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Interviewee: Charles "Butch" Farabee (BF)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

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TM: Today is Saturday, July 18, 2020. This is our Grand Canyon oral history interview with Charles "Butch" Farabee. And this is a Part 21 oral history. My name is Tom Martin. Hey, good afternoon, Butch. How are you today?

BF: Well, good morning. Well, good afternoon, I guess it is, thanks.

TM: Yeah! Good afternoon. Good. Thank you so much for discussing your transition from Padre Island in the late fall, I guess, of 1995 into the spring of 1996.

BF: Yeah. Right.

TM: You mentioned a number of jobs, truly, actually, really interesting job offerings, that were given to you, and then kind of nothing happened. And then it sounded like your good friend Walt Dabney, who you'd worked with in Yosemite, thought that there was a chance that you could take the superintendency—

BF: No. The assistant.

TM: No. The assistant. That's right. Managing assistant at Canyonlands. Can you clarify for me the difference between a managing assistant and the deputy?

BF: Well, yeah. I'm sorry— You got that mixed up, anyway.

TM: Okay. I did. Help me out.

BF: I think today they generally refer to the No. 2 person as the deputy. But in my era, at least, the assistant was the No. 2. And that's what I was. I was offered— You know, John Cook told me, he said that I'd got the No. 2 job, the assistant superintendent, open at both Glacier and Rocky Mountain. Would I be interested? And so, I agreed upon Glacier because I'd never been there, for one thing. It has much more of a wild aspect to it than Rocky Mountain, although I'm sure

Rocky Mountain's a very good place and lots of peaks and things like that. But it didn't have the basic sex appeal that Glacier did to me. And Glacier, you know, has a pretty good, sizable count of grizzly bears. I think, like, 350 or so, and lots of eagles. It's just a much more wild area. It's a bigger area. I'd never been there. But then in the interim, after I'd accepted going to Glacier, and I talked to my boss-to-be, Dave Mihalic— Walt Dabney asked me if I wanted to be the No. 2 person at Canyonland, the assistant superintendent.

TM: Got it. Okay, thank you.

BF: Not the managing assistant. Just the assistant superintendent. And I don't know if they call them deputies now or not. I think at the Grand Canyon, they call them deputy. But frankly, you know, the No. 2 person was the assistant, which is what I was when I went to Glacier. I reported to Glacier, or I was assigned— I took the job on April 14, 1996, so, you know, I had about a week or two to clean up everything at Padre Island and get things squared away and get my house on the market and that sort of thing. So, I don't know. Did you want me to go into, you know, slipping up to Glacier now?

TM: Yeah. I think so. The only other question I have, as I'm hearing you talk about the assistant superintendent versus the superintendent, is I realize I have no understanding of the different roles of those two positions. Can you kind of explain that a little bit?

BF: The No.2, at least in my case, was doing sort of the day-to-day operations of managing the park. The No. 1, the superintendent, you know, he had his fingers in the pie. He was overseeing, I think at Glacier there might have been five chiefs, if you will, plus myself. But he was more involved with the outreach and the politics of the position. And in a place like, you know, big parks like Glacier and Grand Canyon, Yosemite. You know, it's just not an island. Glacier doesn't operate totally independent of its neighbors.

And then in Glacier's case, pretty much the entire eastern border of Glacier is a Blackfoot Nation. So, that was, you know, what turned out to be quite a relationship. I mean, I did a lot of working with them, as did Dave Mihalic. So, when I refer to Dave, it'll be Dave Mihalic, the superintendent, as a rule.

But you got other, you know, you got the Forest Service, you got the county, and you've got some small, little towns, and you've got the other entities that you need to be working with. And so, the superintendent spends a fair amount of time keeping an eye on that part of the operation, whereas the deputy or the assistant superintendent, in my case, did a lot of day-to-day operations within the park. The personnel issues and work with the division chiefs probably a little bit closer than the superintendent did. So, I don't know if that answers your question.

TM: It does. It helps. Thank you.

BF: Okay. So, when I went up there, by this time, my lovingly little Volkswagen van, which was actually kind of unique because it was some sort of an anniversary model, but it rusted in place, basically, in Padre Island or Corpus Christi. You know, so much salt air. And I just didn't have the room to put it inside. I kept it underneath an overhang, but I didn't put it inside and didn't baby it as much as I should have. Because, ultimately, I wanted to retire with that thing and put on an antique car license plate. That was my goal.

But that didn't happen. I ended up having it towed away as I moved away from Corpus Christi. And so I went up to Glacier, and I told Dave that what I would like to do is just sort of slip in and visit parts of the park and that, you know, interact with the staff as much as I can without tipping my hand as to who I was and just see how things were being done to the ordinary visitor and rather than— You know, you always worry about when you're in those kinds of positions that people are going to put on their best side and do things that maybe they wouldn't do ordinarily. So, that was my— I spent a couple of days sort of wandering around the park quietly, you know, in my little house. I had a what they call a Mission 66, which was a big program begun back in the middle to late '50s as a very major upgrading of facilities within parks, including housing and visitor centers and headquarters and roads and all kinds of things. You know, the real necessary upgrades. So, you know, I just sort of would sleep on the floor and go out and drive around and talk to people and things in my own private car. Mostly, you know, sort of undercover, I guess, just to see how they reacted and see how they're doing from a tourist's, a visitor's standpoint.

And I did that for several days. And then, you know, the word sort of got out well enough. I couldn't sneak around as much as I wanted to. And, you know, I had— Trying to think if I had any of the division chiefs were anybody that I'd ever worked with before, and I don't believe I did. Steve Frye was the chief ranger. And oh, you know, we changed several times the chief of maintenance, so I've actually forgotten who the first chief of maintenance was. Anyway so, but none of them— I never worked with, I don't believe, any of the staff actually, before. Perhaps I knew them by name, but that's about it. And I had this— I was offered the superintendent back in— I mean, it's on the National Register, the superintendent's house—they call it the superintendent's house—in Glacier, which is in the park, was not being lived in by the superintendent.

TM: Where was Dave staying?

BF: Dave lived in Columbia Falls, which is the nearest community of any size. It's about a 30- to 40-minute drive from the park. And it's a matter of establishing, you know, keep building up on your home and your equity.

But I had told Dave before I ever came up, I said, "Dave, I really would like to live in the park." Because I said that this may be the last time I get the opportunity to live in a National Park, and I'd like to take that opportunity, even though it's not financially, it's not a good thing to do, but from a personal remembrance standpoint. I don't know what the right term would be, but I thought, well, I would like to stay, you know, live in the park. He said, "That's good because I live outside the park." So, I was the highest-ranking person in that park. And he offered to, you know, I could live in the superintendent's house, which was a pretty big, probably four-bedroom, two-story, right on the water, right on the river, the Middle Fork. I mean, my back windows looked into the Middle Fork River, although there were trees in the way, mostly. But it's also one of those classic, old, from the 1910-1915 era homes, buildings, that one of the, actually, the first director of the National Park Service, Stephen Mather, had actually had built, so it's on the National Register of historic places.

And he asked me if I wanted to live in there. And so that was the game plan for a little while but then they needed to— They were going to put in something like \$400,000 or \$500,000 into

doing some things with this house, which ultimately, we ended up doing and not because— It was only because it was on the National Registry, principally, because it was a historic spot. But I told Dave I didn't want to live in that house unless I could make part of it available to visiting dignitaries because it seemed like a real shame to have me living there all by myself and ramble around. And I'm pretty much of a minimalist anyway. Lesser is better for me as a rule. So, he said that'd be great. There's nothing wrong with that. You know, if the Secretary of the Interior or the director were to come into the park, and that would be a place that we put him in and make it available for him—him or her or whatever—to stay. And that was the idea. Well, sadly, after we decided that the building needed to be worked on for, I don't know, well over a year. And all those things combined, I chose then just to move into a regular old Mission 66 house, which I did, and I lived in it for four years while I was up there. I lived in the park. And because of my background, you know, I joined— I was on part of the volunteer fire department within the park, which we got called out a number of times. And generally, what I would do, like, if we would get called out on a fire, I mean, if there's a fire alarm and the alarm was set off from our dispatch. We had a 24/7 dispatching center in the basement of the headquarters. That's where it is still, I think. If a fire report came in within the community, not so much as a wildland fire, I mean, not a forest fire three miles out in the backcountry but rather within housing. Yeah, structural fire or car fire within that area or even outside the park because West Glacier, the little community of West Glacier, and there's probably several hundred people that live in that community. In the summertime, it's a very busy neighboring community with a grocery store and a couple of restaurants and oh, you know, several curio stores and there's a school, which is all year round. You know, a few things like that. So, collectively, there were several hundred people living in that area, as well. So, we would respond to anything out there, too, which we did on occasion. But half the time, rather than report to a— We had a fire truck, and one of the staff, one of the rangers was responsible for sort of keeping it up and making sure it started every other day or something and just keeping things up to snuff in case we had to go someplace. But what I would do is if the alarm came on, which you could hear all over the community. You know, it went on for minutes. It would be really irritating after a while. But once that alarm came on, I would turn on my handset because I had a radio at home. I'd turn it on and find out where the fire was, and I would be in my own car on my way to the scene of the fire so that I could report to the fire responders what was going on. One, I had a lot more experience, and I actually had a lot of experience both at Yosemite and the Grand Canyon on structural fire. You know, I was a fire chief at the Grand Canyon.

And we trained fairly often, and we had a number of responses. The same thing is true for Yosemite. And I got really into structural fire. I don't think I mentioned that before, but to the point where I would be studying it at night. I'd have— I'd take home these textbooks, and I would get myself into training outside the park where I would go pretty much on my own time. I would be covered legally and from a liability standpoint, but I wouldn't— You know, I'd go up and I'd throw a sleeping bag someplace and pretty much would be on my own time and my own money. Anyway, the point is that I had a fair amount of structural fire experience, and I also know that when you respond a lot of times, particularly if you don't get a lot of these things, that your adrenaline goes up way the heck off the Richter Scale.

And there's a real chance if you get so caught up in the excitement and you're driving fast, and there's more to lose by getting in a wreck than there is by saving some stupid car that's on fire. So, that was my principal reason for getting to these places first was that so I could call back and tell everybody what we've got. And I would try to encourage them, you know, without being

demeaning or sounding like I was talking down. But I, you know, "Okay, this is what it is. Slow down and relax because this is not a major kind of a thing." That was my intent. And I did that a fair number of times while we, you know, over the time, probably 10 or 12 times.

TM: And I would think that if there was a car fire on the east side of the park, then people would be racing over the— What is it? The Going-to-the-Sun Highway or something like that? —to get over there.

BF: Yeah.

TM: And so, if they were told, "Hey, you don't have to put the pedal to the metal. You can just—" That would be a really good safety—

BF: Well, yeah, no. That's a good observation, but I hate to correct you, but—

TM: No, please do.

BF: Because, you know, the east side and the west side were pretty much different. And even on a good day, driving on Highway 2, which was a state highway, even then it would take you an hour to get over to the east side.

TM: Okay. So, did the east side have its own facilities over there? Its own fire truck?

BF: Yes, that's correct. It was minimal. There was a fire truck there. I don't really remember, but it was pretty old equipment because there just wasn't too much in East Glacier anyway. Particularly in the wintertime, you know, everything would close down. And all the seasonal workers, not only within the park but in the little neighboring Saint Mary's, which was the principal area for the park. There would only be a small community of maybe 30 people at the most. Most of those would be park employees, maintenance, and some rangers, you know, an interpreter or two. And so, you never— I mean, the fire group over in West Glacier never went to the east side.

TM: Oh, okay.

BF: By the time you got over to West Glacier, or East Glacier rather, in the Saint Mary's area, whatever was on fire has already burned down. But, you know, on east side there were several National Historic landmarks. You know, the hotel at East Glacier, which actually isn't right in the park, but we would be responding to it as well. And then you would never take the fire truck over the Going-to-the-Sun Highway anyway. It was hard enough to take a car over it, practically. It was built in the 1930s, and it also was listed as a National Historic landmark, as well. And that would turn out to be one of the biggest issues that we got involved with, Dave and I, in Glacier was rebuilding that highway. And it was, you know, on the west side, it literally is just barely two cars in width on the cliffside. I mean, on the outside, where you fall off cliffside. There would be, you know, there was a sort of a CCC-era, Civilian Conservation Corp-era kind of a little wall. Although it wasn't built by the CCC, but it looks like it. But all this was built in the 1930s with equipment that might have even included mules dragging boulders kind of stuff. It was probably pretty progressive for its day, but in retrospect and looking back in time, that was, of course, pretty primitive.

TM: Right. Sixty years later, it was 60 years out of date.

BF: Yeah. So, there was always— Pieces of the wall would fall off and the road was, you know, at certain places, there would be— The cliff came right down to the road's edge. And it's really, for anybody who's never driven that road, it is a world-class trip. I mean, it's something that if you live in the United States, you have to do, you should do. It is that classy. But it's also not something, if you have fear of heights, it's not something you want to drive over. And there are any number of stories of people that I know who have been taking visitors and friends over that highway for the first time, and all the way up they'd be having their eyes closed and they'd be hiding behind, you know, down below the seat because it's pretty scary.

But in trying to get that rebuilt and reworked, I spent a lot of time, as did Dave, with the federal highways, meeting after meeting and week after week, trying to sort out what we're going to do and how we're going to do it, because the winters up there are 10 months long, practically, or nine months long. And the falls and the springs are often spectacular, but there's also a lot of snow. If you were to go online, if you googled Going-to-the-Sun snow clearing, you would see one of the most amazing maintenance and sort of unsung heroes of these maintenance guys with their bulldozers on these 60-foot-high drifts, snowdrifts, clearing this highway. And you know that highway is the main reason that people come to Glacier, one of the principal reasons. And so, one of the little jokes, and it wasn't really a joke, is that in Kalispell, which was a fairly good-size city, I guess, about 45 minutes, an hour from where I lived, but it was also the biggest place for shopping or what have you and the doctor's offices and things. But there's one intersection there, and if it was busy, you could tell in the summertime that the road is open, that the Going-to-the-Sun Highway was open. If it wasn't very busy, then you could guess that the highway was closed. I mean, that's how popular this road is.

TM: So, you'd have to arrange the rebuilding or work on the road in peak tourist season.

BF: Yeah, that's exactly right. One of the big problems is working on it in the wintertime. And so we did all kinds of Plan Bs, Plan Cs, Plan Ds, pre-fabricated—putting up snow sheds in order to work on the road. There were all kinds of scenarios that we built and considered. And then we went out to the public, and we went to various meetings, had meetings around the state. And the State of Montana sort of claims Glacier as its park, whereas Wyoming claims Yellowstone as its park. And the governor knew me, it was literally true, knew me by first name. And technically I could probably call him by his first name as well. And the congressman, you know, at that time we only had one United States congressman. Of course, we had two senators, but only one congressman. And we worked with these guys, I mean, their offices, almost certainly on a weekly basis.

But, anyway, trying to get that thing rebuilt, but we went out to the local communities, and they just raised Cain about—because one of our original proposals was we're going to close the road down for two years, and just do it and get it over with. You know, we were taking away their livelihood. And I made the front page of the state newspaper out of Helena, which I don't remember the name of the newspaper now, but I was at one of these meetings where I was conducting the meeting, and one of the people that owned a little, I don't know, a bed and breakfast or little motel or restaurant or something, and I said, "You know, the park is not created for you guys. The fact that you are making a living off the park is a benefit for you. But

we weren't created for you." And, of course, that was headlines in the Helena newspaper. So, we got a lot of backlash from these little communities. So, we started working on it just piecemeal. You know, we ended up having a road closures, but it might be only closed for a couple of hours.

TM: So, the locals were able to push back and say, no, it's not going to be closed for two years?

BF: Well, they got hold of their congressman.

TM: I see.

BF: You know, it was a big political football. And, you know, we were trying to get something fixed for them, as well as for the general visitor.

TM: Exactly.

BF: But it's sort of like this pandemic that's going on today. A lot of people can't see beyond their nose, so to speak, on these issues.

TM: Right.

BF: And so, we spent a lot of time in meetings and going to the drawing board, trying to figure out what can we do for this and that and whatever. And as I say, I worked with the federal highways a lot. I mean, many times, probably in a year's time in 1998-99, because I retired the last day of 1999, December 31. But, you know, for the last couple of years I was working with the highway people and the state people, as well. Probably if you put it all together, five or seven weeks a year total on just this one issue. So, that was a big deal. One of the big things that I got involved with, it wasn't anything I personally resolved. It was just I was part of the machine trying to get things done. And then while I was there, Dave, and again, as his assistant, of course, I was a key player, but we did a general management plan which was pretty involved. I don't know how many tens of thousands of comments we got back. We set up a group of people within the park who had a real planning ability. And one woman, in particular, was very good with environmental assessment and environmental impact statement, kinds of environmental laws, and so she was sort of the chair of all this. And we spent a lot of time working on this general management plan, trying to look down the road, you know, to the future and what to do about various things. Sort of separate of the road, actually. The road was so visible and so politically charged that it was largely set off to the side. You know, we dealt with it sort of on a separate basis. But the rest of it was what are we going to do with this little road and this campground and just look down the future. So, we got a GMP, general management plan, actually through, which is what they're currently working under. That was also during the four years that I was there, that was one of the major things, perhaps *the* biggest major thing, I guess, that I was really involved with. And again, remember this is, you know, we're not an island. We have to bring in our neighbors, make them cooperatives with— And not only the people that actually touched our border, but, of course, we would go out miles away, you know, the communities that sort of made their living off of this park. And so, we kept them in, you know, not in mind but involved, anyway, all the way through the process of both the GMP as well as the road.

And not everything we did was perfect, and not everything that we did was really accepted by all of these neighbors and all of these cooperators. But we ended up getting a consensus on how to do certain things and which direction to go, keeping in mind that, over time, things crop up, like this pandemic that we have right now in 2020 that, you know, there are things that happen, you just have no control over it, so you have to deal with them.

Well, the same thing happens with the General Management Plan. You got a super big avalanche—this is just a hypothetical—but it takes out a good portion of a road, not necessarily the Going-to-the-Sun Highway, but just roads in general. You might have to deal with something like that. So, anyway, the GMP and the road were two major things. And then working with the Blackfoot Nation, which they unemployment, you know, in Browning, which is their capital for the Blackfoot Nation. And unemployment on the reservation was very high. I don't know exactly, but 30 to 40 or 50%. I mean, it was super high. So, the park made a real effort, partially because we got pushed into it, partially because we knew that we should do this, trying to hire people off of the reservation to work in the park. I think in the summertime our employee numbers were up in the four hundreds. We had, like, 400 or some roughly 450 people working in Glacier in the summertime at its peak. And, of course, a lot of those, the majority of those are seasonal employees but then in the wintertime it would be back down to maybe something like 120 or so permanent employees.

Pretty good-size budget. I think the original budget when I went there was like \$11 million for the park operations. But then you throw in road money that we got from other sources, including for the highway because the federal highway department system was throwing in money to us as well. Collectively we had probably another \$25 million that that we're trying to manage. So, you know, I worked on— My job as the assistant was to take care of a lot of the day-to-day problems and issues and directions and that sort of thing, you know, personnel issues or whatever. So, I did a lot of that, but at the same time, I was also involved on these bigger picture issues as well.

I've been rattling on here for a long time, Tom. Do you have some questions you want to ask me or—?

TM: Well, I was just thinking about the issues that would be unique at Glacier. You haven't talked about grizzly bears yet or mountain goats. And so, sort of the wildlife resource, wildfires, and visitation, trying to keep people away from wildlife, especially, you know, goats and bears. And then there's also, as you mentioned, the rivers. And I think in the last ten years or so there have been some really interesting, terrifying diseases in the water that have decimated the fish populations and shut down the whitewater rafting. So, then it just, it seems like there's a lot of really— But besides the day-to-day management operations of not only a management plan for the park and trying to keep the highway going, you know, seasonal ups and downs, which a lot of parks, I think, have seasonal employee populations that fluctuate greatly. Yeah. So, that was just some of the things I was thinking about.

BF: Well, okay. Let me talk about a couple of things real fast. There are roughly 350 grizzly bears in Glacier. Of course, they don't stay within the park, and the grizzlies that are outside of the park come into the park. But 350 is good number to work with. And we had a lady that worked with us. At one time, she worked for the Park Service, but then she was a scientist. Her name is Kate Cannon. [See transcriptionist's note below.]

TM: So, hang on. Is this Kate Cannon that would become—

BF: No, no, no.

TM: Different Kate. Okay.

BF: I've screwed that up. I was thinking about Kate at Canyonland's Kate.

TM: Right.

BF: No. That's wrong. It was— Well, I guess I forgot what Kate's last name is now.

TM: There was a bear ranger at Glacier named Michelle Madeline, but that was—

BF: No. That's not who I was thinking about. Well, what I was trying to say is that this lady came up with a pretty unique method of identifying how many bears are in the park, which is now, I think, sort of an SOP kind of a thing. But we put these scratching posts up, barbed wire but, you know, not enough to hurt anybody or any animal really, around some of these trees that had already been identified as trees that bears would routinely use to rub their backs on. We put these things up to catch the hair. And so, we were able to do the DNA thing. And this wildlife biologist who actually, as I started to say and I got myself screwed up, but she worked for the United States Geological Survey because of Secretary Babbitt, back in the middle, I think about the early '90s, they took our scientists away from the Park Service and put them into the USGS, Geological Survey.

[Mr. Farabee may be referencing Kate Kendall, a U.S. Geological Survey research biologist who oversaw the collection of grizzly DNA at Glacier National Park.

<https://fwp.mt.gov/binaries/content/assets/fwpmontana-outdoors/2009/operationgrizzly.pdf>

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TM: Why?

BF: Well, it just seemed like a way to streamline business, as far as they were concerned. As it turns out, it wasn't very popular because the people who, the scientists— I had, you know, the one lady in Padre Island who was pretty much the Turtle Lady for the United States, actually. You know, she worked for the park. I actually got her into a doctorate program. She went off and got a doctorate in biology of some sort. But then she got taken out of the Park Service and put on the USGS. Now, they're all under the Department of the Interior, and she didn't lose anything, but it seemed to me that's the way they wanted to streamline business. Well, we had a couple of people in Glacier, couple of scientists that ended up going to USGS, and this woman was one of them. But she was able to come up with this survey method, which was pretty interesting and pretty, I think, unique. And I think it's been used elsewhere now a lot where they put up these places on these trees all through the wilderness, or parts of it anyway, where we could collect hair samples, and they could identify individual bears through the DNA process.

TM: That's very neat.

BF: So, they had a way of identifying, pretty much, how many bears. And there was some extrapolating, perhaps with a little bit of it. But, you know, pretty good guesstimates on how many bears. You know, because I always sort of prided myself on being hands on, I mean, I'd be out there helping them put up these posts, then going back with, in particular, this one lady who, I don't know if a sign of my age, or if I'm getting dementia or something, but I'm sort of having a hard time remembering some of these facts anymore, I guess. It's been 25 years, I guess.

TM: Exactly. Yeah.

BF: Maybe that's partially an explanation. But I'd go back out and help collect the bear samples. And there's methodical, scientific way of doing all of this, and they're able to tell where these bears were. Of course, bears roam. And as I said, they come in and go out of the park. Anyway, that was one of the things that we were doing that pretty much didn't have much visibility, but grizzlies were a big thing in Glacier. One of the reasons I went up there was because of the bears. I mean, I dealt with black bears in both, well, mostly in just Yosemite, I guess. But in Glacier we had grizzlies.

And while I was there, we had two people killed, two hikers killed, and I ended up having to sign a death warrant for a mom and a cub. There were two cubs to this one bear, but all three of them had eaten on this one guy who, unfortunately— This would have been like 1997 or '98, and, you know, Glacier's only had about 12 or 13 fatalities with bears since way back when. But in this case, I ended up signing this death warrant for the mom and two cubs. And this poor guy had just signed in that day to work in East Glacier, which is the East Glacier Hotel, which is actually right out the back door of Glacier National Park, but it's not technically within the park. I mean, it was within probably less than a couple hundred yards of the park boundary. But this poor guy had signed in at the beginning of the season. He'd been assigned a room and, you know, report to work the next morning, kind of a thing. And he takes a little hike in the park and gets killed.

TM: Wow. Well, I mean, I'm assuming he would have walked onto the mom and the kids, and mom would have taken defensive action or even predatory food action.

BF: They were able to figure out pretty well. I went up to the scene where this guy was killed and they would show me where, my rangers would show me where the glasses were found. This guy had been wearing glasses. They could pretty well reconstruct what had happened. You know, the guy walked in between mom and the cubs.

TM: Oh, wow.

BF: The guy started running, it seems, based on some of the physical evidence at the time. Started running but didn't get very far. Mom took him down, killed him. And anyway, you know, eventually as it turns out, I mean the two cubs and mom, probably mostly, ate this guy to the point where there wasn't much left at all. But we were able to tell— We knew which bear had done this pretty quickly, and because it's an endangered species, there are some real hoops you have to jump through. You just can't go out there with a rifle and shoot this bear, at least unless it's charging you or somebody else. That's one thing. But if it's already killed somebody, and it's sort of minding its own business at this point, you know, days later, there's some hoops you

have to jump through that are pretty interesting. But I signed the death warrant for this one bear and a cub. And we were able to trap them and ended up destroying them. I tried to get these bears initially, you know, along with some help from the staff that really knew what they're doing, but I was sort of the power person trying to get the bears, rather than destroy these bears, was trying to get them into a zoo.

Well, there are regulations within the Endangered Species Act speaking specifically to this kind of an issue where if the animal has either killed or eaten a human being that it has to be destroyed. It can't be put into a zoo or even in some sort of a wildlife sanctuary. It has to be destroyed. So, we tried to go around, we try to find ways to get around that, you know, made a case, trying to talk to the people in U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that actually administer the Threatened and Endangered Species Act. But we couldn't do it. I ended up having to sign the death warrant for those. There's actually a book written about this called *Chocolate Leg* [sic]. This bear actually had a name, Chocolate Leg, two words, which I have. I've never read the book, so I should probably read it, I suppose. So, that was one of the issues with working with the bears.

Every time I'd go in the backcountry, which I made a real point of getting on a horse and going out and seeing some of the trails. And we spend several days, which is one of the perks of being in the Park Service. And I was a pretty good horseman. I'd been through a horse training for six weeks. I had my own horse. I worked on the trail crew for four summers where I had my own horse. Worked with six mules. So, I thought I was a pretty good cowboy, which I, basically, was. But, you know, you ride in the backcountry with a couple of other rangers, and we'd stay in these cabins along the way. We probably would end up doing a 40- or 50-mile trip in the backcountry in Glacier, which I need to mention right at the moment before I forget it, that from my perspective, I think that Glacier National Park has the most spectacular scenery in the lower 48 states, with the possible exception of the Grand Canyon. But everything else, you know, Yosemite, Sequoia, Rocky Mountain, Zion are all spectacular, but the scenery in Glacier is, I think, the best in the lower 48, with the exception of the Grand Canyon. So, I want to make sure I— You know, I tend to forget things, and I want to make sure I put that into the record.

TM: You got it.

BF: But anyway, we would go on these— You know, Dave and I and the chief ranger or his No. 2 guy, the chief of resources, because resources at that point was under the chief ranger. You know, we'd go out for several days looking at the trails, just being out there getting our hands dirty, so to speak, from the saddle. But you'd ride through these really dense areas where there would be lots of brush. You couldn't see more than 20 feet at the very most. And you'd watch the horse's ears, where the horse's ears were looking so, you know, and you'd be at the same time— One of us would be shouting some words. I tended to say, you know, like, "Hey, moose!" And there's a reason for me saying that, but just so that the bears would hear you, and you would never have to encounter them, which you really didn't want to do that.

TM: Surprise them.

BF: Yeah, you didn't want to surprise—

TM: So, what's the deal with "Hey, moose"?

BF: Well, because a lot of people, mostly when they're hiking and they're doing the same thing. They're saying, "Hey, bear! Hey, bear!" Well, I got to thinking, well, you know, if you hear that, you're not sure if that person is saying, "Hey, there's a bear here." Or they're trying to scare the bear away. So, it made more sense to me. And it wasn't something I went out and put in the newspaper or something, but it just made more sense to me to say something besides bear. So, I sort of chose moose, you know, "Hey, moose!" because if anybody heard that, it wouldn't be nearly as threatening and—

TM: I'd come running. I want to see a moose!

BF: I guess that's probably true. I suppose that's probably true. But, you know, fortunately never had an encountered a bear while on horseback, but you were always alert to that. There was one time I was on a, I'm trying to remember now—it was probably about a 30-mile hike. It took us two days—that we would—I say "we," I mean the superintendent would make a point of inviting some people from around the neighborhood, not so much people within the park. Others out there, too, wanted to get to know them better and have them get to know us better. At the same time, get a little better feel for what we're trying to protect and how we're trying to protect it. So, we'd have these trips. There might be 10 or 12 people on these trips and, you know, there'd be several people from within the park. It wasn't like they couldn't. It was just you could only have X number of people, maybe a dozen, and we'd be supplied or supported a little bit with, you know, a wrangler and with a mule or two with equipment. And then you be carrying your own equipment, as well. So, there's one time up at Goat Haunt, which is the northern part of the park, which is right on the Canadian border, literally. In order to get to Goat Haunt, you either had to walk about eight miles in or you took a boat. The boat started in, and you went out through Canada. And the rangers there in the park, now, these are park rangers, were actually customs and immigration deputies.

TM: Oh, wow.

BF: It was sort of the unique position, right?

TM: Yeah.

BF: So, in theory, if there was a hiker coming in from Canada, and they're going to exit, they're going to hike up to Goat Haunt and then keep on going into the park and exit into the United States, they would go through— In theory, they're supposed to check in with the ranger there at Goat Haunt.

Well, anyway, so I'm hiking on this trip. And rather than take the boat—a lot of people took the boat—but I decided I'd hike the trail. So, I had a couple people in front of me, and they weren't more than probably maybe 1/4 of a mile in front of me, you know, people in my group that were hiking as well. And then I'm back, say 1/4 of a mile, and I stumble across a big pile of bear poop right in the middle of the trail, so I knew that there was a grizzly only just a few minutes right before I was there, because it was still steaming, sort of thing.

TM: Right.

B: Bears were ever present and something you had to be alert to. One of the big things they sell in Glacier and around Glacier are bear bells, which is, you know, you have on your pack and hooked to your shoes or whatever. And the theory is that the bells will alert the bears that you're coming, right?

TM: Right. In theory.

BF: So, let me backtrack for just a second, go back to Chocolate Leg—

TM: Please.

BF: — and the cub we had to kill. We actually found DNA, human DNA, in the scat, which is one of the ways we were able to determine which bear had killed this guy, or eaten, which is kind of unique and kind of bizarre and kind of something made for TV thing, but it was the truth. We were able to get confirmation, like, within a couple of days of this human remains inside this bear scat. But anyway, bears are a big deal there. But it's such a neat wildlife area. It's not quite as good as Yellowstone. But, you know, on a good day, you can see a grizzly bear, a mountain sheep, goat, a bighorn sheep, elk. I never did see a moose, actually, as much as I was yelling for him, right? I never did see a moose inside the park. But on a good day up in, you know, at the upper ends of Glacier, in some of the more remote parts of Glacier, you could see bears, bighorn sheep, and sheep all in one day. So, it was really a neat spot, and that's one of the reasons I wanted to go there because it was so wild and, you know, one, I'd never been there before.

The goats gave us trouble, particularly at Logan Pass, which is the highpoint of the Going-to-the-Sun Highway. It's where it goes from the east side of the park to the west side or vice versa. And then on the west side of the park, it's the more, it's the older road and on the east side of the divide or Logan Pass, it had actually been reconstructed quite a bit, so it was pretty new. And I don't think it was part of the National Historic Landmark designation. But when you got to the top of Logan Pass, there'd be all these mountain goats there. And they were attracted to, of all things, to antifreeze and the coolants in, you know, radiators. And people would be on the road or in the parking lot, and, you know, they'd stop and the antifreeze and the coolant from the radiators would boil over a little bit onto the parking lot or the road.

So, we'd end up having these not only bear jams where people would be stopped because there would be a bear—of course they stop right in the middle of the road—but would also be these goat jams where, you know, there'd be goats right alongside the road or even in the road, and people would stop to take photos and things, which is fine. There's nothing wrong with that. But it does, after a while, become sort of a pain because traffic backs up, and there's some real headaches. So, we tried to figure out a way to deal with these goats that were licking this coolant, this antifreeze off of the ground. While I was there, we actually never— I don't think we ever solved the issue. We just sort of lived with it. And when anybody would ever ask me, you know, talking about seeing animals in Yellowstone or Glacier or someplace else, I'd say, well, don't look for the animals. Just look for the other cars that are parked.

TM: Right. Stopped in the middle of the road.

BF: They've already seen the bear and that's what you want to look for, other people that have already seen this animal. And I think that's sort of universally true. If you're lucky, you might be the first to see it, but as rule, you're not.

TM: Right. You know, I want to go back to something that you mentioned that's got me really thinking. One of the missions, stated missions of the National Park Service is to maintain these resources unimpaired. And it seems that the only way you can make sure that a resource is not suffering from impairment is certainly with good management planning, whether it's a general management plan or it's a fire plan or it's, you know, these different types of plans. But you also need monitoring, and that's where science comes in. So, it suddenly kind of hit me like a ton of bricks after 30 years that maybe this idea of moving the scientists out of resource management into USGS might actually not be in the best interest of the Park Service when it comes to managing for non-impairment.

BF: Well, I mean, I think you are a much deeper thinker than I am. I sort of get bogged down in the philosophy. In this case, the scientists that were taken from the Park Service and put in the USGS, both the ones that I work with on Padre Island as well as in Glacier, you know, they didn't stop doing what they were doing. They were pretty much doing the same thing. They had a different boss. And it wasn't that we wanted to boss anybody around. It was that we had a little better control and a little better input on what was being done. So, it became harder to manage or to work with people that were working in the park for park resources but who didn't answer to us. I say "us" meaning the National Park Service. You know, I don't know that there was any real detriment to the research. Possibly there was. I know that after a couple of years that, you know, first of all, they didn't want to go. I mean, pretty much the scientists that I knew, that I worked with and got to be good friends with many of them, really didn't want to leave the National Park Service. They like having that arrowhead on their sleeve. They enjoyed that. USGS is a great agency, certainly nothing wrong with it, but from the scientists' perspective, perhaps the Park Service had a little more cachet to it. They just liked being with the Park Service. And over time, many of them got back into the Park Service one way or another.

TM: Oh, interesting.

BF: You know, which some of that we would orchestrate from internally. But there's money attached to some of this, as well. Some of these researchers would have monies available to them either from the Park Service standpoint or perhaps the USGS standpoint or for some other grant or some other pocket of money that might be made available through different scientific kinds of programs and things. So, there was always that to consider as well, which is part of the management at that level. We had to be alert to that, and did we want to get—and I'm just sort of almost hypothetical, I guess—but did we want to get that person back into the Park Service or keep that amount of money.

And, you know, sometimes they came together, and sometimes that wasn't— But that's all part of being a manager. That and lots of other decisions or things that you have to do. So, I don't know that I even answered, even come close to what you were talking about, Tom.

TM: Well, I think it's fairly complex is the answer.

BF: Well, yeah. That's true. There are people on one side or the other of the aisle on this issue that you could make a case either way, perhaps. And, you know, from a management standpoint of the superintendent or assistant or the chief of a division like resources management, you're trying to juggle a bunch of balls at one time. And that became sort of the fun, became sort of the challenge, became sort of the frustration—sometimes disappointment, you know—and maybe all at the same time, almost. And that was just— that's the name for being a manager, just like being a policeman. There's a lot of balls you have to weigh, and laws you have to know, and procedures you have to understand.

Well, the same thing is true for a manager at that level. I guess that was part of the challenge and the fun, the reward. Living within Glacier National Park itself was quite a thrill then. You know, not that I had bears outside my backyard. But I do know that when I would go ride my bicycle, which was mostly pretty much every day because my running days were over at this point. I'd screwed my knees up sufficiently. But I did ride a bike a lot. I also carried bear spray with me on that bicycle. And fortunately, I didn't have to ever use it, but others did. I didn't want to be caught on one of the more sort of isolated parts of the park, particularly when the park would be— You know, we would close down roads at the end of the summer, into the fall because we never knew when the snow was going to come, for one thing. But I could go ride my bike behind the barricade because, one, I had a radio, but two, I also would ride, and there wouldn't be any traffic. But I'd have my bear spray with me. I never knew what was going to be out there.

TM: Right. And it's just common sense.

BF: Well, yeah. Well, sometimes I didn't exhibit common sense, Tom.

TM: Well, join the rest of the human race—

BF: Well, that's probably true.

TM: You'll be fine.

BF: Let me think. What else can I tell you about— I mentioned the fact that I thought it was just spectacular. In the fall, like after a rainstorm, I can distinctly remember, and because I was by myself. I didn't have a wife. I didn't have any kids. I didn't have anybody waiting for me at home, so I was often working overtime, or I'd be on a— I'd be over on the east side of the park. So, I lived on the west side and going across the Going-to-the-Sun Highway. And I'd be coming back late in the afternoon and the sun would be just right, and I'd be going from east or west. And I'd be on the Going-to-the-Sun Highway, every little curve, there would be flowers everywhere, water running everywhere, and the sun would be reflecting off of these little cascades. And, I mean, it was magical.

Every time I'd go around a corner, you know, I would swear to myself, like, holy moly, that is spectacular, right? And that is how the park affected me. And, of course, it's in the middle of the winter. You're not driving that road. As I say, it's just an absolutely gorgeous, gorgeous place. I was lucky enough to live in it for almost four years, I guess. And I saw a lot of it. There's a lot that I didn't see. I regret not having seen a lot of it. I even went back up there after I retired. I was still very good friends with the guy that became the chief of resources. We were able to get

him up a higher grade, but he had pretty much worked his entire career in Glacier. He would take me; we'd go out on horseback. We'd go out for a couple of days, you know, even though I'm no longer working for the Park Service. And we go out, and he'd be wanting to go check a trail or something, because the trails were under his domain, too. And there's, I don't know, 700 miles of trails in Glacier. We'd go out and check a certain part, and I was a good enough cowboy that we'd go into some pretty rough areas where you did not want to be a novice rider. You could end up easily getting hurt or hurting your horse because there's a lot of rugged places. But anyway, I went back there, oh, I don't know, probably five or seven times after I retired. And we'd go out for overnight and go into and probably do 25 or 30 miles on trails. So, I did see a lot of the park, but there's lots that I didn't see. It's like Glacier, Yosemite, or Grand Canyon. You get a good taste for it, but you don't become any type of an expert on any of them.

I'm sure that there must have been some big issues there that I haven't mentioned that— I mentioned the GMP, the road, dealing with the Blackfoot, which we did on a— There for a while, for about a year, we were meeting once every couple of weeks we'd have these big meetings where there'd be 15 or so from the nation, from the tribe, and there'd be 10 or 12 or 15 of us, and it'd be a major meeting.

TM: What were the issues with the First Nation that you could remember?

BF: Well, some of it had to do with employment. Some of it had to do with how are we going to deal with a fire, wildland fire, when it comes this way or goes that way? And there's always this underlying current that, you know, they thought that everything east of the Continental Divide actually still belong to them. And sometimes it wouldn't be so under anymore, you know, where they would be threatening to make a gigantic issue of reclaiming that part of the country, which would be half the park, for one thing.

TM: Right.

BF: But the other part of the issue, and unfortunately this is probably still true is that the Nation was pretty poor in many ways. Unemployment was way up there. But they didn't have the skill and the mechanisms in order to manage that part of the— Even if we somehow, you know, if that part of the park were actually given back to the tribe, it would have been very difficult for them to manage it at least in a standard that we were trying to manage it, at the level we were trying to manage it. So that was always up, you know, sometimes it was up above, on the table. But oftentimes it was sort of under the table but in— You know, everybody knew about this desire.

But there were a lot of good things. There was one time that there was some sort of a— It was an annual celebration in Browning, which is not in the park, but celebration about the tribe and Glacier. And I don't know how or why this happened, but I ended up having the assistant secretary for the Bureau of Indian Affairs spent the night with me in that house. I had that three-bedroom house. And we got invited over to dance in one of these tribal celebrations. And I'm out there in the middle of the arena with probably another 25 or so mostly Native American Blackfoot dancing, you know, or doing a tribal dance. And it dawned on me, boy, how special this kind of thing was.

You know, not that I was particularly special, but the fact is I got to participate in this traditional dance, which I thought was kind of an honor for me. So anyway, that's the sort of thing that I enjoyed throughout my entire career was just those kinds of little special perks that pretty much don't rise to where you going to put it on your wall. But they certainly register in your memory as being unique or interesting, or maybe some cases, bizarre but collectively, they all came together to make my time in these various national parks just special.

TM: Right. I had a question about the Blackfeet. The lands in Grand Canyon National Park are around or adjacent to the really small Havasupai reservation are labeled traditional use lands. And tribal members 24 hours a day, seven days a week, can walk out of the reservation onto the traditional use lands that are managed by the park without a permit for traditional uses. Do the Blackfeet have any similar legislative agreement with the Park Service?

BF: I don't think so. I don't remember. You know, if I had one of these people I was talking about a few moments ago that were really knowledgeable about some of these nuances, they could probably give you a definitive answer. We had some concession employees or concessionaires, rather, people that conducted business. Like one, he ran a little tour company, you know, that was Blackfoot.

And then some guys who would run horses into the park. In fact, that was one of my threats. I mean, Glacier it's huge, really. It's not as big as Yellowstone. It's not as big as Grand Canyon, but it's still awfully big. And there were several times when I went out with the district ranger on the east side and the chief ranger, the three of us would mount up, and we'd ride into the middle of nowhere. And there'd be these cows and horses way into the park, which they weren't supposed to be. And normally we would report them. We generally knew who the owners of the cows were in particular. There are only a couple of people running cattle in that area. And same for horses, for that matter. But I always told these rangers, I said, "You know, when I retire—" Because I got, you know, I took that personally. It's like, well, they're not supposed to be here. And I wasn't totally joking, although I never came through with this, but I said, "You know, after I retire, I'd be happy to come up here and shoot some of these animals for you." You know, totally illegal, I suspect but it would take care of the problem only temporarily probably.

But I never had the opportunity. I never did anything like that, but that was my sentiment, I think, for some of that. You know, I sort of felt violated because these animals weren't supposed to be up there. Now, I guess in the great scheme of things, that's not a big deal but— Maybe they ended up being food for the wolves, but I didn't mention. I guess I should mention the wolves pretty quick.

TM: Please.

BF: The figure that I remember was something like 35 to 45 wolves within the park that we knew, like, two different packs. Unfortunately, I never saw one in the wild. I regret not having seen a wolf in the wild. But I knew that they were there. Of course, they're an endangered species and they were protected, you know, just like the grizzlies are. And we dealt with the wolves quite a bit. And Dave Mihalic used to joke with Mike Finley, who was the superintendent at Yellowstone, and Mike is the one that introduced wolves back into Yellowstone. He was the superintendent at the time. And at the time, Mike was probably our senior superintendent. He'd been superintendent at Everglades, Yosemite, and now Yellowstone. So, he had a lot of

managerial experience. Somebody could write a book about Mike and some of the things that he got done throughout his time with the Park Service. So, Mike has these wolves, and Dave used to joke with Mike, you know, that Mike's wolves came in by plane and ours walked in. That was his little personal joke between the two of them. But that is true.

I mean, everything that took place in that park, in Glacier was at sort of a grassroots level. It was a pretty wild, pretty primitive in many ways, you know, one of those places that parks were set aside for. And as I say, it was pretty special. I can remember one funny time when, you know, and wolves bring this to my mind, is that the National Park Foundation, I think that's right, was composed of some pretty big-time people, like Rockefellers, for one. And they would go, this group of men and women, would go around to different parks, like, once or twice a year and meet and help solve some of these issues. And they bring visibility, and they bring money and stuff to the parks.

So, they came to Yellowstone one time, and I was the acting superintendent, which is what I was when I retired. I was the acting superintendent. But Dave wasn't in the park, and I don't remember where he was or what he was doing. But the chief of interp, Larry Frederick, and I were to be the guides, not so much guides, but we would travel along with this group of men and women for about two days. So, the first day, you know— And I looked through the list, and I was probably half asleep when I looked through the people who were coming and I recognized the names, but I didn't know much about any of them, really. So, we picked these people up, and we got these two eight-person vans. And we've got a driver, not a Park Service driver, but somebody that owns the vans, really. And Larry's in one vehicle, and I'm in the other. We're just going along. So, we pick these people up at some resort outside the park. We're taking them into the park, and the first thing in the morning is we're going to meet with a ranger and a researcher and some wildlife people inside the park and at the same time, have coffee and a doughnut or two. Let everybody stretch their legs. It's still dark, and I'm half asleep, and it's cold outside, and the heat is on, and I'm sort of nodding off practically. And I'm in the very back row of all these seats. And there are three people right in front of me, a man against the window, a woman in between, and then a guy right in front of me. So, all of a sudden, I hear one of these men sort of leaning over and talked to the other man. He says, "And, you know, I told the President to get rid of Kissinger." And when he said that I perked up, like, wait a minute. Who is telling the President of United States to get rid of Henry Kissinger?

TM: Secretary of State, wasn't he?

BF: Well, at the time he was, yeah. And so now I'm actually eavesdropping. I'm listening to what's going on in front of me. And they're going back and forth, and I can tell that, you know, these people, these two men had been congressman at one point, at least, in their careers. And so, we get up to wherever we're going in the park to listen to somebody talk about wolves, and we get out of this van. And I'm standing next to this— Of course, I've already, as they got into the van, I introduced myself and said hello and welcome to the park and all that sort of thing what you would normally say. But I'm probably like a lot of people, you know, the names just didn't really register with me. So, I get out of the car, or out of the van, and I go up to the guy who has just told this other man that we should get we should get rid of Kissinger, and I walk up to him, and I say, "Who are you?" And it was almost like *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, "Who are those guys?" I said, "Who are you?" And he introduced himself. It was Donald Rumsfeld.

TM: Oh, my gosh.

BF: I'm sure that I knew the name; I really just hadn't put two and two together. I just wasn't paying attention, of course. Probably the story of my life, really. When I asked him that, you know, he smiled and shook my hand, and he adopted me. So, now for the next day and a half he would come up to me and ask me questions sort of behind the scenes and really got interested in the park. I mean, he was really— Whether anything ever happened as a result of his interest, I don't know, but he did show a genuine interest and caring for the place. And as I say, he's sort of adopted me. And so, in the next day and a half Babbitt, Secretary of the Interior, joined us in this party as well. He wasn't with this initial group that morning, but he did come in later that day, spent the night there. So, I just thought that was always kind of an interesting and, you know, little story about some of the things and people that you meet along the way. It's like the Prince Naruhito at the Grand Canyon.

TM: So, this is a good time to segue, I think, into a next little bit of discussion because you retire after four years, almost four years there. So, it's, say, December. It's December 31, 1999. It's just ahead of the new century.

BF: Yeah, the Y2K was a big deal at that time.

TM: And now, 20 years later, looking back and looking forward, what are your thoughts about the Park Service and the politics, the political football, you mentioned that? Are you talking to your fellow ex-Park Service, now that you've all retired, friends? And some of your friends in the Park Service are still working in the trenches.

BF: Yeah, yeah. I keep my foot under the tent door there.

TM: What are people saying and what are they seeing about the future of the parks?

BF: Well, right now, the morale is terrible. There's no question about the morale within the agency. You know, it's a terribly underfunded, and you always see this figure of \$12 billion for maintenance needs within the parks. Somehow somebody came up with that. You know, pretty much all the managers at the Washington office level, and I got to know some more than others, but I got to know like five or six of the directors well enough to call them by their first names as a rule. But I don't know any of those guys anymore. I don't know who, you know, the various superintendents— There aren't almost no rangers, except in Yosemite where I've been maintaining a database for the park even long after I retired on the—which I don't think I ever mentioned this to you, either, but on all the deaths in Yosemite.

TM: Okay.

BF: But, you know, I know some of those rangers at that level, but pretty much any other place I don't know anybody.

TM: Well, I was just thinking that morale is terrible. That's got to be really detrimental for the parks, as well.

BF: Yeah. Yeah. Most of these civil servants, you know, just like myself, I took pride in giving more than 100%.

TM: Right.

BF: Including my family and my wife, but— You know, and they're doing the same thing today. Now, I do think that the rangers today, from my observation, they're a little bit more 8 to 5, and it's more of a job than it is a career for them. And I don't know if there is a distinction. There is my mind, but perhaps there is not according to the *Webster's Dictionary*. You know, I took this as a career and I believed in what was taking place. And I'm not so sure that's totally as prevalent now as it used to be. I don't want to denigrate any of the people that are working still, but a lot of it is still sort of they've adopted more of an 8-to-5 mentality. I think some of the parks are in trouble, not only from the morale standpoint, which, of course, as you mentioned, has a real detriment to how, you know, to what they do and how much they believe in what they're doing. But there's a money issue. So, I don't know that the Park Service is being managed nearly as well as it used to be. The guy that's the acting, I guess he's called the acting deputy director, Dave Vela.

TM: That'd be Vela. Yeah, we talked about him.

BF: You know, he was the superintendent of the Grand Tetons, so he sort of came up through the Park Service. Without getting too political about it, I don't think that, you know, he's just sort of the messenger for what's taking place, I guess.

TM: Okay.

BF: I do read a fair amount on— I belong to a listserv where there's a lot of news articles from around the country that I have access to, and as do a lot of other retirees. I belong to a group, the coalition of, basically, a coalition of National Park Service retirees.

TM: Right.

BF: And most of these people are mid-level managers, all the way up to upper management. So, I read a lot about what's taking place within the parks around. Some of it's pretty mundane and pretty trivial and would be stuff that would go on normally anyway. But there's various issues taking place around various parks and, you know, superintendents are being placed by political appointees. Perhaps they're good people, but they don't have any real experience managing a park. Maybe they're doing a good job, but from somebody's perspective, I'm not so sure from mine, particularly.

TM: Well, it's been really fascinating just talking with you about what it means to finally get a promotion to be a superintendent or an assistant superintendent and knowing nothing about the resource you're going to show up at, but at least, you know how that agency works. And I think that would be a huge benefit to otherwise a very challenging assignment. But if you didn't have that background, that agency understanding and background, it would be even more difficult.

BF: Well, I think that's true. I'm sure there are people out there that can make a case for, well, you know, if you're at that level, you've got a lot of experience, managerial experience anyway, and it's just one more place to manage. I don't buy into that particularly. I do think that having, as you just said, some perspective and history on the traditions and what's taken place before you within the Park Service, you know, some of the history and the heritage—legacy, not so much heritage—legacy a lot of these people have left, I think is important to me. I'm not so sure it's important to a lot of others, however.

TM: Well, looking to the next 100 years, you know, I think we talked earlier, the Park Service is one of the or the only federal agency that has a mandate for future generations: unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. That's a long vision. That's a long-term journey and requires, I think, it requires resource protection, and it requires adequate staffing and management.

BF: Well, I think that the civil servants around the country are really by and large very dedicated, and they just want to do a good job. It's like anything else. I mean, there are probably some good people and bad people, of course, but I think within the agency, my agency, the Park Service agency, that at least people of my generation or of my era were very passionate about trying to protect these places and provide for the enjoyment, just like the Organic Act says, so that they, you know, the future generations. And whenever I give a program—I still teach twice a year, I just got a request yesterday. I teach at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff with their ranger school, which is the law enforcement school. It's about 16 weeks long, and it's a fully— There are people that go through that school, and they're actually hired by police departments, certainly smaller police departments. So, they teach all this stuff, but I'm the one that starts the whole thing off. I give a four-hour introduction on the history and the ethics. I try to stress to them about the legacy of all these people that came before you, and the fact that you get to wear a flat hat, which is the envy of a lot of police agencies, anyway, should be significant for you. Sometimes it doesn't fall on deaf ears. Sometimes it does fall on deaf ears, but that's, you know, I make a case for that, or try to. So, it's the only time anymore after 20 years of retirement, you know, it's the only time I will ever have any real opportunity to have any kind of impact on these young rangers. Maybe I have a teeny bit of impact. And if that is the case, then I feel good about that.

TM: Well, you should. I certainly want to take this opportunity to thank you for your service. You know, it's only through this interview that I've become aware of a lot of, certainly a ton of the different projects that you've pioneered or certainly helped along within the agency and, you know, again as a team, a lot of people working on things.

BF: That's exactly right. It's a team effort.

TM: The only way that can happen is with a healthy agency. So, as the agency becomes a— If you go past lean and mean, you become weak and sick. And that's not a survivable way to operate these incredible places.

BF: Well, I got to the point in my life now, not my career, my life now that, you know, I'm sort of a realist. I recognize there really isn't too much I can do on a real hands-on, day-to-day kind of influence on pretty much any of these things except for, perhaps a teeny bit with these young rangers. But beyond that, I just read about all this stuff like everybody else does. And I've got my

own thoughts on what's taking place within the Park Service. Occasionally, I'll nod, at least internally nod, and say, "Well, okay. That's a good thing." But I find myself shaking my head in disagreement more often now. You know, that's not a good thing. So, I guess I don't know what else to tell you. You know, as a small sort of anecdotal aside. The last day of my professional career with the Park Service, National Park Service, because I went to work for the State of Texas a bunch of times, but the very last day, December 31, 1999, you may recall, was Y2K fear and paranoia.

TM: Right. All the computers are going to crash and stop.

BF: The world is going to come to an end because of, you know, the computers are going to stop, and there's all the conspiracy theorists and the survivalists are out there just knowing that the world soon as, you know, the next minute after 12, at midnight, the world is going to stop. I went to party, or not so much a party, but a New Year's Eve supper at one of these restaurants there in Kalispell. And, you know, now at midnight I'm off the clock. At midnight, I'm totally retired. At 10 minutes 'til midnight, I leave this party. I drive back into the park. I get back to the park about 12:30. And I've gone back—and of course, I still have the keys and everything, right? And I go into the office just to make sure that the computers are still working, and that life hasn't come to an end as far as the agency is concerned. You know, that's sort of like how dedicated I was to this particular mission. Now, I knew in my little, black heart that everything was perfectly fine. But what I did need to do is sort of satisfy my bureaucratic curiosity just to make sure that things were going— Because nobody else, you know, everybody else was out of the park. I think we had a dispatcher, perhaps, but there was nobody else around. And I thought, well, it's my responsibility. Even though I'm not on the clock anymore, I should go up there and check this out.

TM: Well, knowing what I do now about you through these interviews, this doesn't surprise me that you would do that because that's what you've done for everything else out and beyond, outside of the 8-hour day. You're in, you're out.

BF: Yeah. Unfortunately, that's sort of epitomizes how I got divorced because I would volunteer to work New Year's Eve. I'd go right back the next morning because I didn't particularly like— I don't drink. I'd let rangers in Yosemite, mostly in Yosemite, you know, I would be the one that would be out on patrol because I didn't drink. I'd let them go party. And I didn't particularly like football, so I would go back the next morning. I'd be back at work at 6 o'clock in the morning so these guys could all watch their football games. And that's not healthy for a family-life relationship standpoint to do that all the time. So, that did backfire along the way on me.

TM: Well, it's almost like— You remind me in a way of Jim Wurgler, dedicated to medicine. Jim, of course, was able to manage that minefield of a very jealous career, if you will, keeping his family together. But not everybody is able to survive that when you're that dedicated to your profession.

BF: Well, Dr. Wurgler was much better at that than I, and for you to even mention me in the same breath as Dr. Wurgler is a real honor. But I would not do that, you know, I wasn't in the same league as he was, but—

TM: Well, we can judge that. You can't. [Laughs]

BF: Well, maybe. Okay. That's fair enough to say. But he lucked out, and I just— He was much better at that sort of thing than I was, anyway, unfortunately.

TM: Well, we, the people are certainly fortunate for your service. And again, I thank you for that. And maybe we—

BF: Are you telling me we're not doing this anymore, Tom?

TM: I think we're done after 21 interviews. I've never interviewed anyone for 21 interviews, and this has just been really enjoyable. I hope you've enjoyed it. And I'll be starting to send transcripts your way when the transcribers get to work for your review.

BF: Yeah! No. I'm looking forward to that.

TM: But I just want to tell you again thank you so very, very much for participating in this. And before we wrap this up, is there anything else you want to bring into the discussion?

BF: Oh, there probably is but I can't think of what it is at the moment.

TM: Well, if there is, you're going to get in touch with me. I'll fire up Part 22 as a postscript there.

BF: Twenty-one is long enough.

TM: Well, with that, Butch Farabee, thank you so very, very much for this wonderful interview. This will conclude Part 21 of an oral history with Butch Farabee. Today is Saturday July 18, 2020. My name is Tom Martin. And Butch, thank you so very much.

BF: Oh, my pleasure, Tom.

TM: You take care.