

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewees: Nancy Muleady-Mecham (NMM)
Part 5 of a 15-part interview

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: A Park Service protection ranger)

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Keys: 1987 - 1989, Park Service naturalist, seasonal, Sequoia National Park, Park Medic instructor, Rich Stowell, District Naturalist Bill Tweed, "Naturalist at Large" program, Mary Anne Carlton, paramedic, protection ranger, Death Valley National Monument, Stovepipe Wells, Furnace Creek, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Coordinator, incident command framework, exclusive and concurrent jurisdiction policing, mutual aid policing, continuing education teacher, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, associate professor, cadavers, Tom Godwin's story "The Cold Equations," permanent status, Fort Ord, *Park Ranger & Park Ranger Sequel* books, Las Vegas, Nancy Hagerman, mass casualty incident, Kent Mecham, FLETC (Federal Law Enforcement Training Center), stove piping, Paul Berkowitz, law enforcement, golden rule, Stu Fritz, Sequoia Natural History Association, Dale Antonich, David Yim, fiddling contest.

TM: Today is Wednesday, February 17th, 2021. This is a Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Nancy Muleady hyphen Mecham. My name is Tom Martin. This is Part 5, interview with Nancy. Good afternoon, Nancy. How are you today?

NMM: Good afternoon, Tom; I'm very well. Thank you.

TM: Great. In the end of Part 4, you had taken us on this amazing journey to Africa, and the top of Mount Kilimanjaro. And then, and then we ended, we wrapped that up. And you, you were going to go back to be a, a naturalist-at-large, in 1987. Can you pick that up for me, please?

NMM: I can. One of the things I did -- and I think it's for 14 years -- was, I was a seasonal. And when you're a seasonal for the National Park Service, the most you ever worked in any one park, is usually six months at a time. And so, every six months I changed my life. And I had a camper-van; and it had to be a van, because I grew up driving a van. And also I had my grandmother's rocking chair from Ireland that my mom had given to me; and it had to be big enough to fit the rocking chair, to take from place to place, of all things. So for a long time I just looked forward to minimally living, having my beloved book collection in my parents' attic, and then moving. And so when I finished up a particular park, say it was at Sequoia, that's when I, you know, went to Ireland and then worked as a paramedic, would maybe work in a winter park, or whatever. So I got to pick and choose every six months, what I thought I was going to do. So the pattern began to show itself, very distinctly, that my heart park -- my home park that I loved the most -- was Sequoia. So I always went back there in the summer. But in the winter times, I had a lot more flexibilities as to what I was going to do. So after Africa -- Kenya, Tanzania,

Rwanda, and Burundi – I went back to be a Park Medic instructor, for the next class of Park Medics at VMC, which is now UMC in Fresno. And so that was from January to February, of 2000... -- 1987, excuse me. And then there was a two-month period, in there, that a man by the name of Rich Stowell -- who I had known through the District Naturalist Bill Tweed – had a program called “Naturalist at Large.” And it was a, kind of an outdoor ed. thing; but what he did – rather than have the kids go to some outdoor ed. camp, they went to Sequoia National Park in the wintertime. And so, because of his connection with people, he was able to get permits. And what they would do, is they would take kids in middle school, pretty much – 6, 7, 8 grade—before high school; and they would go and we would learn about tracks and nature, adaptations to the cold; you know, if you’re an animal you’ve either hibernated, migrated, or, you existed on what you could cache, for instance. So they learned all about that, and then they spent the night in tents! And so, one of the reasons that they asked me to come – this was fairly new; I can’t remember how many seasons they had been there. But it was kind of – I was a naturalist at Sequoia, so I already knew the resource; but also could work, could help out if there were any emergencies, being a paramedic and stuff. And so I would camp with them, and go from tent-to-tent to make sure everybody was okay. And it was usually pretty normal kids; there was every now and then you’d get somebody who was kind of exceptional; like, Ray Kroc’s granddaughter was there. And if you don’t know Ray Kroc, he was the founder of McDonald’s; so, she was there. And then, every now and then you’d get some kid – I remember one winter I got called to one of the administrator’s rooms, and they said, we have this kid in here, and he’s climbing the walls. And I went inside, and he literally was climbing the wall, up on the windowsill and stuff. And I said, well, this is not good. And his heart was just beating, you know, to beat the band, and he was just really hyper. And come to find out that he didn’t want to miss anything, so he went and bought some No-Doz -- and took them all. Which is a lot of caffeine for a little kid. So we ended up taking him down to the Emergency Room; he ended up being fine. So occasional things like that, but nothing really untoward; no broken bones or anything. So, during the daytime we had a lot of fun, and they learned about stuff, and then they got to camp out at night time. So I did Naturalist at Large for them, that particular winter, and then when that was done, I think I got the gig through Mary Anne Carlton, who’d done Naturalist at Large for him a couple of times.

TM: Aaahh. This is your friend Mary Anne that you went to Africa with, and...

NMM: Right, she went the first three weeks. And, we worked different – and she was at Sequoia National Park.

TM: And she was at, at Florida Everglades with you, and – yeah.

NMM: Well, she was, she was Royal Palm and I was down at Flamingo. But, yes, she was the one who went back; and she ended up being my maid-of-honor. So we’re, we’re still really great friends today. And so when I finished being the natural history instructor for Naturalist at Large, I still had a couple of months before my working at Sequoia National Park. And so several things happened there. When I was teaching the Park Medic Instructor Course, one of the naturalists said, Look, I’ve got somebody whose leaving, and I really could use you working at Death Valley. And I said, well, aaahh. And he said, Just for a couple of months. And he said, Just from January – um, just from March to May. And I said, Well, I can do that, March to May. And because I could just step right on in and knew how to give the programs, and they had housing all set for me. So they didn’t have to train anybody. So, but, in

between then, I still had two months, so then I worked as a Paramedic; again – back in Modesto, for Mobile Life Support, for a couple months. Then went, went to – let me see if I get this... Oh, you know – I take it back; that – when did that happen? So, 19... -- trying to figure this out. I went back to Death Valley, but I also – can you pause it for a second? Or, do we just talk?

TM: We just talk; just talk it out; it's all right.

NMM: There may be – I'm looking at a timeline here; and it helps me out. And it says, we're into '87; so I did that at Death Valley, and it's not on the timeline. I actually did that back in '85, I think it was, when I went back and worked as a naturalist. So when I went back to Death Valley for a couple of months, I actually went back as a Protection Ranger. It says, it says here, but I, I'm not certain that that's correct. So I went back to Death Valley, and I already had my seasonal commission; so I might of done both; it might've been one of those where I did both of those. But I'd have to double-check that. But it makes sense that I went back in protection, at Stovepipe Wells at that time, or Furnace Creek, for a very short time. And then, beginning in May, until October, I went back to Sequoia National Park as a Seasonal Interpreter, and I also began a dual job there, where I became the Emergency Medical Services Coordinator, the EMS Coordinator. So I worked – I think it was 70 percent time as a naturalist and 30 percent time for protection; and that was all kinds of behind-the-scenes stuff where the park medics needed to get continuing education. I taught continuing education classes for the EMTs; I audited their run sheets; I coordinated with the resident liaison to the Emergency Room. Did a lot of the stuff that people don't show on TV cuz it's boring. And, as well as went on calls, and things like that. So...

TM: Hey, Nancy – when did – we may have talked about this earlier -- I was just thinking about the, the concept of incident command. When did that come in here?

NMM: Ooh. Well, incident command has been around for decades. And the, I believe...

TM: Had it been around for decades in 1987?

NMM: Um, it started in the late 60s, early 70s – the concept of it – after the riot in Yosemite. And what happened is, again, back in those days, the friendly ranger didn't carry an obvious gun, didn't wear body armor; but the riot in Yosemite changed that. They realized that they really needed police powers amongst the people, to take care of the evil people that were starting to come to National Parks. And taking peoples' cars, driving drunk, having riots in Yosemite – all kinds of stuff. So they thought, well, we can send the park police, but we don't have enough park police; or we could take these rangers, and start to specialize them. And so that's, that's when that happened. So the split began, I believe, in the late 60s.

TM: Okay, so by 1987 that program had been around for quite a while. Got it.

NMM: Right. And then the incident command system started to come into that, because of, especially the US Forest Service. Because the US Forest Service, compared to the National Park Service, does not have as much policing power. And that's because National Parks have specific legal jurisdictions; sometimes they're exclusive. And exclusive jurisdiction means that the Park Service has exclusive power

to enforce the laws within their National Parks; nobody else can come in and do anything. There's also – trying to remember all the different categories – there's also "shared"; but that's not the word for it. A shared, is where the Deputy Sheriffs – and that what we had at Grand Canyon – Deputy Sheriffs can come in and investigate crime on a, on a mutual aid. And then there is another one where they really don't have police power, but they have, can only encounter, enforce misdemeanor law; and then outside powers have all of the jurisdictions. Well it turns out that the Forest Service, I can't think of a single place where it has exclusive jurisdiction. So they have all of these mutual aids with Bureau of Land Management, with the local sheriff's department, with the local cities that might be near them. And in order to, in order for everybody to come to that plane crash in a community case, or look for somebody during a SAR, they need to be all on the same page. And so now the National Incident Command System was developed so all of these entities could coordinate, and work together. Concurrent jurisdiction, that's what it's called; exclusive and concurrent, and then there's a third one that may come to me. I haven't had to think about that for a long time. Proprietary is the third.

TM: Yeah. So I'm imagining that your job as the EMS, the Emergency Medical Services – I think? Is that what that stands for?

NMM: EMS coordinator? Emergency Medical Services.

TM: Yeah, yeah; so EMS coordinator. The incident command framework would have been something you would have been very familiar with; and it would've just been in the background. And you wouldn't have messed with it unless there was some sort of major incident that required it to be kicked in.

NMM: That was correct at the time; but later, when I worked at the Grand Canyon, almost anything that involved more than one patient, we did an ICS on. And that was because of detailing resources. And part of that was because we had so many resources coming in, we – at Grand Canyon, just to diverge for a second – we had people who we needed to do crowd control, people who needed to control the roads, people who needed to do the investigation as to why that fire happened; you'd have the structural fire people come in, you'd have the EMS people come in. So, you had a lot of people and everybody needed to know the ICS system. And so you're Incident Command, you're Logistics, you're Operations, you're this, you're that; and there are vests folks wear to indicate that. And so everybody knows their jobs; and it is a requirement for all Protection Rangers to take these Incident Command classes, and there are several of them.

TM: Okay; got it. And so Sequoia in '87, I'm assuming you didn't have that type of Grand Canyon framework in place.

NMM: No; uh-huh.

TM: Okay. Smaller parks, smaller...

NMM: There was no, there was no real – there was small structural fire brigade; and, but they didn't enter buildings. In fact, I don't think they still do. It's all defensive firefighting, cuz they don't have the – they have the training but they don't have the experience. So if a car catches on fire, they can put it out.

There was an incident about – hmmm, I think it was 20 years ago – where the fire, or the fire and the search-and-rescue cache caught fire, at Lodgepole. And they just stood outside and started to put it out; it wasn't worth any of their lives to go in for equipment. And that was like their big fire, every three years kind of a thing. Yeah. Whereas at Grand Canyon, I mean, we went to several fires a week.

TM: Yeah. So, okay; so at Sequoia, you got two jobs now. You're doing...

NMM: Right. The EMS Coordinator...

TM: And Interpretation. So, how did you balance that?

NMM: And I did that until 1989.

TM: Really!

NMM: Oh, yeah, I did that. Well, it was the scheduler, you know; I worked like four days of the week as a Naturalist, or three and a half. And then those other two days are where the things I did the paperwork or scheduled training. I went from different areas – I went to Cedar Grove, I went to Grant Grove, I went to different – Mineral King; and specifically put on continuing education courses for the people who couldn't come to Lodgepole, for instance; as well as Ash Mountain. So I traveled from place to place and did that. I think it was '89 – '90 where that really kicked in; but I started as a paramedic and doing some of these early things in '87. But I don't think the designation, now that I think about it, really happened until the end of '88, '89, and '90. Yeah. It's trying to remember all the details of that period of time. But I was definitely doing – getting into the helicopter and flying off into the backcountry of Sequoia National Park. And I remember specifically, I just came out of a backpacking trip to an area near Moose Lake – (I'm going to take a drink of water) -- Moose Lake, and the area cross-country – we loved to hike cross-country – and I came back out and because I had search-and-rescue training and stuff, they said we have the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team here, we have a missing hiker. You just came from that area; did you see anything? I said, no. Well, since you're familiar with it, would you fly back in with them? So, yeah, and here I took several days to hike out, and I'm back in there in 20 minutes! It was just, like, Oooh, man, this is something! So ever since then, you've always gone, Oooh, if only a helicopter would come! You know, when you get really tired, at the end of the day. So I was doing those kinds of things at Sequoia National Park. And then in the end of that time, I again went back to Naturalist at Large, for a month; and then I'd be, worked as a paramedic in Fresno, California, from October to the end of December, in Fresno

TM: That was in '87.

NMM: Right. And then something really exciting and very different happened. My sister, my older sister Kathleen, had married a man who got his Ph.D. in genetics from UC Davis; and he got a job at the University of Northern Iowa teaching genetics. And he called me in November and said, they don't have anybody to teach general biology, or -- you know, the 200-student, big classroom thing, here – or, somebody to teach the anatomy, physiology, pathology, for the nursing students in the nursing school. And you could do both of those! And if you could come and do it, they'll pay you to do both of those,

give you a place to stay, and you can come be an associate professor here, at University of Northern Iowa. And I said, well, what a great adventure. So from January to May of 1988, I went to Cedar Falls, Iowa. And it worked great because I was just in the same town as my sister and her two kids and her husband; I got to visit them for five months; I got to teach for, for the real first time as a, as a university professor. So I taught the big, you know, 200-people-in-biology class, and the more intimate – and did some innovative things for them. Because this nursing school was still dissecting cats, and I said, well, this is ridiculous. Because even when I taught at Fresno State as a teaching assistant, we used human cadavers. And so, I made arrangements to go to – I’m trying to think – University of Iowa, and to go to their cadaver lab with my students; and so they could actually see all of that. So we did all kinds of things; and I set up programs where – I got my brother-in-law to do this, cuz he was an athlete and – showed them how VO_2 works -- the percentage of oxygen used during athletic events. And so I got him to put on all of the equipment it takes, and get on an exercise bike, and they could see the amount of oxygen he was using, and the CO_2 coming out. So I did a lot of innovative things so they could see physiological changes in real-life situations, I think. So I really enjoyed teaching there, and I’m going to put a plug in for a story that was written in – I want to say it’s ’54 or ’55 -- by a man named Tom Godwin. And it’s called “The Cold Equations.” And I make every single one of my students, ever since then, read that story, as an assignment. In fact my students just now, in the EMT, just read that one. And it’s a powerful story; it’s kind of a science fiction and space story. But what they get a feel for, is the consequences of actions; and not thinking things through ahead of time. And it’s really a clear story to that; and if anybody wants to look up that story to read it, I think it’s very powerful. I had all 200 of my biology students read it, and I got some very powerful feedback from all of them. So, anyway...

TM: It’s interesting because those classes are typically, in quotes, weed them out, end quote, classes. You know, where the kids, I gotta take a biology class! So, here we go! But, gosh, what a great way to help those kids.

NMM: Yeah, and that’s true; and one of the things I tell my students right now is, I said, I’m not here to trick you; I’m not here to see how many of you I can get rid of. I will tell you exactly what it takes to pass this class, and to do well in this class. And I teach them like tricks; like for instance, if somebody used a phrase like “always” or “never,” in a science question? Nothing is always or never, so forget about that. And if; and how to take a test – don’t look at the answers. What pops into your head first – see if that’s among the answers; cuz your unconscious brain knows more than you do. So I do everything I can to enable them, and not get rid of them; that’s sort of my philosophy. So anyway, I started there and, in University of Northern Iowa, we were the Panthers. And I learned how to play broom hockey; I never lived in that cold before. When I would walk from my apartment to teach class, it was sub-zero temperatures – actually, I was cold before, I was in International Falls. But I never sustained cold. And so, when your eyes would tear, it would immediately freeze and little tiny balls of ice would run down your cheeks. And if you rubbed, if you rubbed your eyes, your eyelashes would break off. You had to, you learned different things not to do, at UNI. And then, so I did as much exercise as I could when it was cold, but then it started to go warm. I love to run, and I would run around the cornfields, adjacent to the campus. And I would run --

TM: Like a square mile?

NMM: It was four miles; so it was like a square mile on each side.

TM: Right. It was a mile down the road, hang a left; mile down the road, hang a left. Okay!

NMM: And I got to watch the corn grow! And I learned about how almost every teenager in Iowa, their job as a teenager, one of their first jobs is called “detasseling” the corn. Where they take the male anthers off the corn so they can selectively fertilize it what they want to. So I learned a lot about stuff I didn’t know about. And you know what – Iowa is not flat. It’s got these rolling up and down hills, let me tell you, when you run, I can confirm it is not flat. So I left there in May, and it was great to have spent time with my older sister, and her family. And later on, when she died of myasthenia gravis, I was able, I went back to Iowa to be with their, her kids. And we’ve had such a close association ever since then; it was really kind of a neat thing. And then, from May to October, I went back to Sequoia National Park.

TM: I can’t help but think that Northern Iowa University would of offered you, you know, come stay with us.

NMM: Oh, UNI? Well, yeah, it was interesting because that was part of the equation. And there was a beautiful Victorian house – I’ll never forget it – right on the Cedar River; \$28,000 dollars. Which for me, at the time, was affordable. And I thought, Okay, but I’m a California girl, and I like going from place to place, and figuring out the world. I don’t want to sit here and do this; this is, this is in a classroom teaching. I want to go back to Sequoia and be a naturalist. So it was a fun gig to do for a while, but it wasn’t anything I wanted to do permanently, at that time in my life. So, yeah, so I came back. But I think you’re right, I did get some nice feedback.

TM: Back at Sequoia, did you again be a naturalist and a dual job of EMS coordinator?

NMM: Yes, yes. That’s what it is right here; it says “naturalist” – it says “naturalist paramedic” here. Okay. And then – you need to understand about the National Park Service. In order to be a permanent park ranger, for the National Park Service, you have to work permanently for the National Park Service or the US Government. So as a seasonal, at that time, there were very few avenues to permanent jobs. And so if you got your status, as it is called – we used to call it the “golden key” – that means you could work as a seasonal all year round, none of this six-months at a time stuff – but you wouldn’t get the benefits. But it also meant that you could apply competitively for openings as a permanent employee for the National Park Service. At that time, the seasonals could not apply for a permanent job; there was no pathway for me to go work permanently anywhere, as a park ranger. So I had to go get my status. And back then, it was well-discussed among seasonals – Well, you could always go work at Wall Street, or the Statue of Liberty. And the Wall Street and the Statue of Liberty, most people don’t realize – they’re National Park areas. So National Parks are not just National Parks; they’re monuments, battlefields, recreations areas, historic sites; all of these are National Park areas. Now there’s over 430 of them; you know, probably was 390, at that time. And so, people would do that – they’d work for a day, and then they would leave! Because they only had to work a day, and get their status. And so, that really put a bad taste in people’s mouth, for the National Park Service. And it began to catch on, and they blackballed these people; so if they did that, they didn’t get hired anywhere. So the goal was to

work for a place for a specific amount of time; because only worked one day and you got your status. For instance, my friend Mary Anne...

TM: You mean, like, like six months or a year, a year and a half, or two years?

NMM: No, it depends upon the different things. Now it's not just the National Park Service; you have to work as a permanent for the government. My friend Mary Anne Carlton worked for the USGS in Palo Alto; and she worked for them for three months, in her winter season. Now she has that all important, golden key status. So I thought, well, shoot -- I've been doing this for 13, 14 years now, maybe I should get my status. So I applied for a paramedic position for the Department of the Army, at Fort Ord, in California. And I got it. And so I worked as a paramedic for the Department of the Army. You know, you live in Monterey, or in one of the places over there; and I had a room in a nice place. And I worked there, and I had a very nice supervisor; and, so I'm all set...

TM: What did you, what did you do there?

NMM: I was a paramedic. I worked -- if they had a call on, on the -- in the Fort grounds, I went -- we responded with EMTs. This was...

TM: Was there an ambulance?

NMM: This was an Army fort. Yeah, there was an ambulance; I was a paramedic. So, we had some mutual aid, and so we might respond out, off the property of the Fort. But that was very rare. So if somebody cut themselves in a shop somewhere, or somebody had a syncopal episode, or fainted somewhere, we were the paramedic/EMTs; and there were a lot of civilian employees, and there were a lot of Army employees. And I was a civilian employee for the Department of the Army, but I got my status. And I was there for a while; and then, Death Valley called, and said... Yep, this is what had happened; they called and said, Hey, somebody just quit! We need somebody over here to work. And I said, well, okay -- let me check and see. Cuz I'd worked for them for long enough.

TM: How long, how long had you worked for them?

NMM: A couple of months. And there was no obligation for how long; they never said; they just said, here's your job. And I said -- and I went to Jose, who was my boss, and I said, I have this job, and this is a protection job. This is a 100 percent protection, at Stovepipe Wells, at Death Valley National Monument; it was not a national park at the time. And I said -- and he said, that sounds like a really good job -- I'd like that job! So you go and do that job; no problem. So I did all the paperwork, and I checked my books back in the library; went to all these different departments. I had my status! And the status runs out after three years, unless you work for the government, even seasonally -- it stops the clock. So, so if I -- another way to get your status, by the way, is to join the Peace Corps. So working for the government permanently, somewhere, allows you; but I didn't screw -- we learned very quickly -- like Mary Anne never wanted to work permanently for USGS; I was never going to work permanently for the Army. So if you were going to leave early, they would never hire you back if they thought, felt badly of you. But that's fine, just don't, you know, mess with the Department you wanted to go to. So, I left

and I worked until April of '89, as a park ranger at Death Valley National Monument. And that was a very interesting situation; I was at Stovepipe Wells, I was a seasonal ranger. And my boss was a really nice guy, and he – within a couple of weeks of my arrival – got an offer to work at, I think it was Wall Street, as a permanent. Or somewhere in New York. And he took that job because it was a career, you know, advancement. And so, and then the other – they had not filled the district ranger position yet. So here I was, a month in to my position – and they specifically hired me at Stovepipe Wells, to be a park ranger protection paramedic. And that is because in the wintertime we have all these snowbirds come, they have major medicals all the time. I addressed them in my books, *Park Ranger*, *Park Ranger Sequel* - quite a few calls at Death Valley. And, so...

TM: But, but you had no boss, and no boss' boss!

NMM: So here's the best part – I became the boss at Death Valley; the boss of myself! There was nobody else there. And, and the volunteers – I got some volunteers, I taught them how to drive the ambulance, so I could get them to, you know, pick it up. Somebody in, like, the maintenance position, or somebody else – somebody who was a park employee who could legally drive the ambulance. I also got, upgraded things; I went to Las Vegas in Clark County, and worked with the paramedics there to get equipment. So I was able, the – I should backtrack a little bit. In order to work the paramedic in Death Valley, I had to be a certified paramedic for ICEMA, the Inland County Emergency Services Association. So to do that, before I went to Death Valley, I went to Mammoth, in California, which is part of ICEMA; and I got checked out as a paramedic there, working on the ambulance there. And they said, yeah, you've got all the skills; I passed the test, so now I can do that. You just can't walk in the door and be a paramedic; you have to jump through all these hoops. So now I'm the EMS coordinator for, for Stovepipe Wells, and the Northern Monument, and – but there was no equipment. So I immediately assigned myself to Las Vegas, and I went there for a couple days and I made arrangements to buy some of their old LIFEPAK 5 monitor defibrillators, for one dollar. So they could transfer it to other government entities, as long as something exchanged; you know, they couldn't give it to Joe Blow on the street. So I came back with two heart monitors, and left one at Furnace Creek and brought one to Stovepipe Wells, and ordered IV bags, and ordered a warmer so they could keep the bags in and get them warm. So I started this. Then I worked with the – my EMS coordinator liaison happened to be out of Las Vegas. Even though it's in a whole different state, it's – the details -- don't need to go there – so I got a bunch of medications, and drugs to utilize from epinephrine, to albuterol – you name it; to take care of asthma, heart attacks, everything. So it took a while...

TM: So the people, the people in Las Vegas were your medical control? Is that how it would work?

NMM: Yes, kind of, but I was working for the State of California; it was – like I said, it got complicated there. So, so anyway, I got everything I needed to be a paramedic. And then, I sat and I looked at the map and I realized I was the only protection ranger for a million acres – and I loved it. I loved it! It was like, this was mine, all mine. So I'd go up to, you know, Mosaic Canyon, or I'd go up to Towne's Pass, and I'd go up and just, you know, do all the things you need to do. But in -- remember I'm not just the EMS person now: I'm search and rescue, I'm structural fire, I am law enforcement. So I was stopping people, and there's quite a few very, you know, I consider them very engrossing and spectacular calls that happen while I was in Stovepipe Wells. And, for instance, when – it wasn't that year, but it was the

next year – when Nancy Hagerman came down to be the EMS coordinator for the entire monument; we had some training one day, down at Furnace Creek. And at the end of the training, I was driving back to my area at Stovepipe Wells. And I was driving past Salt Creek – do you want me to tell this story today?

TM: Yeah!

NMM: Oh, I was driving past Salt Creek, and I was in a marked patrol vehicle; and I had all my equipment in the trunk of my car, from search and rescue to emergency medical services and stuff. And I was passed – while I was going the speed limit, in a marked patrol car – by a rental car. And I said, Well, that's kind of ballsy, to pass a cop, while exceeding the speed limit. So we went, we were – I was following them, turn on my lights; as we say, lit 'em up. And just as we were turning the corner, just past the cutoff to the Mushroom and Beatty intersection, I saw this big plume of dirt in the sky. And, but I'm busy going after these people, so stopped them, and there really wasn't much of a shoulder. So they had to stop in the middle of the road, cuz we're at the Devil's Cornfield, which is all sand. And so I'm behind them, and my vehicle is offset to give me protection when I go talk to them, and it turns out they are just people who want to get to Lone Pine now, they're from Argentina, I spoke Spanish to them, and they gave me their passports. And I started to walk back to the car, just as another car comes screaming up behind my patrol car; and I thought, ooh, this is a setup. What's going on? Turns out they said, there's this big accident, up here! So that's what I saw, that big plume of dirt – the accident actually happening. So I went back to these guys, and I told them in Spanish, Slow down, obey the speed limit, wear your seatbelt. And got back in my car, and went to the intersection. And because I was in EMS training, I had my tie on, and my Class A uniform, so I, you know, as I'm driving, I'm pulling stuff off. And I – this was just a big mass casualty incident; so I pull – I ask for the world to come. And so people from the Scottys Castle, and Stovepipe Wells, and Furnace Creek all responded, eventually. And again, it's in my...

TM: I was gonna say, they're miles away!

NMM: They are. It took 30 minutes for my first backup to come. And I had, I had four patients; one was dead, one was almost dead, one was near dead, and one was injured pretty badly. And again, this is the story called "T-bone," in my book, *Park Ranger*. And without going into a lot of details, we called "flight for life," there's only one helicopter; and, you know, I had one defibrillator monitor and I was defibrillating one guy in an ambulance, and jumping out of one and jumping into the other one with the same monitor, and defibrillating the next one. So, it was quite the call. Quite the call... So, anyway, it's also the time when a park ranger from Furnace Creek – it's now dusk and we're wrapping up the – patients are either waiting for the coroner, or the patient's gone -- two of the patients went to the hospital; two of them died on scene; or were called on-scene, I should say. And then I hear this, the fire chief say, Hey, Irish! And I turned around, and it was Kent Mecham, who I knew was a friend. And, that was the first time he ever used the nickname he used for me; and, cuz he knew my Irish background. And we, we had talked as friends, and we had not, had dated, we had not anything. We were just, whatever; but that was sort of the beginning of our relationship. And then we started dating soon after that.

TM: Cool. So I, I'm kind of backing away here, going, Wow. I mean, I hear stories about being understaffed, but this is, this is crazy! It's just...

NMM: Here's, here's where you need to have judgement. So, I'm, I had the sand dunes at Stovepipe Wells, and I get a report of – or, actually, I'm driving. And it gets even worse because I stop at an information post, at a place called The Mushroom, on the Beatty Road and the Scottys Castle Road. Because once I leave that – go down to the sand dunes – I have no radio communications. So I stop there -- and San Bernardino was our dispatch at the time -- so I said, San Bernardino 4-R-2-4, going in to the sand dunes, I see a glow in the sand dunes; I should get back to you within 20 minutes. And if they don't get back to me within a certain amount of time, then they call out people to come, to see what's going on. So, I drive into the sand dunes, and I turn off my lights as I make the approach around a curve, and, so nobody knows I'm there. And I see this HUGE, HUGE bonfire – minimum, 11 people there; several cars, 11 people. And I watch them for a while, and they're dancing, and they're doing whatever they're gonna do, and all that kinda stuff. So I backed out, went back to the kiosk and reported back in what it is, and I, and I said, and now I'm available; and, you know, went and did my report. There's no way in the world we – if I got every park ranger in Death Valley to come respond to this, we still wouldn't have enough. So, there's a time when you just sort of clean up the bonfire the next day. Nobody's being hurt, killed, murdered, or whatever. But that's illegal, what they were doing.

TM: Right; and so I just think about, you know, park resources. Well, there's a couple different things: you have these major, major accidents, as you had. And if you hadn't been there, there'd be four fatalities instead of two! And so it's real difficult – I can appreciate, a little more, the staffing issues.

NMM: Right. And keep in mind this is the late 80s, so this is 30 years ago now. And when I went to Grand Canyon in the '91, and stayed there until 2008, I think it was, when we finally left, things changed dramatically for the National Park Service. They realized that was an issue. And so more and more people were becoming park medics; trying to get people to be paramedics; protection rangers were increasing, and getting assigned. So a place like Grand Canyon, which had protection rangers for the Inner Canyon, the South Rim the North Rim, Desert View, that – if you look back and go back to the 1980s – that never happened before. Even had river rangers who had – but they didn't have protection duties. So now all these people had to go to FLETC, had to have their commissions, and had to know – cuz it's not just for the area. Maybe nothing happens on the river, but let's say you're on the South Rim on your days off, and a mass casualty occurs, or a, oh, a hostage situation, perhaps. Has that ever happened? Yes. And it's all hands on deck. So you need all of these people to come and respond. So things did change; and something else began to change. All of these people were under the superintendent of the park; he took care of the ranger naturalists, the protection rangers, seed collectors, maintenance workers...

TM: Administration...

NMM: Administration, all that stuff. And so here you had somebody who might've been, in another park, promoted from chief of maintenance to the superintendency. And has no clue what a protection ranger does. And so, cuts the budget, doesn't let them hire people, things happen, investigations happen -- it's a problem. So there was a real push in the 90s, for something called stovepiping. That

means that the park rangers who are law enforcement and protection, their boss is the district ranger, and then the district ranger's boss is somebody not in the park. Somebody who understands what law enforcement needs. And there were some superintendents who did not want to have that happen; they wanted to have control of everything that went on in their park. And this was the hugest battle of the 90s, I can tell you that. So, but it wasn't made public at all; I don't know if you even heard of it, Tom.

TM: Uh-huh. Well, I, stovepiping I've heard of, but I never knew what it was about.

NMM: Yeah, one straight line from, from the person in the field to the person who makes the decision. And, if you go through the superintendent and then go to, you know, the law enforcement specialist; and that's when – what's his name? Start with a B! (Help me, help me out here.) Anyway, he became the boss. He was an investigator; he married the – oh, my goodness – Elaine Lesley.

TM: Oh! So you; um...

NMM: Berko --

TM: Berkowitz, Paul Berkowitz.

NMM: Berkowitz, Paul Berkowitz. So he became the stovepipe head.

TM: Right. And he's, but he's written a couple of books: *The Case of the Indian Trader*, and, a...

NMM: Yeah, well, what was the one about the investigations at Ganado That was so good.

TM: Yeah, *The Case of the Indian Trader*.

NMM: That was an excellent book, I thought.

TM: Yeah. So, let's back up a bit. So, you've got a protection ranger, boots on the ground, patrol car, and etcetera. They have a boss – a district ranger. If you've got a large park, it'll have multiple districts.

NMM: And then you go to the, then you have the, then you have the chief ranger.

TM: Right. But, but there's a law enforcement specialist. Now how did, how did that... How did it come to pass that somebody said, we need this guy to be overseeing these people?

NMM: Okay. And it wasn't so much – Paul Berkowitz came in not necessarily to do that, but to setup switching to stovepiping, if that could happen. I don't believe it ever happened. But cuz you have the chief ranger, and then the chief ranger went to the superintendent. So Paul Berkowitz came in – not all national parks had a law enforcement specialist – which he was, the LES. And what he did, was, he was now in charge of investigations. As you recall, Grand Canyon was so many calls, and – I mean, I alone did 400 calls a year, as a protection ranger; includes EMS, SAR, structural fire, and law enforcement; law enforcement easily over 125 calls. And, so we had our own magistrate court, with a circuit judge who

came in. So a place like Death Valley, when I arrested a drunk driver, I drove them out of Death Valley, took them to Lone Pine, California, on a mutual aid agreement, put them in the county jail. Then I went back and presented my case, as the seasonal ranger, of why he was drunk driving. I talked about his, his field sobriety test that he didn't do well, and, you know, the probable cause, and all of my paperwork, and all that kind of stuff – in front of the judge, the Federal judge that was there.

TM: In Lone Pine?

NMM: Lone Pine, Lone Pine.

TM: And so that's how many hours away for you to drive?

NMM: Oh, six hours round trip.

TM: So, I would assume – given how busy you were, that, that for some people, that might be – I'm not saying this for you, but I would think other people in that position would say, I'm just not gonna arrest the guy! Because I'm gonna lose a day, just driving.

NMM: Yes, and that's what -- I had somebody who was shooting -- across lanes, throwing rocks in the air -- shooting, that should have gone to jail. And I wrote him a ticket instead, mandatory appearance. So you're exactly right. But a place like Grand Canyon, on the other hand, who easily has 50 times the calls of Death Valley – easily – had their own magistrate's court, had a magistrate judge...

TM: Had their own little jail; but, but, even, even...

NMM: Had our own little – but we didn't call, we called it, we didn't – we called it a "holding facility;" couldn't legally be called a jail because they weren't, didn't spend the night with it. And then they went...

TM: Yeah. But even the Coconino County Jail in Flagstaff was only an hour and a half away; it wasn't six hours away; I mean you had to drive in to Tucson from Flagstaff with a prisoner, this is not gonna happen.

NMM: Yeah, well, it wasn't six hours away, it was six hours round trip. It was only three hours away.

TM: Oh, round trip; okay. So it's driving the Phoenix and back, from Flagstaff.

NMM: So, so here, now you've got these sophisticated calls; people are coming back with lawyers now, to the Grand Canyon, who are ready to beat their drunk driving arrest, and they're ready to do all of this and that. So, for me to become the prosecutor, was not gonna happen at Grand Canyon. For little cases, that's fine, I would testify as the arresting officer. And so, that's when we start to have court officers. What was Craig's wife's name? Jennifer Sypher. Anyway, so we began to have court officers who actually presented the case. And Paul Berkowitz was brought in not only to be in charge of the court officers, but also because now we had 9/11. And now we had people, who were evil people, now

we had so much going on in the United States, that anybody who had a Federal law enforcement commission was desperately needed to take care of terrorism. And that was the worst part of my job when I transitioned into, post-9/11, to, all, we were required to go on Homeland Security assignments. And it was awful.

TM: Okay, hang on a sec. Wait, wait, wait. We need, we need to back up, because we're still in 1989!

NMM: We are; all right, we can come back, we can come back.

TM: Because, because I'm, I'm, there's a cute guy that said, Hey, Irish. And I'm like, Wait a minute, I don't want to miss that. But let's go back for a second; hang on a second. So let's – I just wanna clear up with stove-piping for a minute, through the nineties. Because the concept was: I've got a ranger on duty, reports to a district ranger, and instead of the district ranger reporting to...

NMM: No, they; no, they report to the chief ranger.

TM: But instead of them doing that, they would report...

NMM: No, no – they do do that.

TM: To an LE specialist.

NMM: No, they report to the chief ranger, who then reports to the superintendent. What they wanted to do was bypass the superintendent. And go to a, go to a regional law enforcement specialist. Which is what Paul Berkowitz was.

TM: I see.

NMM: Yeah, so no, they'd still go to the chief ranger, Steve Bone at the time, when I first got there, I think it was. And then, and then Steve, instead of going to whoever was the deputy superintendent, or the...

TM: Arnberger, whoever – yeah.

NMM: Superintendent, would then go to the regional specialist. And, of course, keep the superintendent informed, but decisions would not be made at that level.

TM: I see.

NMM: And I, I, they, they...

TM: Right, so that is a...

NMM: Began stacking, they began stacking the deck after 9/11, to enable stovepiping; but I'm not sure it's – I haven't, been out of it, I'm not sure if it ever really happened.

TM: Cuz I can see where a superintendent would say, Wait a minute, I want; you know; you're keeping me in the loop, but you're basically answering to a regional LE specialist. So now we're starting to have a whole 'nother framework of regional – there must be a DC as well --

NMM: And that's where things start to get carried away: between being a protection ranger, and being a cop – a police officer. So now, when you make them exclusively law enforcement, with these other duties, then that's what a handful of people want to be. They don't want to be structural firefighters, they don't want to be EMS, and they resent having to have to go on these other calls. They just wanna be police. And that's where you have problems. And then you have people who are nightshift rangers, in the summertime – and we'll talk about this more – who 90 percent of their calls are law enforcement. And they act like cops; and begin to give everybody else in protection ranger a bad reputation. Superintendent doesn't want that; wants to curb their powers, you know. And so then you're going, but we have to enforce the law. No, but they say you don't have to; you can be nice and give them warnings. And they don't understand that we're dealing with somebody who just pulled a knife. And so, or somebody, or, or, a knife person who was trying to walk home without a, without driving their car. The problem was is they were, they were lost, and so they were walking down the middle of the road, following the yellow line in the middle of the road. So, you know, and so we, we had UIA – Under the Influence of Alcohol in a park area. So, the magistrates did a good job of reining people in. So UIA is, it's not against the law to be intoxicated in a National Park; but it is against the law to be intoxicated and be a danger to yourself, a danger to others, or causing property damage. So it has, you have to have these two things going on. So if somebody were drunk, we could give them a ride home, you know. But some of these nightshift people would wait outside the bar -- before it burned down, the pub – and wait for people to get in their car, to drive, and then would get them for drunk driving. Rather than going to them, I think you're too drunk to go home, in your car. Let me give you a ride. So that's where, that's where a lot of the, the – and now we have huge problems with the community, huge problems with protection...

TM: Was there – Nancy, was there pressure, from superiors, on these rangers so that they would make arrests? And have these, have these arrests of drunk drivers to their credit? Was, was...

NMM: Yes. Yes, there was later on. There was a supervisor; my direct supervisor there was David Brennan, who I knew him as a friend at one time; and then when he became my supervisor, was not the person I knew.

TM: Okay, well hang on a second; wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Cuz now we're, now we're at Grand Canyon. So let's back up.

NMM: But, but, let me just answer that question quickly. We used to, the people were driving, we pulled them over for whatever reason, they had a suspended license, we would write them a ticket. He wanted us to arrest every single one of those and transport them to Flagstaff, for arrest. And we didn't want to do that.

TM: Aah; got it.

NMM: So that's when they...

TM: So somebody, somebody was looking somewhere at, at wanting to show doing a good job, in some report somewhere. And so that would come back as pressure on the staff.

NMM: Yes, so yes there were people, there were people like that that changed how we did things. And, and other things like that, that we can get into when we get to the Grand Canyon. Which is the whole reason we started all of this, isn't it?

TM: So let's back up. It is—we're getting there! Don't wanna rush! Let's, let's go -- I'm, I'm curious. You had this mass casualty event and, and, there was a guy named Kent there. And you had met Kent at Death Valley, did, did he...

NMM: I'd known him, I'd known him for eight years.

TM: Right. Had he, had he stayed at Death Valley all that time?

NMM: He had. He had. He was a permanent sub-district ranger at Furnace Creek, and a structural fire chief. And actually we became friends. We really didn't start dating until 1989. But we became friends, and he called me that, and it was really a nice thing. And we were all seeing other people at the time, you know, when we met years before, and also we were just friends for all these years. And I think that kinda helped our relationship, to have a basis in friendship.

TM: Yeah. So, so, I'm gonna backup even further. Here you are in your, in your journey with the Park Service, and you're working as a seasonal, and you're six months on and six months off. And you're going from different places – yeah, Sequoia is your home base, but, but you're going out to these other parks. Meanwhile here's someone like Kent, who is a structural fire chief, and I, I mean...

NMM: But, no, he was a protection ranger. He was a – that was part of his collateral duties. Because there was so few structures, and so few fires, in Death Valley, there was no need for a full-time position. So it was a collateral duty.

TM: So was he permanent?

NMM: Was he what?

TM: Was he permanent at the time? Back in '89?

NMM: Yes, he was permanent. In fact, he was always a permanent. When he came out of the Marine Corps, he went into he went into being a dispatcher, and then he worked at Yellowstone, and then he

worked at Lehman Caves, which is now Great Basin. And then he worked at Death Valley; so he'd never been a seasonal.

TM: Okay. And he'd been in, in Death Valley for, as you mentioned, eight or nine years? By '89?

NMM: Uh-huh.

TM: Okay. Because I am thinking about sort of the four-year golden window of, All right, I've been at this park for four years – it's time to go someplace else.

NMM: I don't know where that comes from, that golden window.

TM: Okay. I'm just thinking about the sort of climbing the ladder journey.

NMM: If that's what you want to do, I suppose; if that's what you want to do. My goal was never to sit behind a desk if I could help it. I never wanted to be a superintendent, a chief ranger, anything like that. Yes, it was a lot more money, and it was more responsibility. But, that's the problem is, is you have middle managers in the National Park Service who have no business being middle managers, cuz they have no people skills. And they have, they just wanna move themselves up. And I've always -- when I was a supervisor, it was my philosophy, if you take care of the people, then the operation is fine. If you screw them, to try to make the operation work, then it doesn't work. So a lot of my supervisors, in the past, have screwed you, to try to make the operation work. And that's another story for another time. But, so yeah, it's, it's -- this golden thing. A lot of people find a park, and they're just happy as a clam, and they don't feel the need to leave. I had a friend of mine who was at Sequoia National Park for 32 years. Yeah. Loved it, loved it, loved it – why go somewhere else.

TM: Exactly. And, and so, but other people in the Park Service look and say, Oh, that person's not, not enhancing their career; they're not, they're not, you know, not good for the agency, if you will, in quotes. Because they're at the same park. And yet I think about people like John Riffey, who, you know, just refused to leave Toroweap, his entire career. He found a place he just loved and he, he fought like heck to stay there.

NMM: Right. If you go to places like Tuzigoot, or Mesa Verde, or Chiricahua, or some of these littler places like that, some people think that they've gone to the Black Hole of Calcutta. There's nothing going on there. There's, there's other people who go, this is the place I wanna be. I'm in nature, I love it here, why would I wanna go.

TM: I've died and gone to heaven. Yeah.

NMM: I mean, who, who was it – his name just went right out on my – his wife died of breast cancer, he moved to Prescott. Used to... oh. Anyway, he was at the Grand Canyon forever as a naturalist. He looked like...

TM: Uh, Stu Fritz.

NMM: Stu Fritz. You know, how long was he there?

TM: He and Donna, I mean, she was on the trail crew before they met. I mean, she was on the first female trail crew.

NMM: That was their heart park.

TM: Yeah! That's right; that's right.

NMM: If I could get to, if I could get to Sequoia and be a permanent there, I would've. But when you get married, it all changes, what you do for the Park Service.

TM: Well, let's, let's – meanwhile, back to '89.

NMM: Yeah, '89.

TM: You weren't, you weren't gonna spend too long at Death Valley, were you?

NMM: No, no, no; in fact, I left in April.

TM: You did leave in April, in Death Valley? Okay.

NMM: And I start, and in, in – I also was doing things for the Sequoia Natural History Association. I'm not giving all the details, but I used to do backcountry, led backcountry hikes. I, I would take people, at the end of my season at Sequoia, or in the middle of the season they'd have me take days off; because the Natural History Association wanted my skill, so I would use my days off to teach a backpacking trip on glaciers and granite. Or I did one where I, where I went all the way... In 1986, John Palmer, who was the Chief Naturalist, who was also, at the time, in charge of the Natural History Association, said, "I need you to guide this trip from Giant Forest to Mt. Whitney, and we'll give you extra days off to do it for the Natural History Association. I said, "Well, okay." So I did that. And so, for a short time, right after that, and before I went to – right after that, in January – I did cross-country skiing and natural history instructor for the Sequoia Natural History Association. And then, from January to February, I was again the Park medic instructor, at, in Fresno, for the National Park Service. And went back to...

TM: March; March and April in Death Valley. And then, and then, when you, when you and Kent...

NMM: No, no, no – not that year. Let's see; let me think what I did. March... What'd I do in March and April of '89? Yes, I was! I was back in Death Valley.

TM: Right. So when you and Kent got together, were you at Sequoia? Was that that summer of '89

NMM: No, no. What happened is, I went back – well, I went -- in '88, I went back to Sequoia. And I worked as the Park Ranger-Naturalist-Paramedic-EMS Coordinator. And then from October to April,

that was a six-month stint at Death Valley. This was kinda, this was kinda hard – is that correct? Do I have that down? Let me get my dates right. '90, and then – yep. So, '89 to '90... Am I getting this right?

TM: So you'd been in Sequoia for the summer of '89, and that makes sense. And that's gonna be until October?

NMM: Uh-huh. And I'm, I'm kinda meshing things up a little bit, but the bottom line was, when Kent and I started dating at the end of '88, I think it was. And I may have this right. When I went back to Death Valley, I was all set to go back to Stovepipe Wells; he would be the acting district ranger at Furnace Creek, and I'd be at Stovepipe Wells. Dale Antonich – told me, No, I was working at Furnace Creek. And I said, Well, I don't wanna work at Furnace Creek, because I'm dating Kent Mecham, and he would be my boss. He says, I don't care if he's your boss. I said, Well, yes I do care if he's my boss -- we're dating! And, he said, If you want this job, you're gonna be there. And so, I was down at Furnace Creek, living with my boss, Kent Mecham. And there was another seasonal ranger by the name of David Yim – and I sat down with him, and I said, I don't want to work here. We are co-workers underneath Kent Mecham, together, and I'm living with him, and there's going to be a perception of favoritism, and, and all this kind of stuff. And so I sat down with David, and I said, If it ever comes across that way – I said, I really don't want to do this. He goes – and he was the coolest guy, he was so neat – and he goes, you know, those things happen in life; you just, whatever, you know.

TM: Yeah, yeah, no, that's very true, but it's still, gosh, it's tough!

NMM: And unfortunately... It is. And then Kent's immediate boss, between the chief ranger, was another man named Mark Macia, Who took advantage of the situation, unfortunately. But, anyway, that's neither here nor there. I don't need to get into personal stuff, but I was persecuted by this man. Because of the situation that I did not want to be in. Making me do stuff, and other stuff like that So when I... So I went back, and I worked at Furnace Creek. And, you know, in November when we had the Forty-Niners – there's a huge campground called Sunset Campground, and you have 2,000 RVs there. And you have Texas Springs, and then you have, you know, the fiddling contest. And that's the fiddling contest that I talk about in my book called *Carnegie Hall*; where, back in the previous year in '88, I'd had a man at the Liars Contest at Stovepipe Wells, stop breathing, and his heart stopped, during the Liars Contest. And I was up on this little stage, trying to make sure he got back; and I had to do CPR on him, and then brought the ambulance down, and did everything, and unfortunately, lost him. During the Fiddlers' contest the next year at Furnace Creek, I'm over at the Visitor's Center, which is probably 300 yards away, and I just had taken a woman who had a heart problem out to the air strip. When I got back, they said, somebody's collapsed on stage. So I ran, from the Visitor's Center – didn't drive my car – ran from the Visitor's Center – cuz it was much easier – through the palm trees, all the way over to – it wasn't even that far, actually; I think it was closer than that – didn't have to go all the way through the palm trees. And there's, you know, 400 people in the audience! And I'm jumping up on stage and running a code! Sadly we did not bring him back. And I thought, well, shoot, I can't call him dead on stage -- all these other people would have heart attacks. So we put him in the ambulance and drove as if we were going to the air strip, when in fact he had actually died. So, but that's a story called *Carnegie*

Hall. So the, and, my, my call just; and that, it was a good thing that Dale wanted me there, because there were lots and lots and lots of calls. That needed a paramedic, and needed my skills.

TM: So Dale was willing to cover for you while Mark was willing to make your life difficult.

NMM: Yes, but, but, but, Dale Antonich was the Chief Ranger. So, but, the Chief Ranger was not so much a desk person in Death Valley. We, we had Dale, Mark, Kent, myself, and David Yim, for, you know, 15,000 people a day. And, you know, there was a call one time, I'm driving through Artists Drive – I don't know if – yes, you have been to Death Valley – Artists Drive; beautiful drive. And these people flag me down; this person whose ledged out up on this cliff. So I walk up to him, and I get to a point where I'm like 50 feet below him, and I can't go any further. And I'm talking to them, and they're scared to death; and, yes, if they fall they would probably hurt themselves quite severely. And so it's a technical rescue. And so I call just Kent, and so the only other search and rescue specialist available is the Chief Ranger. So Kent and Dale come out, and they've got their equipment, and I'm about to help them, and then we get a call for a motorcycle versus a van collision, down past Bad Water. And Dale said, Go, so I go down there, to meet the Shoshone ranger, two of us working a four-car accident, with five people. So that just tells you about what we don't have, and do have, and so everybody has to do their thing.

TM: Yeah, it's, it's terrifying. I mean, this is, this – I mean, I think about, I think about personnel burn-out.

NMM: But, you know, back then, when I was younger? I loved it. I loved not knowing what the next call was going to be. And part of it was my skill level – my comfort with my skill level, my comfort with my ability to remember how to do stuff. And so, if it was a structural fire – and this happened at Grand Canyon – I, I loved the volume; I loved the variety. When I was a park ranger in Protection, I was in the right place. And I still...

TM: Yeah. I guess I was thinking, Nancy, about, about Dale and Kent and, and, and Mark and David. I mean, you're a team of five for, for what, you know, what can be terrifying. So you might, you might say, Yeah, I was there at a time of my life where I loved it; I'm hoping that the other four were as well. Because if they weren't, if any of them, if any one of them wasn't, it's like, Wow, how do I get out of here?

NMM: Well, that's the other thing is, people who weren't like that, who, who – let's put it this way: whose nearest grocery store was five hours round trip, at Las Vegas. Or Lost Wages, as we used to call it. Or, and didn't like to be without any backup, did not last. And so all five of us were people who were of that mind set. We knew that there was nobody else gonna be there. You know. I think there was another guy who worked for the courts, Terry Harris; and there were people up at Stovepipe Wells. So when we went on a call, people would come down from Scotty's Castle, and places, to cover our area. But it was, it was "call waiting" a lot of times. Yeah; so, anyway.

TM: All right. Well that gets us...

NMM: We made it to 1989.

TM: We've made it, we've made it in to 1989. This is good!

NMM: Boy, this is gonna take the next three years, isn't it?

TM: Well, it might, because we started in '87, you know; and eventually we'll be going a little faster, and it'll be all right. But, yeah, got through, got through two years in an hour. That's all right. Yeah.

NMM: So I guess the next thing we should do is come back...

TM: You know what? We'll, we'll wrap this up; I've just, I just wanna make sure – is there anything else you want to add to this interview before we start our next one?

NMM: Yes, I just want to clarify that all the stuff I just described happened from October of '89 to April of 1990. That's when I was at Furnace Creek. I was at Stovepipe Wells from '88 to '89, and I was at Furnace Creek from '89 to '90.

TM: Got it; okay. All right, cool; that's helpful to just get that, get that timeframe figured out. Well, with that, let's conclude Part 5, a Grand Canyon Oral History, with Nancy Muleady-Mecham. My name is Tom Martin, today is Wednesday, February 17th, 2021. Nancy, thank you so very much.

NMM: You're welcome, Tom.

END of Nancy Muleady-Mecham interview Part 5.