

Interviewee: Robert “Bob” Cornelius (BC)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Working as a Park Ranger at Phantom Ranch in the Grand Canyon in the early 1970’s

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TM: Good morning, Bob. This is Part 5 of a Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Robert “Bob” Cornelius. My name is Tom Martin. Today is June 5, 2018. It’s Tuesday. Bob, may we have your permission to record this telephone interview?

BC: You may, uh-huh.

TM: Thank you very much. So in Part 4, last time you had recounted your recollections of Jack Fields and Lester Womack and Dave Strope. The next person on the list is Ken Hulick, H-U-L-I-C-K. Did you have anything else you wanted to add about Dave?

BC: Well, I did mention he was killed in a plane crash in Northern California. I don’t recall how I found that it out. It was probably through the employee alumni newsletter. We used to look at that. They always had an Out-of-the-Traces and In Memoriam sections there and I think probably it was in there. I don’t recall, in this plane flight he was killed on, whether it was a park service flight or whether it was just a private flight. I tend to believe it was just a private flight he was on and killed in that way. I remember Dave as being very competent. I didn’t know a lot more about him other than the trip we took out to Cape Solitude.

TM: Well, thank you. Thank you for that. Many people would like to know more about. How did you first meet Ken, Ken Hulick?

BC: Ken was working on the South Rim during the winter/fall period, I believe. I would go around with some of the permanents to get experience at night patrols and whatnot on my own time. [cough] pardon me [cough]. I went around with Ken quite a few times so that’s kind of how I got to know him. Of course, I knew of him my first summer because he was an Inner Canyon ranger at Phantom. But the fact that he was at Phantom and I was on the South Rim, I don’t remember if I ever actually met him or knew who he was. I might have seen him around the office or something. They would be on 10-and-4 schedules, they’d be down in the canyon for 10 days and out for 4 generally, so your chances of seeing somebody that was Inner Canyon were a little bit slim unless you actually went down there.

Ken seemed like a... I kind of looked up to him. First of all, he was a permanent ranger. He was very competent and he seemed to know... He had been around awhile. I remember, he had been to the law enforcement training center, not FLETC that’s in Georgia, but he had been to what was called the Consolidated Law Enforcement Training Center in Washington, DC, I believe. We used to call that, it was C-L-E-T-E-C or something like that. We called it “ceefletic”, I remember that,...

TM: [Laughter]

BC: ...rather than FLETC. But anyway, he had been to that. I remember one story he told that was interesting. He said he'd been to this pre-FLETC and he had learned techniques with his baton. He one evening confronted this large Navajo man that they had had a lot of trouble with. I believe he had had some real...quite a criminal history. He was a great, big guy. Ken said he confronted him by himself and he thought, "Well, here's my opportunity." He told the guy he was under arrest for I think intoxication. I don't know if it was drunk driving or drunk in public or whether he was doing some vandalism. I don't know what the reason was. He figured, well, he would try to arrest this guy. The Navajo man said no he wasn't going to be arrested, he didn't want to go to jail. So Ken thought, well, this is an opportunity for me to use my baton, one of the techniques I've learned with my baton. Where you kind of take the baton and kind of whirl it by your side and let the guy have it right in the solar plexus. That doubles him over and you can subdue him. He said he did this. Took a big swing at this guy, hit him right in the stomach and the guy just went "ugh" and stood there. Ken thought, "Uh oh. [chuckle] My life is flashing before my eyes." Fortunately, a couple other rangers showed up. I think there was like probably some of the guys who worked then. Could've been Womack or there was a seasonal named John Glottus that was a big guy. Anyway, they surrounded this guy and then he agreed, "Well, okay, I'll go to jail." They took him to jail. I always thought that was an interesting story because even though you learn techniques in the classroom and that sort of thing, they don't always work in the field [chuckle], in real life.

TM: Yeah, and Ken was a...he was a stout, probably stood 6 foot didn't he?

BC: Yeah, he was at least six foot or six-one, somewhere in there. Tall guy. Another story he told me. This was from Phantom Ranch and it involved Robert Kennedy. Have you heard this? Did he talk about this story in an interview?

TM: He might have, but the more people that recount it the more little spices we'll get about it.

BC: Well, mine would just be hearsay and from what I remember him telling me. The Kennedy's were always trying to let the public know that they were outdoorsy and sports-minded, and vigorous, and energetic, and healthy. All these things. They used the media like they were the first ones to really use television and stuff to get their political views out. Robert Kennedy came down the Colorado River on a raft trip and landed at Phantom Ranch. Ken told me that he went down to the beach to represent the park service and greet the senator and to just be there for the group, see if they needed anything or anything on their trip down the river. I guess Bobby Kennedy was terribly put out that the superintendent wasn't there and there wasn't a big entourage of park service people and really gave Ken a really bad time and even threatened his job and everything. Of course, who knows how much alcohol [chuckle] and that sort of thing might have played in this response of Senator Kennedy. I know in my experience with river running, I always refused to drink because I thought I have a hard enough time, when I was at Dinosaur this was, had a hard enough time running the rapids stone sober. I didn't know what it would be like if I was drunk. So I never drank on the river. But I always remember as you would leave the put-on points at Lodore or Deer Lodge Park or Echo Park or Rainbow Park, you didn't hear the sound of the water or the birds or the wind through the trees or all these wonderful natural things, you heard the hiss of the flip tops as the people popped their beer cans. I mean that seemed to be the mantra of running the river, was having everybody drinking from the get-go.

TM: Interesting.

BC: So that could've been the reason for Kennedy's outburst, who knows. Other than that, I know there was a lot of drama on the South Rim. They had these baseball parties and all this. I don't know how Ken was involved in all of that, but I know there were a lot of people that were [chuckle] involved in some real hanky panky up there. That was certainly a rumor. He did, after he left Phantom, moved up to the North Rim as I recall, and then he went to Everglades. Actually visited him at Everglades. Had dinner with him and stuff at Everglades. I remember it was really nice down there in the... I think it was March that I went to Everglades. He [chuckle] said I was really fortunate because the mosquitoes would just carry you away down there in the summer.

TM: Yeah.

BC: I had a real interesting thing happen, kind of non-related. It was at Everglades. We went out to one of the hammocks there on our auto tour. I stopped at this hammock and I saw these guys stripping these, they were like air plants or something, off of the trees and putting them in a bag. So I went back to the visitor center and reported this. A ranger was coming in from Homestead and stopped these guys and searched their car and found a whole trunk full of these [chuckle] air plants. I remember Ken that evening saying that was the first case that they'd had down there of someone stealing stuff. So it was kind of interesting from that standpoint. I don't remember, when I moved to Phantom, really talking a lot to Ken. Maybe on occasion about things. How he had done things down there as opposed to how I might be doing things. In part...

TM: Was there a lot to it? Meaning Ken would just basically say, "There's your quarters over there" and "have a good time"? Or did he actually walk you around and say, "Here's the campground, you'll need to check people's permits." Or, "Here's the river, you'll need to deal with the..."

BC: No, I never met him at Phantom. We never spent any time at Phantom together.

TM: Huh.

BC: I just mean by phone call or something like that. When the re-organization took place, he was gone up to the North Rim. That became his interest. But I mean, as far as calling the guy that used to work there and finding out what had happened, how it was handled, I didn't do that with Ken except maybe a little bit. That was in part because there was a guy named Ron Lucas, who was a seasonal, and he had worked with Ken down there for at least one season. I don't know if he had worked for more, so I was able to find out from him how the operation worked. So that was how that was done.

TM: Okay, so Ron basically was the one who trained you up to the Phantom job.

BC: Pretty much. He was my kind of on-the-job training person down there. We worked together that whole first summer of 1970.

TM: Was he older than you? Was he younger than you? What...how old was he?

BC: About the same age. We were both in our twenties. I was probably...by that time I would've been 22, I guess when I went down there for the second time. The way I got to Phantom was kind of interesting and Ed Carlson played a role in that. I'll just talk about one other story about Ed...

TM: Please.

BC: ...if we can move on to him. I told you about him wrapping his Ford Torino station wagon, or whatever it was, around the tree when he was having some issues. Well, he had another incident. He was going through some really tough times at that point. He was married to a woman named Diane or Diana and I think he had four kids or something like that. They lived in one of the Mission 66 houses there in the village. There was, like I was mentioning, a lot of hanky panky going on. There was a lot of stuff going on in the village. It was a lot of drama and you never knew what story to believe from time to time. Ed...one time I talked to him and he said he thought that a lot of the issues that went on on the South Rim were a result of people coming from small parks into a big park, where the park they had left they might be very few people there, they got to a big park, it's more of a almost an urban situation and there were a lot more social opportunities and people didn't use good common sense in some things. I don't know if that's true or not.

But anyhow, we had this... One evening we got a report that Ed had threatened to... He was accusing one of the maintenance foremen, I think, of trying to break up his family and causing problems with his wife, etc., etc. It really sounded like a really volatile situation. We were told, Jim Cutler and I, we were told to go up to Ed's house and get the kids out of the house. So we went up there and I'll never forget. Now this is the guy...Ed's going to be my supervisor. He'd asked me if I wanted to go down to Phantom and I had said, "Sure, I'd like to go down there," after I had hiked down and looked at the place. I'll talk about that a little bit later. Cutler went to the front door and there was a big rock in the yard. Cutler had me hide behind that rock and he went to the front door. It was lighted and he knocked on the door a couple times. Ed came to the door and instead of just opening the door normally, he grabbed the door and he flung it open really fast. It flung into the inside and Cutler jumped about 4 or 5 feet [chuckle] because we knew Ed loved guns. We knew he had a lot of guns. So here I am, I'm out hiding behind the rock. I had my pistol on him.

TM: Wow.

BC: Fortunately Ed didn't have any firearms with him or anything at the time. He didn't come to the door with anything so [chuckle] Cutler talked to him for a little bit and found out that neither Diane or the kids were in the house. Ed was in there by himself and everything was okay. So we went ahead and left. But I've always thought back to that moment. That could've been just an awful, an awful moment for the park service and for me, obviously.

TM: Sure, sure.

BC: Have a shoot-out at my future boss's house. [laughter] I don't know if Ed knew I was out there or not, I really don't. Because of the lighting situation, I was kind of in the shadows. [laughter] But anyway, I was having some real questions in my mind of whether I wanted to work for this guy or not.

TM: Yeah.

BC: But in retrospect, he was going through a terrible time in his life.

TM: The poor man.

BC: He and his wife divorced shortly thereafter and I think she either... I think the kids went with her, wherever she ended up I have no idea. It was a very volatile situation and a very volatile evening.

TM: Yeah.

BC: Prior to that, [chuckle] Ed had asked me if I wanted to go down to Phantom. I said, "Well, let me think about it." I said, "Let me hike down there." I hadn't been to Phantom Ranch. I'd been down to Plateau Point. I'd been to a couple other places in the canyon, but I hadn't actually been to Phantom Ranch because I didn't have the time. I was too busy seeing the whole southwest. I didn't go down there. So I hiked down and I spent the night at Phantom. It was like in the early spring before the rush of campers and hikers and stuff. So I got down there...

TM: This was in 1971? Or sorry, 1970?

BC: This was 1970.

TM: Okay, spring of 1970.

BC: Spring of '70.

TM: Thank you.

BC: Yeah, spring of '70, and you know it was like idyllic down there.

TM: [laughter]

BC: It was just beautiful. There were a few campers up in the campground and it was quiet. I just hit it on a particular day. I remember going out to the mouth of the Bright Angel Creek where it flowed into the Colorado River. There's a big high bank, or there was a big, high bank on the downstream side of the west side of the creek. There were some big boulders there and I sat down on a boulder. It was in the late afternoon and I could see the bugs in the air. You can see there kind of a... I was watching the swallows, you could see the swallows open their mouths and gobble these bugs up. Man, this is so cool and you're right here. The river's flowing by and making all this racket with the rapid, just a beautiful place. It didn't take me very long to say, "Sure, I'd love to go down there." There was this huge park re-organization where they went from an old system where you had a chief ranger and district rangers and all. They went to this park management manager system. Ed went from being the safety officer to being what was called the Corridor Unit Manager. During spring break, he went down to Phantom Ranch and spent 10 days down there working. It was a very illuminating time, I think, for him in that there were no controls on the camping down at Phantom Ranch, Indian Gardens. Those were the only two camp... Cottonwood was closed because the North Kaibab Trail was closed at that time.

TM: Because of the pipeline?

BC: Wait just one second.

TM: Okay.

BC: I got to let my little dog out here. There were not controls on the Inner Canyon so people just showed up. One night...

TM: Hang on. Hang on. Hey, Bob, hang on right there. When you say “no controls” you mean “no permits.” People could just...

BC: There were no permits.

TM: ...hike down.

BC: There were no permits on Phantom Ranch and overnight camping at Indian Gardens.

TM: People could do it...

BC: No permits for... What’s that?

TM: People could do it, but they just showed up.

BC: They just showed up.

TM: Okay.

BC: The permit system was strictly for the unimproved trails and other places in the canyon. People did get permits for that all the time.

TM: For the backcountry, essentially.

BC: Right, the backcountry other than the corridor.

TM: Okay. I got another...hang on. I got another question for you right here.

BC: Okay.

TM: You mentioned that the North Kaibab was closed and that was because?

BC: Right. The North Kaibab trail was closed at the first bridge across the creek. That was because they were still working on the Trans-Canyon waterline. They had put the waterline in and then they’d had this enormous flood I think in ’67 and they were having to repair sections and improve sections of trail to accommodate the waterline. So it all related to the construction that was going on up in there. They didn’t want visitors up there getting in their way as far as construction ‘cause they were using dynamite and stuff like that.

TM: Yeah, let me ask you a little bit about that. We probably want to come... You know what, let’s make a note of that. At one point I’m going to...if you wouldn’t mind...I’d like you to recount what you remember about that construction that was happening at that time.

BC: Okay.

TM: But let’s go back. ‘Cause you were saying that Ed was down there at Phantom and...

BC: Right, he went down to Phantom during the spring break period. I think probably at that time, spring break was a little more condensed as far as when, particularly students and stuff, would arrive. People would have off from school and families could do a spring vacation or something like that. So I don't think it was quite as long a period as it is now. But he went down there and one night at Phantom there were twelve hundred people.

TM: Wow!

BC: If you can imagine that. Twelve hundred people at Phantom Ranch. They were camped apparently everywhere. On all the beaches, in the campground, along the trail. They were... It was just crazy. A lot of big Boy Scout groups. So this had a real effect on Ed. He looked at all this...all the trash, all the fire pits that were being built. They were still allowing driftwood to be picked up and burned and people were having fires. It was just a real mess. There was also no control over the length of stay. The length of stay down there was 14 days.

TM: Okay.

BC: So you had some people that were staying 14 days, and then... If you didn't figure out they'd been there 14 days, they stayed another 14 days, or another 2 or 3 days or whatever. So it was really an unmanageable situation. Then the toilet facilities down there. There was no toilet in the campground. There was only this toilet near the ranger station, which at that time was out by the river. It was just kind of a chaotic situation. Of course, after spring break was over things improved as far as the number of people. It got a little bit better but it didn't get good, that's for darn sure. Now, I went down there starting in, I think mid-June of 1970. Ron Lucas was already working down there. I got some instruction in horsemanship by Jack Watson. He went up and we went over saddling the horse, putting the harness on, saddling the horse, putting the bridle on, and all these things.

TM: Had you rode a horse before or was that your first experience with...?

BC: Yes I had. As a kid I had ridden quite a bit, but not for many years. You get rusty on stuff. I still considered myself somewhat of a novice. So they gave me this horse. His name was Hammer. He was probably the most gentle of the 3 horses that we used in the canyon. Hammer was an old grey, well, actually white in color, they call them greys. Kind of had a dappling to him and they had scotched his mane. Meaning they had cut his... Instead of having long hair for a mane, he had this sort of a buzz cut. They call that Scotching 'em. They'd done the same to his tail so he didn't have a lot of hair on his tail. And he was pretty round. He was like riding a barrel. But he'd been in the canyon for years and he kind of had sort of a sad demeanor to himself. [chuckle] He had gotten his name Hammer by one time when he was young, they were going to shoe him. They had him in the farrier's blacksmith shop there and they... One way that... They have to teach the horse to stand on three legs. So they had put a rope around one of his rear legs and they pull it up and they tie it maybe around the neck of the horse. So his leg is up and it sort of teaches him how to stand on 3 legs. Well, they did this with the horse and then I guess the farrier left for a little while to go home and grab a bite to eat or something for lunch. When he came back, Hammer had fallen over on the concrete floor in there, or on the floor I mean, and he had banged his head against...trying to get up and banged his head. He had a big place, I think it was on his left above his eye, where there wasn't much hair. That's where he had banged his head on the floor of the blacksmith shop. Because he was pounding his head they decided to name him Hammer. So that's how he ended up getting his name.

Anyway, I remember getting on the horse. I had some saddlebags. Had a whole bunch of food in these saddlebags, even some frozen... I know I took some milk, a gallon of milk. I didn't have a pack mule with me. I had a bunch of other food stuffs that were frozen and here I go down into the canyon. The trail went from the park service corrals, which were up in the residential area, down past in back of the old Babbitt store and the post office, and then went down past the Fred Harvey corrals, and then over to the Bright Angel trailhead. Then down the trail I go. Even though I'd ridden horses, I'd never ridden anything in the canyon, obviously. I always remember the first stop. Hammer stopped and my leg is dangling over the edge of the cliff, my outside leg. [chuckle] That was the first stop. We were parallel to the trail and it was a little unnerving because I'm looking into space on one side. I remembered that the foreman had told me to turn the horse, turn him and have him face the canyon, and then that way they see the danger. What's dangerous is if you turn the horse or the mule the opposite direction. They get spooked, they could back off...

TM: Back off the edge, yeah.

BC: ...the edge of the cliff. So down the canyon we go. First thing we ended up was stopping at Mile-and-a-Half House. What we were instructed to do at the rest houses was they had a broom there, they had a bunch of gunny sacks. You usually had to re-sack trash there because the squirrels, the rock squirrels, would get in the trash and chew them open. If the packer hadn't got down there in time to get the trash, it would be scattered all over. So there was a bit of looking for cans in the rocks and stuff like that, getting that all re-sacked up and neat. Then they had a broom to sweep the shelter out. It was unbelievable how much sand was in the thing, I remember. Seemed like you swept and swept and swept. The other thing you did was to check the telephone. They had an emergency telephone. This emergency telephone system hooked to all of the phones down in the Inner Canyon. If one was left off the hook, it disabled the entire phone system.

TM: Wow!

BC: It was really a poor system. You had phones at Mile-and-a-Half, Three-Mile House, River House (down at Pipe Creek), Indian Gardens. You had two phones at Indian Gardens, one in the ranger's quarters and one in the maintenance quarters. You may have had one in the pump house, I'm not sure, I'm guessing they did in the pump house, also. You had one at the ranger station at Phantom and one at the maintenance building that was next door to the ranger station. You had one at the USGS house and then you had an indoor and an outdoor phone at Phantom Ranch itself. Then you had a phone at Cottonwood Camp. So if any of those phones...

TM: Was there was a phone at Tipoff?

BC: Also there was one at Tipoff.

TM: Okay.

BC: There was one at Tipoff, that's correct. So if any one of those phones was left off the hook it disabled the entire system.

TM: Wow.

BC: Or if, as often happened, people would steal the insulators. They had these turquoise insulators and they would steal those or they would just take rocks and throw them and break the insulators. Later on, one of my jobs was to [chuckle] replace glass insulators on the phone line. We had guys from Mountain Bell rode mules down into the canyon. I would go with them and we'd go up the trail and...

TM: Oh, cool.

BC: ...I'd tend their mules while they were fixing the phone lines. That was always something you had to do.

TM: So the phone lines there, you're at Mile-and-a-Half trying to clean up. You got frozen food in your...

BC: What's that?

TM: You got frozen food in your saddlebags...

BC: Right.

TM: ...and the day is slowly moving by. [chuckle]

BC: That's right. That's really a problem for me as I'll relay a little later on. I went to Three-Mile House and did the same thing again. Cleaned up and made sure the phone was okay. Then as I'm going down the trail, I go down a little ways. I'm on the Jacob's Ladder heading down and there's these 2 people there. This woman is just absolutely wiped out. I remember [laughter] her saying to me... What I did is I said... They were so dehydrated. They were coming out of the canyon and I put her on Hammer and I walked her down to Indian Gardens and her husband followed along. We decided they needed to spend another night at Phantom...excuse me, at Indian Gardens...

TM: Sure.

BC: ...because they were so dehydrated. I remember her saying, "Oh," she says, "When I saw you on that horse, I thought you were God!"

TM & BC: [laughter]

BC: Not quite that. Not quite that. Anyway I got to Indian Gardens. I had made my first rescue [chuckle] basically of my time in the canyon and we get a report that there's a woman down below Indian Gardens at the Devil's Corkscrew down there. She's been there laying across...she's laying in the trail. I didn't know what to think so I... Vic Watahomigie was at Indian Gardens and I asked Vic, I said, "Can I use your freezer and your refrigerator for my food?" So he put all my food in his refrigerator and then I got on Hammer and away we went. We went down to the...partway down the Devil's Corkscrew. This is June, see, and it's like 110 degrees, I mean, down in the Inner Canyon there. It is really hot.

TM: Yeah.

BC: I come up upon this woman and she's lying across the trail. So I start... She's almost incoherent but I'm talking to her a little bit. I ask her, I said, "How long have you been here?" She said she'd been there for hours and hours and that people had just been walking up the trail and just sort of stepping over her

and continuing on. So I said, "Well, we got to get you out of here." Then she mentioned something about being diabetic and not having her medication with her, so I thought boy, we've really got a problem now. I had a canteen and I soaked her down really good with the canteen. Then I was able to get her up onto the horse into the saddle. I got her to hang on to the saddle horn and I started leading Hammer back up toward Indian Gardens. I would kind of glance over my shoulder and every once in a while she'd start to slide out of the saddle. I'd have to stop and run back and push her back up onto the saddle. Somehow we got her to...course I was carrying her pack, too. We got her up to Indian Gardens and got a helicopter. Brought a helicopter down and flew her out 'cause she was really in bad shape. She wasn't in like a diabetic coma at this point, I don't think, but she was getting there. So that was another incident that happened on my way down. Then I loaded all my supplies back up and off I go again down toward Phantom. By late afternoon, I finally arrived at Phantom Ranch. I remember going along the River Trail and seeing Ron Lucas. It was late, getting toward evening, it was probably 5:00/6:00, and he was walking the beaches there. We waved and I went down and he showed me where to put the saddle and everything in the tack room and all that stuff. I think it was the next morning, we kind of toured around and looked at all the jobs that we had to do down there. You know it was just...it wasn't quite the same as my idyllic...

TM: [laughter]

BC: ...little first trip down there. It was absolutely atrocious. I mean... They had trashcans in the campground. I think they had like four, maybe four trashcans in the campground. Then they had this huge burner. It was about almost 6-foot tall and probably 3-foot in diameter. It sat in the campground not too far from the rock rest house down there.

TM: It was like a big dumpster kind of thing?

BC: It was a big...it was a burner where it had ventilation holes around it. It was designed to burn trash. What we would do is [cough]...excuse me...

TM: Where... Sorry I'm going to jump in again. Where was its location?

BC: It was near... There used to be a big Cottonwood tree. There's this lean-to rock rest house just as you...on the lower end of the campground. It was right in that vicinity. There was also a water spigot there.

TM: There's a cliff there.

BC: What was that?

TM: There's a cliff there. This is on creek-right of Bright Angel Creek. There's a cliff there and then there's a little rock house kind of structure there.

BC: Yeah, it was maybe a hundred feet from that.

TM: Okay.

BC: Upstream. We would put trash in there that was burnable. We'd make a mixture of gasoline and diesel and we'd soak this stuff and then you would light it off and there'd be this big whoompf. The smoke was just horrible. It'd be black smoke rolling up. [chuckle]

TM: Wow.

BC: And the stench was just really bad. But we had to reduce the trash down so we could get it out of there. So there was that to deal with. That was the first thing. Then there were the restrooms and the recovery on a toilet takes a little bit of time. Well, the toilets were being used so quickly that they would get plugged pretty regularly so you would have standing water and human waste and other debris in the floor in there. You'd have to deal with that and finally get the toilet working again. In some cases it was better to go stand out there, if there were a lot of people in the area, and be like traffic cop. Say instead of having a men's and a women's, you would send the men over to the women's, and so on and so forth, because there were always more men than women anyway. So there was that to deal with. Then there was the pool house. Fred Harvey had activated the pool and by this time it was sort of a traditional concrete type pool. Not the old rock...beautiful rock pool that they originally had there.

TM: Yes.

BC: They were having trouble with the... They did have trouble with the health department at some point, but when I got there the pool was active and they were using it. The problem they were having is [chuckle] they were having all these hikers... It was supposed to be for the guests of the ranch, but everybody with all their dirt on them and everything were jumping in the pool and getting it all nasty and they couldn't keep it clean. But that was not my problem. The pool was not my problem. My problem was they had a couple of trashcans there at the bathhouse. We were responsible for the trash, so we were getting all of Phantom Ranch's trash there. We had to sack it up and we'd carry it back down to the ranger station. It was mostly aluminum cans and papers and stuff like that. Then also there was a bathroom there, men's and women's bathroom, and a shower. The showers were leaking and it was flooding the whole...both bathrooms. [chuckle]

TM: Oh, wow.

BC: So you would go up there with a squeegee and try to get the water out of there so people didn't have to wade in to go to the bathroom. It was just really bad.

TM: So were you doing...hey, Bob? I'm going to jump in and say, were you doing maintenance as well? If there was a leaking faucet or a fitting or something that needed replacement, was that something that you would take care of or would you call maintenance for that?

BC: No, you'd pretty much have to take care of it up to your...

TM: Ability.

BC: ...level of expertise, I think. Used to call myself a manger...

TM: [laughter]

BC: ...rather than a ranger because you did so much maintenance down there, especially initially when I went down there. The next thing was... I remember my boss, Ed Carlson, he sent some new showerheads down and we were able to get the thing to stop leaking. But I think in this case, maybe they might have eventually had to send a plumber down because there was something internal inside the wall. They had to replace the valves or something. So I think they might have sent a maintenance man down to repair that, but it took a few weeks to do it, get somebody down there. Then we went down to the boat beach and this was really where the biggest problem was. The boaters would come in and there was kind of a little fenced area there. They had a little, sort of a temporary fence around, probably 6' x 6', or something like that. Then there was another burner. We had another burner down there on the beach. The boaters would come in and instead of leaving their gunny sacks full of trash like they were actually supposed to do by permit, that was the way they were supposed to handle the trash at that time, they would dump the trash...

TM: Oh, and keep the sacks.

BC: ...and take the gunny sacks. So we would end up with this enormous pile of trash. We would have to re-sack it into gunny sacks and then we would pile it under a mesquite tree. The guy that was doing the most of that was Vic Watahomigie. He was the maintenance guy and he was the relief guy. He would come down and we would help Vic. We only had, because of the scheduling and the number of people we had, we only had like two days to work together. We'd try to get more of the heavy maintenance done at that time. But Ron and I also went down and... That first day that was one of the things we did as orientation, was we sacked the trash. You couldn't keep up with it!

TM: So you would burn...?

BC: What's that?

TM: You would burn what you could burn and what you couldn't burn you would put in the gunny sacks and then send out on mules?

BC: Right.

TM: Okay.

BC: It would go out on mules. It was awful because you had broken glass. You had cans that had been opened. You were always getting cut and stuff like that. It was really just a horrible, horrible job. Eventually, I was able to deal with it. One of the things that surprised me. You know I have this log, this old log that I kept while I was down there. I was reading and Warren Hill, who was the river manager, and several other managers from up on the rim came down to Phantom and were looking at the operation down there. How these guys in their right minds could look at this boat beach and think that everything was copasetic is beyond me. The only thing I can think of is whenever... The park service is great for this. They have these management teams that would go around and they would do evaluations of park operations. The only thing I can think of is when Warren and these guys came down there, whoever was down there had been told in advance and had been instructed, "Be sure you get everything cleaned up down there. We want it to look really good." That's the way that those management teams always work, is that the park manager wants to look good so he says, "Be sure you get this cleaned up, and that taken care of, and this taken care of." Because they knew they were

problems and they didn't want to get caught with the problem. They wanted it to look like everything was going good.

TM: Wow. That's a difficult way to manage things.

BC: It's an awful way to manage things. So that's what was going on at Phantom, at least in this case. Because, like I say, I don't believe these guys could've come down and seen the situation as it was that I was dealing with and really in their right minds have thought things were okay. What I did... The boat beach was an interesting thing. I decided... I called up to the South Rim and I talked to Warren Hill. I said, "Could you send me a copy of the boat permit down. I want to look at it." I didn't have a copy of it. They did that and I read it over. There was a provision in there where the boaters could leave their trash at Phantom Ranch, but it had to be sacked. They couldn't do this dumping stuff. I don't know how that ever got started. Sometimes things get started and as turnover of personnel and so on and...

TM: Yeah. Yeah.

BC: ... and so forth, it just gets to be done a certain way. So I read this. I called up Warren Hill and I said, "Warren," I said, "are you aware of this trash problem at Phantom?" I don't remember what he said, but I told him, I said, "We are going to clean it up here and these boaters are going to start leaving their trash in gunny sacks or I'm going to start writing tickets." He said, "Oh, don't do that. Oh, don't do that." I said, "Well," I said, "we are not going to be up to our armpits in maggots anymore down here." I said, "This is disgusting." So Ron Lucas and I and Vic, we spent about a week I guess [chuckle] and we cleaned the boat beach up. We made a screen out of two by fours with a screen on the bottom. We screened the sand. We got all the glass and the pop tops and everything, cigarette butts and everything out of the sand.

TM: Wow. Yeah, yeah.

BC: We cleaned that all up. We burned everything that we could. We sacked everything up and we took the little fence that they had there, we threw that away. We took the burner, we threw that away [chuckle] and now we have a clean beach. So what happens? Well, here comes the boaters in. The first guy comes up and empties a bag right where the trash used to be, where it used to be left. So I went down and I wrote him a ticket for littering and wow was he upset. But, you know, that was okay. I said, "Read your permit." [chuckle] To give credit to management, they backed me up on that.

TM: Okay. Good.

BC: Even the second person that I ended up citing was a boatman for Martin Litton and that really hit the fan because Martin Litton was a lawyer in addition to having Grand Canyon Dories. He wrote a 5-page letter to the park service complaining about it. What they actually did, they didn't leave their trash on the beach, they hauled their trash up to Phantom Ranch and filled up all of the trash cans up at Phantom Ranch. The concession was PO'd about it. So I wrote them a ticket. The park stuck by their guns and backed me up on this trash deal. I don't know how it happened but I only wrote the two tickets. It was like the underground telegraph or something swept through the boating community and we didn't have any other problems with trash from boaters. They started either carrying their trash through the canyon or leaving it sacked under the mesquite tree there at Phantom.

TM: I think I looked into that. The park service was providing the gunny sacks at Lees Ferry but they would all get full by the time the boaters got to Phantom, so they were dumping the trash on the ground and then refilling the sacks.

BC: Right.

TM: Eventually the park service said, "We're not going to provide the sacks and you've got to carry it out."

BC: Right.

TM: It took a while. But, this is great as a step along the way to kind of get that detail sorted out.

BC: Oh, it was and if Victor Watahomigie ever smiled it was [chuckle] after he found out he didn't have to go down there and sack that trash up. We would get up at like 4:00 in the morning and go down there while it was still cool...

TM: Yeah.

BC: ...in the summer heat. You couldn't work past about 10 on that type of work and survive. The other thing that happened was the Fred Harvey had to close the pool because they were having trouble keeping the pool cleaned. Then they closed, I think they closed the restrooms, too. We quit taking care of any trash at Phantom Ranch, so now we're down to just the trash in the campground and the burner. Of course, Ed Carlson had been down there and seen the 1200 people in the area so he came up with the idea of this Inner Canyon permit system. What it was... This took some selling, I'm sure, on his part. It was a tag, a yellow paper or a composite type tag and it had the rules, basic rules like no fires, pack out your trash, all those types of things, on one side and on the other side it had what campgrounds you were going to be staying at in the canyon. It had a little wire on it and you could wire it to your pack. That's what we had the people do. But one step in this...there were two steps. One was to stop having trashcans and burners in the campground. I thought, boy will this really work? Cause the people they still have the trash, are they really going to carry it out? We were a little hesitant to do it, but it was obvious that we had to do something because we were just overwhelmed with trash. Then I came up with this idea. Let's stencil the tables. We'll put a stencil on the tables and it'll say, "You packed it in, you pack it out."

TM: Oh, cool.

BC: Ed thought that was a good idea, so we stenciled all the tables. Well, someone from the South Rim, I remember, came down and saw those stencils on the tables and thought, "Oh gee, that's really kind of offensive to people, that type of wording." So we said we'll come up with something better. [chuckle] No one could, so we stuck with that at least for the time being. Really when we got rid of the trashcans, things improved. You got more questions about, "What do we do with the trash?" We'd say, "Pack it out." The other thing was...

TM: So Bob, I'm going to jump in and stop right here, because I'm a generation or so, a little younger than you, but the concept of pack-it-in, pack-it-out has always been drilled into my brain. Did you come up with that "You pack it in, you pack it out", did you come up with that phrase?

BC: Yeah.

TM: That's brilliant. Well done! You're a marketing genius.

BC: [Chuckle]

TM: Because it's a simple... "pack it in, pack it out" is just great.

BC: Yeah, yeah. The other thing we came up with down there, Ed came up with this, is he had a trash compactor. He had a kitchen trash compactor, I guess, in his house and one day he thought hey, maybe we could use this for Phantom. I came over to his house one day and we compacted some trash. We took the compacted trash bag and we put it in a gunny sack and it fit just perfect. We figured we could get two compacted bags of trash into one gunny sack. So now we had a way of... You still had trash down there. The pack-it-in, pack-it out was supposed to work perfectly, but it doesn't obviously, so you still end up with trash and you end up with domestic trash that the rangers are generating and other maintenance guys and everything. So you're still going to have trash. This was a good solution. So he bought a little compactor and we put it down in a little shed down between the corral and the ranger station down there. We would compact the trash and then put it in the sacks. We needed another way to deal with the trash. When I first got down there, I'll never forget, the maintenance guys would put the trash bags, well, not the maintenance guys, we would, too, we would stack them right in front of the ranger station. There was this big pile of gunny sacks of rotting trash.

TM: Oh gosh.

BC: You'd turn on your swamp cooler and all you could smell was garbage. I thought, "I don't like this very much." That went on for a while. There were a couple of big culverts, kind of oblong culverts with metal lids welded on top of them. They were supposed to be valve boxes for the Trans-Canyon waterline.

TM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BC: There were a couple of them leftover. So I came up with this idea, there were actually three of them, that I would go down between the corral and the ranger station and I dug this big pit. I put these things down in there. You could lift the lid up and put the gunny sacks down in these. There was no smell or anything then.

TM: Made sense.

BC: The other thing we did is we put a hitch rail there so that the packer could come in there to where those lidded boxes were, lift them up and then he could load the trash from there. Then we didn't have trash in front of the ranger station and the maintenance building anymore. So that helped with the... I thought I was a park ranger but I was actually a solid waste management disposal expert. [chuckle]

TM: I love that term "manger," you know.

BC: It really was...it really was true.

TM: Bob, I'm going to ask you another question here. You mentioned the yellow tags with the regulations on it and the campground location. I am assuming that that also came with a restriction on the number of campers allowed to be in the corridor per day.

BC: That's correct.

TM: Okay. And that was 1970 or '71?

BC: That was...well, let me think. Was probably '71 I'm thinking because the first year was pretty rough, as I recall. I know we didn't get to it that first summer. It was the following... '71 it would've been, is when they instituted that. They started it out by... When Easter arrived they had a publicity blitz. Especially in some metropolitan areas and there was a lottery. They had a lottery and they drew names for the number of people that were going to... I think the capacity at Bright Angel was like 80 people or something like that. We came up with looking at the campground, which was at that time only on the west side of the creek, and figuring we could put 80 people or so many groups in there. So they had this lottery and people's names were drawn from all over the country. Then they went ahead and issued the permits when people got to the canyon based on their place in the lottery. So that's how it kind of got started. From then on... We didn't have lotteries after that, as I recall. People if they showed up they got permits and went on their way. If they couldn't go down into the corridor, they might be suggested to go down to Hermit's or Horseshoe Mesa or something like that. So we now had a... Oh, the other thing we did, instead of having a 14-day limit at Phantom and at Indian Gardens, we had a 2-night limit. That really helped and it stopped the long-term camping, which was a large part of our problem.

TM: Okay.

BC: What would happen is some guy would come down, usually I'd see him hitchhiking on Highway 66 when I was going to Flagstaff. Then I'd come back and they'd be in my campground and they'd stay there for 2 weeks. Then you'd go out on your 4 days off, you'd come back and you couldn't remember if that guy was there for 2 weeks or 2 days. You'd get some of them that would stay there for a long time. As people would leave, they'd give this guy all of their canned goods and all of their this and that.

TM: Oh, take all of their food. Sure.

BC: Yeah. He'd have this huge store of food and stuff there. Then all of a sudden one day, he's gone and guess who gets to clean everything up?

TM: A big pile of junk there.

BC: Yeah, it was unbelievable. This had gone on for years, I guess, down there. So the 2-night limit really, and the permits, really stopped all that and things became much more manageable.

TM: Great.

BC: At least it was a temporary, compared to what they have now. I think the backcountry permit office didn't come into effect until much later on. They were doing everything at the visitor center. Originally at the South Rim district ranger office and then the visitor center. I don't know if there ever was a time where they issued permits at both locations. I think it was either or.

TM: Sorry, I've got another question I wanted to ask about...kind of go back a little bit. You mentioned that there was a woman with a diabetic problem down in the Devil's Corkscrew. You had gotten her...

BC: Right.

TM: ...back to Indian Gardens. She has diabetic issues and actually got a helicopter in to take her out. Were the helicopters... Did the park have its own helicopter by that time or were they still using the helicopters from the Trans-Canyon pipeline work? Do you remember that, were you clear on that?

BC: They had a contracted helicopter. It was a Jet Ranger. It probably was used for things along the Trans-Canyon waterline, too, I'm guessing. Maybe taking personnel and stuff like that or sling loading things occasionally. I do know it was contracted to the park service. If we had an emergency I think we probably got priority.

TM: Okay.

BC: I remember, it was only like \$80 dollars, or \$180 I think, per hour or something like that. It wasn't anything like it is today as far as cost. We used helicopters a lot for search and rescue and to haul people out of there for all different kinds of reasons. I remember even boatmen coming to me and just begging me to [chuckle] get someone helicoptered out of the canyon because they were like a mental case or something. We had a lot of injuries that came off of the river that had to be helicoptered out. A lot of heat emergencies. Surprisingly quite a few people with diabetic emergencies. That seemed to be one where they'd go off and forget their medication, or the fact that they were in a really harsh environment would somehow trigger a problem. We had different...glucose and stuff like that that we could give people, or the old stand-in orange juice and stuff like you would use.

TM: Well I would like to ask you more about the medical situation that you encountered at the time. I'd also like to ask you more about kind of the river, what was happening there, and about Duke, the Tennessee walking horse, but I've got a meeting I need to run away to here now. So if it's okay with you let's wrap today's interview up and we will pick this up again for Part 6.

BC: Okay, sounds good.

TM: Give me a minute here. This is the conclusion of Part 5 Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Bob Cornelius. Today is the 5th of June, 2018. Thank you so much Bob. Hang on for a second.