebody could study underneath a lawyer and challenge the California bar. And you could become an attorney. You could do everything that all the other attorneys did that went to law school by training and having various steps to go through. But you did not have to go to law school.

TM: Interesting.

BF: And one of the Rangers, who's name actually just slipped my mind here a moment ago, actually did this. And so, when I first got to the park, that's who we would go to is this man. And, you know, he would help us out and interpret the law and be the intermediary between us and whatever else needed to be done, including working with Judge Ottenello. My wife ended up being the Judge's secretary at the end of his time there, and then she ended up becoming the secretary for the incoming judge, whose name was Don Pitts, 1975 till 1994. And Ottonello, as well as Pitts and all the, not all the others, but some of these, most of these were all, had gone to law schools and were real lawyers.

TM: Right.

BF: Whereas I don't think that Degnan had been. I don't think he'd been— I don't think he was at law school graduate at that time.

TM: Did Judge Ottonello ever make any decisions that you didn't agree with or you thought were inappropriate?

BF: Well, you know, I don't have any kind of an answer for you. It wasn't something I paid that much attention to. You know, my job was to just to, sort, of get people off the streets, if you will.

TM: Right. Right.

BF: And I would appear in front of the judge and tell them my side of the story. But so, I don't have an answer. I'm sure that there are people who could give you that kind of information, but I'm not one of them. I do have a little minor story that had something to do with climbing. There's a very famous one of the,

perhaps, like, one of the world's best climbers, a guy by the name of Jim Bridwell, who was one of the early El Cap climbers and was really quite excellent. As I say, one of the best in the world. The first time I ever met him was when you could still drive through Camp 4, which now is totally you can't drive through it at all. But I was driving through it on a patrol just one afternoon, didn't know Jim Bridwell from a hole in the wall. And I'm coming around the curve because it was a loop camp spot, and one end was climbers. The climbers lived at one end and just regular visitors, sort of, lived at the other end. So, I'm going around the loop, and I see the climbers have tacked up a piece of cardboard with a target on it with circles, just hand-drawn circles, and they're throwing darts at it. Well, I go around the corner, and just as I'm coming around, Jim lets loose of this dart into this tree. Well, you know, in the great scheme of things, a woodpecker would have done more damage than that dart did, of course.

TM: [*Laughs*]

BF: But it also seemed to me that Jim had done it to spite me, you know. He saw the patrol car. He saw the marked vehicle coming around, and he threw this dart. Now, whether this is true or not, I don't know, but I ended up citing Jim. It turned out it's, like, a \$25 citation. But he's got his entourage, and because he was such, he was so far up the totem pole, he was the king of the mountain, sort of literally in a couple of different ways, his entourage that were, you know, they're all watching this dart game go on. You know, they got very upset that I gave him the citation. He has to appear in court the next day, and so Judge Ottonello fines him \$25. And all of his—Everybody kicks in money and pays his fine for him, which is fine. I mean, I don't have any real heartaches about this, but as a result, Jim and I get to be pretty good friends.

TM: Cool.

BF: We establish this relationship, and I'm sure that we talked about this a little bit, but Jim was somebody that we needed, we as Rangers and rescuers, needed to help us out, because we didn't have the expertise. We didn't have the experience, and we needed people that could climb these big walls and could do these sorts of things that we could not do.

TM: Hey, Butch.

BF: Yes?

TM: We've been at this about an hour and 20 minutes.

BF: Oh, geez.

TM: And I have a lot of questions for you about climbing and Camp 4 and— So, this Jim Bridwell story, I want to take that into a little further with where he becomes friends, and he starts helping you out.

BF: Okay.

TM: So, with that in mind, maybe this is a good place to wrap up this Part 8.

BF: Good.

TM: And we will pick this up for Part 9. Does that sound like a plan?

BF: Yeah. It's fine with me.

TM: Okay. Is there anything else you want to put in here with Part 8 to wrap that up?

BF: Oh, I'm sure that we'll come back with something if I don't remember now, Tom.

TM: Okay. Well, thank you. With that, this will conclude Part 8 of an oral history interview with Charles "Butch" Farabee. My name is Tom Martin. And Butch, thank you so very much.

BF: Okay, talk to you later. Well, thank you.