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Interviewee: Charles "Butch" Farabee (BF)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

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TM: Today is Monday, July 6, 2020. This is Part 17 of a Grand Canyon oral history interview with Charles "Butch" Farabee. My name is Tom Martin. Good afternoon, Butch. How are you today?

BF: Good, Tom. Thanks.

TM: Thank you. May we have your permission to record this oral history over the telephone?

BF: Yes.

TM: Thank you very much. You know, last time we were talking about a number of different things that were happening in Grand Canyon and as they related to the helicopters and helicopter overflights issues. Other things that were happening at the park that you got interested or involved in were entertaining the Prince of Japan. I'll bet that was pretty interesting. Were there any other management plans or activities that happened at Grand Canyon that you recall and want to talk about?

BF: Well, yeah. There's a couple but one was, as it turns out, and I've seen this touted elsewhere, that there are more wild caves in Grand Canyon National Park than in any other National Park area in the country.

TM: So, as a caver, I'll jump in and ask you right now. You should know. Is that right?

BF: Well, I don't know. I mean, I didn't go around counting them all. But there are a lot of caves in the Grand Canyon, pretty much none of which are known except to a small group of cavers in the state or, you know, around the state. But I do belong to and have for 60 some years the National Speleological Society, and they've given me little recognitions over the years as being one of the early people. Certainly not the founders, but one of the early people. So, I maintained this interest in caving in the Grand Canyon at that time of my life, which is, you know, I could still actually get on my hands and knees and crawl into a cave, I guess. But one of the guys, one of the events that took place that really had a significant impact on the resources at the Grand

Canyon was an event where I ended up arresting two river runners. I don't remember the name of the one young man, but the second was the guy by the name of Hans Bodenhamer, who actually lived in Montana, close to Glacier National Park. But at the time, I think, well, that was probably not right. At the time, he was probably living in Flagstaff, although I got to know him later while he was living in Montana, so that was the Montana connection.

And I apologize for screwing this up. I think it was December of '82. I went back and looked at a news clipping. We got a report of two river runners who had launched from Lees Ferry. And whoever made the report, I don't remember much about any of that, but it was pretty clear to the reporting party that these guys were not really river runners. I mean, they really weren't prepared for what they were going to get themselves into. And it was just sort of a wild river-rafting trip, which we had several over the years. I'm sure even long before I was there. But we needed to go in, so Kim Johnson, who was quite an accomplished rafter, kayaker, and she was a Ranger in the River Unit at the park, but she didn't have any law enforcement authority. But she had the knowledge that I did not have. Somehow she sort of second-guessed where they would be based on the time that they were reported to leave Lees Ferry.

We flew in by helicopter and we were able to spot them. And they were in camp. They had beached not too far down below Lees Ferry. I think upstream of the Little Colorado. Someplace in there. So, we landed, and these guys admitted to just doing this expedition that you can do when you're 19 or 20 years old but perhaps have not thought it through very well. And they had some pretty cheap rafts. Theirs was just a little two-man raft. And I don't know. I mean, who knows if they would have lived through all this, but we didn't want that to happen, of course, them to get hurt. So anyway, I cited them, and then we physically removed them from that spot. We slung load, you know, the helicopter ended up— We bundled everything up, and they helped us, of course, put everything into the big net sling. And we slung out their rafts, we slung out all their equipment and stuff, and then we flew these two kids out, these young men out, and cited them in the court. You know, I think I said that I arrested them; I definitely cited them. And whether I released them with a citation after actually arresting them or not, I can't frankly say that. But they had been detained and cited, for sure. They eventually appeared in front of the U.S. magistrate there in the park, and their fine was to pay for the helicopter flights, the sling loading, Kim's and my flight in, their flight out. That sort of thing. And there's probably maybe four or five round trips from this beach to the South Rim. In those days that was a pretty significant piece of money, probably several thousand dollars, which was what the judge fined them, and that was it.

Well, as it turns out, Hans was also a very avid caver. And Northern Arizona has got a lot of wild caves, some of them are limestone, some of them are sandstone, some of them are earth cracks, which are very deep. You know, 300- and 400-foot deep. And Hans was right in the middle of all that. At that point, I was about 40 years old, and I was still very interested in caving, although I wasn't doing much caving because of my job demanding and raising two boys. But Hans and I got to be pretty good acquaintances. And I was able to talk him into volunteering for Grand Canyon to get, you know, really jump into the cave program at the canyon, which was basically nonexistent. There was no geologist or hydrologist. At least not full time for the park. There wasn't anybody who had a focus on caving. And so, I sort of adopted that, even though it was not in my position description, just because of my roughly 20-some years' worth of cave experience that I brought with me to that job.

So, Hans was very agreeable to this. You know, I introduced him to the resource people there. I think it was Steve Hodapp, by that time, was the Chief of Resources Management. And I think everybody in that group knew that there were caves and that was something that we needed to look at, but nobody had ever really taken it on, you know, put it on their plate to work on.

TM: So, can I just kind of paint the scene here a little bit? Grand Canyon and it's 277 miles in length. Roughly 240 miles of that is through very karst limestone, which karst means it's got cavities in it. It's like Swiss cheese.

BF: Yeah.

TM: And a lot of these caves are at the top of the rock unit, top of the Redwall Limestone, so there'll be a 700-foot drop and 50-feet down from the top is a 50-foot diameter opening. And every half mile to two miles, there's another one. And there's a lot of Redwall exposure out there. So that's why, I think, you get that carte blanche "Oh, more caves in Grand Canyon than anywhere else." That's really true, but most of them are not accessible to ordinary folks. And that brings us to Hans Bodenhamer, because I sure don't see him as an ordinary person.

BF: No. No. Hans is not ordinary.

TM: Can you tell me about what his manner was like? Was he an angry young man or was he different? And what kind of skill set did he possess?

BF: Well, as I remember Hans, he was quiet, had a real sense of adventure about him, which, of course, I admire that sort of thing. You know, and cavers in general are pretty secretive about the location of caves. They're not unwilling to talk about caving, but they don't like to reveal where caves are just because the general public is very prone to screwing these places up. So, Hans was quiet in that manner. He was very respectful. He was not, as you said, angry or belligerent or obnoxious. I mean, he was just a nice, a nice guy.

TM: Some people say that he had a really sharp sense of humor.

BF: Well, he may have that. I don't really remember that kind of detail. I mean, it wasn't like we sat around and, you know, me drinking a Diet Coke and him drinking a beer or anything. The relationship really wasn't like that. But it was more of a quasi-professional relationship. And, you know, I'm generally very respectful to pretty much everybody, and I'm certainly very respectful of people that have like interests that I like or admire. And Hans was one of them, even though I wasn't sitting around, having jokes with him. I can't remember exactly, but he was 20 or early 20s at that point. And again, I don't remember anything about his rafting partner. He sort of dropped out of the scene, I think, once they paid their bill with the magistrate. You know, [Hans] didn't fight anything. He didn't voice any real dissent about what had happened to him. I think he was pretty clued in that this was an illegal trip and that if he could get away with it, great. But if he didn't get away with it, he was willing to pay the consequences as well. And I guess I liked that about anybody, you know, that sort of 'fess up to what you've done and move on. And Hans is one of them.

But over time, in the Grand Canyon there are lots of archaeology sites, as well, and some of them are in these caves. And one of the more famous artifacts are these split-twig figurines that

are actually quite common in the park, although they— It took a while before anybody recognized the fact that there are a lot of these little willow figurines sort of hidden, buried in the dirt in some of these shelters and caves. But a lot of the, particularly in the North Rim, there are some very big caves. I mean, some caves that have got a lot of miles to them, and probably some of the South Rim. I only know of a couple. But Hans, because of his interest and the fact that our resource people were willing to sort of bring him into the fold because he had some knowledge or was able to get some knowledge of things that we were to protect. You know, “we” meaning the park, and was within our realm of responsibility, but no one at that time had any real inclination or interest about caving per se. And, you know, to go into wild caves takes a certain mentality. Not everybody is suited for it, just because of the claustrophobic, the need for climbing experience and just being underground. A lot of people don't want to do that.

But Hans brought all this experience and all this interest with him. And over the years that I was there, he would interact and interface with the resource guys. Periodically I'd see him and come up and sit down with him and go through some of the things that he was doing. I didn't supervise him in any fashion. I had no real control over what he might be doing. But just because of our initial relationship, I was involved. And so, I think over time Hans had quite a contribution to the park. And then I don't know exactly what happened to him in the interim, but when I was either the acting or the Deputy Superintendent at Glacier National Park in Montana, I ran across Hans again. By this time, Hans is roughly 15 years older. He's become a teacher, and he teaches at the local high school, the Blackfeet Reservation, which is contiguous, you know, it's right next door to Glacier. And we interacted with those Native Americans, that tribe a lot. The park did, and I did as well. So, I found out that Hans was a teacher. I think he taught biology and some of the sciences at the high school, the local high school. But he'd also formed a cave club within the school, and he was taking these young men and women, probably a group of, let's say, 10 or 12 anyway into the park. And they were starting to do some mapping and expose these young people, his students, to caving, but science as well. Hans made a real effort to do that because of his love for caving and, I suspect, his love for teaching as well. And then over time, I know that Hans would take these groups, these young men and women clubs, to the Grand Canyon on a number of occasions. And the park, the resource people, would welcome them and help them facilitate doing some cave measuring, looking for figurines, perhaps, just documenting some of the caves. I think mostly on the South Rim if I recall.

Hans was no longer actually at that point, was no longer working for the Blackfoot tribe. Rather, he was a high school teacher in Columbia Falls, which was a small town right at the base, right near Glacier National Park. So, Hans over the years has been a real contributor to a cave knowledge of the Grand Canyon. Now the park has a hydrologist, maybe a geologist, and caves are within that person's responsibility. And I have not followed too much of what that person is doing. I often think, well, I ought to maybe contact him and just introduce myself and maybe give him a little bit of this history as well. Not that it would make too much difference, perhaps. So, I think the park is starting to recognize its responsibility with the caves in the park. You know, the figure that comes to my mind, and I would never want to be quoted on this, is something like over 600 caves are known. And some of them even, Tom, you know, about some of these that empty into the Colorado. I mean Vasey's Paradise is one of them. I've never been in Vasey's, but I've got friends here in Tucson that have, and it goes for miles and is particularly complex cave. I did some wild caving while I was there, a couple of caves. The one that I remember the best was way down at Thunder River. Do you remember the canyon that goes right into the water there?

TM: So, Deer Creek, Deer Creek Falls, it's a Surprise Valley.

BF: Yeah. No, it's not Surprise.

TM: And Deer Creek Valley. And then there's Tapeats Creek.

BF: Yeah. Tapeats. Well, at the upper end of Tapeats Canyon, a river, stream, which is not very long, a couple miles at the most, it goes into a cave. That's where the water comes from. And at the very back of that cave is the largest room, at least up until not too many years ago, is the largest room by volume in the State of Arizona. I mean it's huge. And we swam into it, this other Ranger and myself and a guy from—you know, this ought to be recorded here—a guy by the name of Bob Boecher, who was an old-time caver here in Tucson. When I was the Assistant Chief Ranger and I had responsibility for search and rescue, I also knew that we had the real potential to have a real serious rescue and/or search in the park from a caver. You know, within the park we didn't have the expertise. We ended up doing a little cave, and I mentioned a little rescue in a cave, which I've mentioned sometime back. Cave of the Domes. But I also knew it could get much bigger and much more dangerous, much more complicated and much more involved. So, I went out to— You know, I got the addresses and phone numbers of cavers within the State of Arizona because I still belonged to the Caving Club of America, the National Speleological Society. And they put out a little membership booklet every year. I went through, and I identified, I don't know, maybe 10 or so people that lived around the state. I end up calling these guys, and I said, "If we were to have a serious need for cavers on a cave rescue, can I count on you to help out?" Everybody said, yes, for sure. So I came up with a list. I had my call-out list and addresses and phone numbers and stuff for this cave group, including this one guy, this Bob Boecher. I invited him up to the park. I said if you want to go— Because somehow, we got to talking about or maybe he mentioned to me Tapeats. I said, "If I could get us in there easily, would you like to go? You could be our guide into Tapeats Cave." "Well, for sure." So, the inner canyon Ranger, whose name is just sort of slipped me at the moment. I don't know if that's a dangerous sign or not.

TM: Well, you and the rest of us.

BF: Well, I hope so, I guess. So, the three of us, and Tom Caldwell was our pilot again, that I mentioned before. And at Tapeats is also a little campground and there's a pit toilet there with a structure on it. At that time, it needed some work. There was some— It was basically falling apart. So, we made a— We took in some building equipment, carpentry equipment, boards and things to stabilize this outhouse. And we also took in wet suits and caving equipment and camping gear. It was all in one trip. We were able to do it with one—

TM: Wow. That was a heavy ship.

BF: Well, it wasn't— I'm making it sound a lot heavier than it was. It wasn't like we had a huge number of boards but enough to do a nice job.

TM: Well, just four adults and camping supplies and wetsuit gear for three of them.

BF: Yeah. Well, you're right. But I'm almost positive we did it in one trip. So, Tom ends up landing us at the mouth of the cave down in the canyon.

TM: Wow.

BF: Only, literally, within maybe 200 feet of the mouth of this cave. There was a, I think, probably a big boulder he was able to put down. And, you know, everything was done safely. Of course, the pilot is the one that makes these kinds of decisions, but he was whatever. We did it fine and no problems. I think prior to that—my mind is a little foggy on this—but we had dumped off the lumber and the building equipment at the right spot. So we flew in, and Bob takes us into this cave, and it's really one of the funnest trips I've been on. We had to swim through the stalagmites and the stalactite and working your way into the cave. When you get all the way in the back, it's a couple of hour trip to get to the back. And you're in wetsuits because the water is actually very cold. In my case, I just wore a wetsuit top. I didn't wear bottoms. And there's a huge room. I mean, it's a cathedral in there. It's really spectacular. And it ends in a wall. Somehow there's been an earth shift, an earthquake or something, and this wall of— I don't know if it was sandstone, but it was not limestone, anyway, has shifted, and so this big room ends. I mean, there's this big, blank wall, and the water is seeping out from underneath it, I guess. And there's a register at back of this room where you have to, people could sign in. And the last person to have signed in was five or seven years before, and it was the same guy, this Bob Boecher that was with us.

TM: Okay.

BF: Then we went out and did our, you know, spent the night and worked on the outhouse and justified our trip, I guess, but I don't think I had to justify it too much because Rangers had not been in this cave before, even though it's very accessible. River runners and their groups go into it with some frequency. So, there was a need to know about it, to get a better handle for it. It wasn't all fun and games, although we certainly enjoyed it. You know, there was a necessity, as well as repairing this outhouse. So, to sort of summarize the caving thing at the Grand Canyon, there are a lot of caves. Some of them, and I don't have any real feel for how many are very complicated, very dangerous. If something were to go wrong, you'd be at real, real effort, you know, not only from a safety standpoint or rescue standpoint, of course. The bigger issue is just keeping track of the caves and the hydrology. None of this I know much about. It's just that it's a whole dimension of resource management that is sort of out of sight, out of mind. And, in fact, is an important aspect of what the National Park Service does, in terms of preservation and management, resource management. In an off-handed way, I take a little credit for having pushed that aspect of our knowledge about the park along, and that was through Hans largely.

TM: Yeah. Hasn't his work in Glacier discovered some of the largest caves in the country? It's just some phenomenally huge cave system.

BF: Or in the Marshall, the Marshall Wilderness, too.

TM: Yeah. Just amazing work that he's done.

BF: Well, Glacier had— when I was there, we only had, like, five known caves. And I suspect that Hans and his group discovered more. And whether they had any relationship to the early

Americans or not, I don't know. That is one of the things that the Grand Canyon was just, you know, these split-twig figurines that became not commonplace but became— There were a lot of them. There's a lot of not only complex caves but some of these big shelters were also homes or at least transient shelters for early peoples of that area. It's an important aspect of management of the park. So, I don't know what else to say about Hans or caves, I guess. I sort of shot my wad there.

TM: No, that's really good. Bodenhamer was just a pretty fascinating guy. In my time with him, he was very friendly, very collegial, very helpful, generous, but very amazingly resource-oriented, resource-protective. Sort of the perfect caver's caver.

BF: I didn't ever go caving with him, and I didn't sit down and talk about caves in general. But I did get that feeling, which is the reason, I think, that I was interested in encouraging a relationship with he and the park because I saw something in Hans, even though he was a pretty young man at the time, that I thought would be worth cultivating. And it's paid off, I'm sure, in many ways, not only for the Grand Canyon but for other places as well elsewhere.

TM: Yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely.

BF: So, I think one of the other things you wanted me to mention was Governor Babbitt—

TM: Yes, please.

BF: —being lost for a while.

TM: Yes. How do you lose the governor of a state?

BF: You know, it's one of those things where, if you've ever been on a search, lots of times, you find out the people don't think that they are lost, and then probably they weren't lost. It's just that people that are concerned about them didn't know where they were.

TM: [Laughs] Right. Right.

BF: Which is one of the— You know, that was one of the overriding things I did when I was really involved in search and rescue, particularly in Yosemite. There were any number of times when I would drag my feet, whereas probably other people wouldn't be quite so cavalier about this, but I would drag my feet and basically say, "This person is very accomplished. He's 25 years old. He's in good health. La-di-da. La-di-da. Let's give him some opportunity to work himself out of whatever dilemma he's got himself into" rather than, you know, going hell-bent leather to try to find them. And when we find them, you're going to find out, "Well, what's the big deal? I'm perfectly fine. I wasn't hurt or anything else."

TM: Right.

BF: So, that's the same case with the governor. I've written it down here. November 12 and 13, 1983, the Arizona Governor Babbitt, who probably knew the park better than most of us, was on a— He caught a river trip out of Lees Ferry, and it was sort of an ad hoc kind of a thing on his part. It was not uncommon for him to come into the park, and oftentimes we wouldn't even

know he was there. He'd go hiking or exploring or something. He did that before and he did it after he was governor. But on this occasion, he was the governor and he'd caught this river trip out of Lees Ferry, and they got caught. And I'm not so sure I remembered all the nuances to this, but they ended up beaching not too far down the river, probably— Well, above the Little Colorado, for sure. Upstream of the Little Colorado, between there and Lees Ferry. And there are several escape routes or there's several canyons that intersect, and I've hiked four or five of them myself, and Tom probably has as well, if not more. And that's what he was going to do.

Now, he had told people. It wasn't like he was doing this totally by himself. But somehow there was some delay involved. And I got a call from his security group, which is the Department of Public Safety, or the Highway Patrol, if you will, and they have a several-man detail that's supposed to keep track of him and provide some bodyguarding kinds of things. And they don't know where he is. And they're in quasi-panic because it's not a good thing for them to lose their main objective, which is the governor. And, you know, somehow, they sort of shift it to my shoulders.

TM: [Laughs]

BF: And all of a sudden, you know, it's your park. You guys know the area, and you know the people and all that.

TM: Right. Find him. Yeah.

BF: Can you help us find him? Well, you know, it's not really a question. We don't really have a way to get out of it. That was our job. We needed to help get this guy out of there. So, I enlist— I take the responsibility and say, "Okay, we're going to work on this, and we'll see what we can do." You know, I didn't envision the governor drowning or anything. I guess I wasn't too worried about him personally, again, because he was a very accomplished outdoors person who knows the park and knows his limitations, and I felt comfortable about that. But I enlisted the aid of Kim Crumbo, who was our lead river rafter, river Ranger. You know, these men and women who run the river all the time, they develop a sixth sense. But they also have some good idea, well, okay, if you launch at 3:00 in the afternoon, and you're in such and such a kind of boat, and it's either motorized or not motorized, you can go X far. They know that. And they can probably pinpoint within pretty close accuracy, actually, which is what Kim ends up doing. But he ended up spending the night— We put the park helicopter, we fly Kim up to meet with the Department of Public Safety guys who are in— Is it Navajo Springs? What's a—

TM: Bitter Springs?

BF: No. Not Bitter Springs. It's on 89 where it splits off and goes over by the Vermilion Cliffs, right at the base of the hill going into Page.

TM: Yeah, where Highway 89 splits from Highway 89A.

BF: Yeah. Is that Navajo Springs? Whatever it is, there's a little community there. Mostly just houses. You know, Bureau of Indian Affairs houses. That's where his guard group, his helicopter and his bodyguards, his detail, protection detail are based out of. So, we fly Kim up there, and they're looking over the maps. And I'm pretty sure, and I was not there when this was taking

place— I'm sort of doing the big-picture person and keeping the governor's office informed. And I think we're trying to keep the press out of this at that point. Anyway, the governor ends up spending the night at this particular spot. He's perfectly fine. I'm sure he and the river runners or maybe even the guests with the river guys were just having a fabulous time, right? And the governor was going to be hiking out one of these side canyons. Well, because of being out late at night and then, you know, governor-kinds of responsibilities and obligations to the next day, you know, the highway patrol flies in and picks him up. Now, for one thing, they're on the Navajo side. They're on the Indian side. They're not in the park, technically anyway, when they pick him up, so there wasn't any real brouhaha about any of that. And I guess, I don't know, probably anyway had it even been in the park, we would have given him permission. We wouldn't even ask, probably. I mean, we would just have said, "Go. Do it."

TM: Right.

BF: And get it over with.

TM: Have a good day.

BF: Yeah, have a good day. But we didn't have that kind of little minor embarrassment because it was on the tribe side. So, it all worked out fine. The governor was probably a little bit red-faced, but not too much. It did make the newspaper, but story was about 2 inches high. It really didn't end up getting any kind of real press, which was probably a good thing. But I've got to tell you that for about 8 or 10 hours, I was running around like a chicken with his head cut off, trying to resolve some of these and keep contact and run interference between DPS and the governor's office and the Superintendent, of course. So, that's just one of the little, minor things that cropped up along the way, but it was an interesting experience. And, you know, I knew Governor Babbitt well enough that he knew me. I mean, he remembered my name. It wasn't like we were buddy-buddy, but, you know, because he was in the park quite a bit. He actually took a three-day cross-country ski trip, which I organized for him from on the North Rim.

TM: Nice.

BF: You know, they skied out, and we put them up in the entrance station cabin with one of our Rangers, Joe Quiroz. And the governor asked if I wanted to take this trip, and I could have easily done it. I was a pretty fair cross-country skier, and I could have easily done the trip. It was just that I thought I'd like to get younger people exposed to this sort of thing, just for the fun of doing it and the satisfaction they might have. So, I got a nice young guy by the name of Quiroz. Joe Quiroz was married to the local doctor at the time, Cheryl Pagal. And then, you know, once they got to the top of the North Kaibab trail, the governor and everybody hikes across, comes out on the South Rim, but it was a long day for them. But the governor was up to it. I mean, he was a pretty remarkable guy when it came to that sort of thing. So I guess I could shut up about the governor. What else did we want to talk about, Tom? I've forgotten.

TM: The only other thing we talked about, kind of off tape, some things was the helicopter flying at night. And I think you covered that to a certain extent, unless there was more you wanted to mention about that.

BF: Well, not too much. You know, from a policy standpoint, from a practical standpoint, we never put the single-engine helicopter, which is what we had, up at night. But there were some exceptions. I know, over time and while I was there, a couple of times we flew into the river, into the inner gorge, landing on the beach at night for somebody who has had a heart attack. And if you don't get him out right now, he's going to die kind of situation. All of this was up to the pilot. If a pilot was willing to do it and felt everything was safe, and probably there was enough moon to make it reasonable. Because in the canyon itself with a full moon, it's pretty bright. You know, it doesn't take much. And you had mentioned night-vision goggles. We didn't have those in those days.

But even with a full moon or a decent moon, there's so much reflection off of the rocks and things, and particularly for a pilot that has some sense as to where everything is. So, we did that on occasion. One time, I mentioned, we went up just looking for a fire across on the North Rim of a campfire of somebody that we were searching for. And we saw the campfire, but the guys that we were searching for were faster than we were. And they hiked out. They were way ahead of us. They were, like, 10 miles— We sort of leapfrogged all the way around by helicopter, following these guys. And they pretty much got out before we found them. I mean, we ended up making contact with them. Couple of times we flew to the North Rim for the same medical reason. Somebody on the North Rim was having a serious issue, and Ernie or perhaps even Sherry Collins, and there was another paramedic that we had at that time too. We actually had a couple more. We had about four over time. But we would send somebody over on the North Rim to pick up somebody. And one or two occasions they'd go straight to Flagstaff. They recognized that there's no reason to stop at the little hospital there at South Rim.

TM: Right. The level of acuity is high enough that going directly to higher level trauma center was a better idea.

BF: That's exactly right. And, you know, they're probably all good calls, and you leave it up to the people that are in the ship. To some degree, I had a responsibility to say yay or nay. But at the same time, you trusted the pilot. You trusted your Ranger on the scene, usually a paramedic to make a decent decision. So, we didn't abuse that. We didn't do it very often because there really was a liability aspect to it. But I think everybody on those few occasions thought that the end justified the means in this case. And now I don't know what they really do. They probably don't do too much more than we did then.

TM: That's right. But, you know, that decision is made in the field about where you want to take the person that's now in your charge, depending on their symptoms. You know, is the clinic open? What's the level of trauma involved? You know, all those considerations.

BF: Yeah. Yeah. But the alternative for something on North River would be put them in an ambulance and take them all the way out to Kanab, at least. Or I suppose Kanab. Maybe even Page. I'm not sure.

TM: Page or Vegas. Those are the options. But that's a lot of travel time. So, in rolling back to the spring of 1987, actually the summer of '87, and you ended up moving to Washington, D.C.

BF: Yeah. I think it was, like, roughly June of '87. I had been offered this job, decided to take it. My kids— You know, I was a single parent at this point, had been, actually, for a long time. My

wife and I had joint custody, but because I'm the one that had the bigger job and I had the house at Grand Canyon, which was in my name, you know, renting, I ended up taking the most of the raising or them living with me. So, I went back to Washington, D.C. by myself at that point. My kids were spending the summer with their mother in Flagstaff, which worked out real well for me because it gave me an opportunity to find a place to live and get my feet on the ground and get some ideas as to how much traveling I'll need to do and how much work and the lay of the land. And Washington, D.C. is a pretty interesting place in any number of ways, and there are a number of ways that affected me, but one was just the sheer traffic in D.C. is horrendous. Where I lived out in Herndon, which is Herndon, Virginia, which is very close to Dulles Airport, the commute was about a 45-minute commute. And I ended up getting into a carpool, which is very customary for most people. Carpools in Washington, D.C. are— I mean, they actually have offices within these various buildings and various departments, like the Department of Interior, who do nothing but coordinate carpools and get people, you know, putting people with a carpool. I mean, it's that big a thing to them. And the carpool I belong to, my boss, Walt Dabney, and I were in the same carpool. There were three other guys, and as a rule there were five of us that would go in, take about 45 minutes if we hit the traffic right. So, at a certain hour, and this is really kind of interesting from my thought, anyway, is when you're in these big cabinet or big official meetings, which I was in some, and a certain time rolls by, people that are involved, essentially, will stand up and walk out of the room because their carpool is leaving.

If I was in a meeting with the Secretary of the Interior, and it wouldn't be just me but with several other people— I don't know how much we would have abused it then, but for underneath him, like the Deputy Secretary and Assistant Secretaries, we would get up and leave. I mean, we would be very polite and courteous and excuse ourselves, but everybody understood how important the carpool was, particularly for those of us that didn't have parking privileges. You know, I wasn't far enough up the totem pole to have my own parking spot, which I wouldn't want to have done anyway. Driving and the, just the traffic, it's just terrible in D.C.

So, that three-months' worth of my being back there by myself allowed me the opportunity to figure these things all out, get myself adjusted to where I was living. I bought my first house, which was a townhouse. It's only 900-square feet and had three little bedrooms to it. And just a couple of days ago, my youngest son sent me a photo of him standing in front of this little townhouse in Herndon, Virginia. So, because living in a National Park, you know, I lived in Lake Mead— Well, I lived in Glen Canyon, Lake Mead, Yosemite—

TM: Death Valley, yeah.

BF: —Death Valley, Grand Canyon. All with government housing. I couldn't buy anything. For one thing, I didn't build any equity. So, my first little house there in D.C.— I was a GS-13. That was a promotion which is like a major in the military. So, I ended up getting my feet wet about a lot of things, including being a homeowner now. So, I don't know what you want me to say about me actually moving back there.

TM: You know, one thing let's touch upon because I think it's important. You mentioned that as a field Ranger going from remote location to remote location, from service unit to service unit to service unit, it is very difficult to purchase a house in a community. And then, basically, you either have to be an absentee landowner or an absentee renter, if you're going to rent that

property out, to build equity, which the average citizen gets a job and gets a loan and buys a house and puts out a mortgage, and— Well, at least in those days, that was the thing. But you weren't alone in the cadre of Rangers that were living in the parks they worked at and didn't have the opportunity to go in that investment route of investing in a home over decades of payments and then finally making the last payment and having, you know, an investment, if you will. Or even very much as simply a place to retire to.

BF: That's all true. In a position description that you have to adhere to, if you will, there's a caveat in there that says required occupancy, which makes a lot of sense, I mean, if you're on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. There isn't much opportunity to own a place outside the park and live, at least. You might be able to buy something for, you know, build some sort of equity up outside the park, but you couldn't almost not live there. You had to live in the park. It was required occupancy.

Now, it also became a tax deduction. You could deduct the rent, because that's what we paid was rent, on where you lived because you were required to live there. And a place like Yosemite Valley, at least in those days, you needed to be there because of search and rescue, because of fires, because of EMS or whatever, law enforcement, you were required to live in the park. But when I moved to Washington, D.C. there was no such animal. I was not a required occupant. There wasn't any— There might be an exception or two, but there weren't any places you were required to live. And in my case, this was the first house that I had the opportunity to buy. I was nervous about it, had never done this before. And my lady friend at the time that I'd been going with for quite some time, Karen English, she went back there with me, helped find a place to live. She had two kids, and I had two kids, so she had some sense as to what do I need, what can I afford to give to them, size wise, etc.

TM: So, that must have been tough with a three-person, 900-square foot townhouse with six people in it.

BF: Well, no, no. Well, she wasn't living there. No, just three of us. Just myself and my two sons. But I wanted to be able to give my sons each of little bedroom. The oldest at that time was, I think, about 11. The youngest was, maybe, 8.

TM: How old were you at the time? '87?

BF: Well, I wasn't 87. So, in 1987 I would have been about 35, I think, right? '42 to— Yeah. Is that right? Thirty-five years.

TM: Okay.

BF: It was nice little community, but it's a long ways away from Downtown D.C. I had an interesting experience to show you, well, how this works from a single-father perspective, moving his kids back. I had two vehicles. I had a Volkswagen van, which I had forever. So, the kids and I are driving across, coming across the United States and doing some sightseeing and stuff. And we get to Washington, and rather than go straight to the house where they're going to end up living for, turns out for four years, I decide to show them some of the iconic kinds of places in Washington, D.C., that they've only seen photos of, including the Washington Monument.

You know, I wasn't all that good on the road system there for a while, anyway. So, I was going to show them. I was going to drive around the Mall, which meant on one side you've got the Jefferson Memorial, on the other side you've got the Lincoln Memorial, and right in front of you is the Washington Monument. Way over there is the White House and all these iconic kinds of places. I thought this would really be neat, a nice way to introduce them to their new home. And I got lost on the road system, and I ended up driving into what is now Reagan International Airport. At that time, it was called National Airport, which is the main airport, sort of, of Downtown D.C. And there's a place where you could drive to the end of the runway. And the landing planes would be, you know, 50, 100 feet above you when they're coming in. And a lot of people just sit out there and watch the planes come and go, sort of thing.

So, I didn't tell my kids that I was lost because I was trying to get to the Mall. But I did know how to find the end of the runway. So, I ended up taking my kids to the end of the runway. And I was diverting their attention. So, they were watching the big planes come in at 100 feet over their head, which is pretty thrilling. But in the meantime, I'm getting the map of Washington, D.C. out, trying to figure out how the heck to get to where I really want to go. And we haven't even gone to our house yet, right? You know, it was bewildering to me. I was out of my element, that was for sure. And when I accepted that job from having, as you very aptly described, living in these remote areas, going from one to the next, and that was sort of my mindset and what I enjoyed doing and felt comfortable in doing. So, I went back there with two thoughts in mind. One was if I can get out of here— If I cannot get out of here, meaning that if I don't have the credentials to get out of there, then I didn't deserve to get out of there. You know, I didn't deserve to be in competition with somebody else. That was one mindset, which is sort of very unusual for most of my peers, who were pretty reluctant to go to these central offices because they were afraid they'd get caught there.

And I said to myself, well, if I get caught there, it's because I don't deserve to get out of here. And then the second thing was I said Washington, D.C., and all of its complications, socially, professionally, logistically, like the roads, it's nothing more than a wilderness area, and I just have to learn how to work my way between the trees to get to do or be or whatever I needed to do. Once I came to grips with that, like, almost overnight, I realized, you know, I laid back and became comfortable with what I was doing. It wasn't like everything was easy. It was just that I understood what I needed to do better, and that's how I conducted the next four years of my life was under those concepts or precepts or whatever the right term is. So anyway, we got back to Washington, D.C., and my kids, they blossomed back there. I mean, they came from a little, tiny school at the Grand Canyon, and the teachers were very good. And, of course, it's a close community.

And everybody knows everybody, and you get to be on first names with the teachers and socialize. And almost in some cases, you almost could date them, if that was all the right way. I mean, it was that casual and whatever. But it also was limited in what my sons could do and would be exposed to. You could make the case for either scenario. You know, small family or familiar, smaller school system with that sort of companion, not companionship, but friendships and stuff.

TM: And there's a number of Grand Canyon National Park families that try to leave to get their kids in high school in a bigger school where they're littler fish in a bigger sea instead of big fish in

a tiny little fishbowl, just for that sort of broadening of horizons reason. But it's tough because the parents have their careers and they're trying to work all that out, too. So that whole concept of required occupancy and trying to build equity, and at the same time have good, quality education for your family or children. There's a lot of moving parts there.

BF: Yeah. It's pretty complicated, actually. And while I was in Death Valley, Yosemite, and Grand Canyon, I interacted with families regularly who sent their kids away. And I think you even know the name of the school.

TM: Right. To the Wasatch Academy.

BF: To the Wasatch Academy, which, from a Park Service standpoint, had a real close relationship with the parks. And I don't know how that came about, but I do know that a lot of families, particularly at the high school level, would send their kids up there.

TM: For decades. Well, of course, Grand Canyon didn't have a high school since it's, ah, 1919 forward to, what, 1950s.

BF: Oh, is that right?

TM: Like '50s. Yeah, I think so. You know, 8th or 9th grade, it was go to Williams or Flagstaff or Wasatch or someplace else.

BF: I guess I sort of forgot that. I knew they went to Wasatch, but I didn't remember or didn't even maybe know about the high school.

TM: Yeah. I think that came later. I'm not exactly sure of the date, but there was— So, lots of moving parts with that.

BF: Yeah.

TM: Maybe this is a good point to wrap up this Part 17 interview, and in Part 18 we'll dig into some of the nuts and bolts of the job in Washington, D.C.

BF: Well, if you insist, we can do that.

TM: Alright then. Well, with that, this will wrap up Part 17 oral history interview with Butch Farabee. My name is Tom Martin. Today is Monday, July 6, 2020. And Butch, thank you so very much.

BF: My pleasure. Thank you.