

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Pat Grediagin (PG)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Pat recounts time at Big Bend National Park and her transition to Dinosaur NP in 1998

Date of Interview: November 27, 2020, Part 7

Method of Interview: By telephone

Transcriber: Stacy Birk

Date of Transcription: April 2021

Transcription Reviewers: Sue Priest

Keys: Big Bend National Park, river district ranger, US-MX border culture, Border Patrol, river patrols, park staff culture, minor theft in the park, school options, Rob Arnberger, Butch Farabee, ranger rendezvous, Lower Canyons canoe trip, Jim Northup, Mary Risser, Dinosaur National Monument, Lodore Canyon, Green River, Yampa River, Dave Panebaker, backcountry patrols, hunting patrols, elk herd

TM: Today is Friday, November 27, 2020. This is Part 7 of a Grand Canyon oral history interview with Pat Grediagin. My name is Tom Martin. Good evening, Pat. How are you today?

PG: Yeah, I'm great. Thanks.

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

PG: Yes.

TM: Thank you. Pat, in Part 6, we had learned that you had gone to Big Bend National Park as the river unit ranger -- river district ranger, I'm sorry -- which was kind of the chief ranger of the river people.

PG: Right.

TM: And can you pick that story up?

PG: Oh, yeah, sure. I think I kind of described the canyons last time and basically the physical components of the river district that we patrolled in, mostly in canoes, and a little bit about the staff, but I thought I might talk tonight about what it felt like to work there. It was really a pleasant place to work. I really enjoyed it and I think most of the other staff that was there also enjoyed it because of the uniqueness of it, for one reason. The Rio Grande is the border with Mexico, and yet it is an area that...or, you know, the rivers draw people from the dry lands towards the river. So it's kind of a unifying piece of terrain, as well as a separating piece of terrain. And the Park Service acknowledged the culture. Well, the Mexican culture was just across the river. They supported and promoted, but not in big glossy ways, but supported probably is a better word, park visitors to Big Bend going across in little rickety rowboats to the community of Santa Elena, which was the end of the Santa Elena Canyon, the downstream end of it, and the community of Boquillas, which was at the upstream end of Boquillas Canyon; one on the west end of the park, the other on the east end of the park. So the park had a good informal relationship with some of the people that lived in those very small villages on the Mexican side. Those people would come across the river and use the phone down at Rio Grande Village, which is across from Boquillas. I don't know how much they came into Castolon -- there wasn't a phone there. There was a little market, a little store, just a little campground-type store, and they could buy things there. So there was kind of a free flow of people across there without too much concern when it was for legitimate purposes. It was just tolerated and never thought about much.

TM: As if someone might just walk across the border at Nogales to buy some tamales and then come back across the border.

PG: Right. And in Big Bend, it just wasn't a big deal. There was nefarious things going on where people were smuggling some drugs through there and occasionally some illegals, maybe more than I even was aware of, but they were at different spots. They weren't usually through those two little villages that were at more remote places along the border. Border Patrol had two agents that lived in the park. And when park rangers... Well, they had their own intelligence and their own patrols that they would do, but if we ever found something that was off-key, then we would let them know and they primarily took the lead on those cases. But that didn't happen in my world very much. There was a road patrol that worked...Park Service rangers that drove the road in the central part of the park, and every now and then they'd work with Border Patrol to pull over a vehicle that was suspected of carrying drugs across the border. I wasn't really involved with that so my world was pretty... Even though I was working on the river, I was doing it in boats in areas that were canyons where they were less likely to be taking stuff across because of the terrain, the challenges that the terrain presented. So there was stuff going on, but it was at a tolerable or a fairly low level. And at the same time, the park was very supportive of this informal crossing back and forth to the villages. There was, I remember, a "good neighbor day" that we had once a year where we would invite some school kids from communities, maybe Boquillas and maybe a little bit further in. It was very sparsely settled landscape on the Mexican side as well as the Texas side. But there was some school groups that came from, I don't know where exactly, and they had colorful dresses on and they would dance. It was an afternoon of intercultural, inter-country festival feelings. It was great. I enjoyed that tenor that pervaded the park. We had problems... Well, we had problems with some of the cows that were Mexican cows that would drift across and start grazing in the park. There was actually a Department of Ag guy, a federal guy, I think was federal, that would look for those cases and try and get the cows back.

TM: How would they get them back across?

PG: Well, they just walked across 'cause the river wasn't very deep in some of those non-canyon areas.

TM: Right, to get them back, though, because the food is always greener on the other side of the fence. And once you get over the fence, it's going to take somebody to chase you back across on a horse.

PG: Right. And we did have some...some of the rangers were skilled horse riders, as were the Border Patrol. They would help with the Department of Ag guy. Actually, sometimes they would just do roundups and they would confiscate the cows. I don't know, you know, I don't remember how they gave them back. But the concern was not the park resource, the Department of Ag's concern was that there was going to be a disease that would be introduced into the US by these cows that didn't come through the established routes of coming through. So they didn't want cows wandering into Texas and infecting Texas herds, or something along those lines.

TM: Did the park have its own horses? Did Big Bend have its own horses?

PG: Yep, it has its own horses. And again, we had one woman in particular that was a good horse rider, but most of the rangers weren't real skilled with it. She actually put on a little horse-riding training camp for three days, where we rode horses and got a sense of it, or tried to develop some skills. My feeling is

that you have to kind of have spent a lot of time in the saddle to be not a liability falling off and hurting yourself and becoming a statistic.

TM: Or hurting the horse!

PG: Or hurting the horse, right. So, yeah, Marcos was a horse rider, too, so he was part of that usually. So we had a porous border and it was, in general, not a big problem. I got a kick out of going on river patrols and sleeping on the Mexican side or sleeping on the US side, depending upon where the nice sandbar was, and just not caring that I was technically in Mexico on some of my patrols. It just didn't matter. We just did the patrols, and people who were park visitors would go down and camp on either side and it didn't matter. Now since then, after 9/11, they closed those crossings, and people could not go across back and forth to Mexico because our border was more sealed up. I felt that that was a real loss to park visitors' ability to enjoy what the borderlands felt like by crossing in the rickety boat over to one of those places and having a little taco for lunch at a little village restaurant. I think maybe five years ago, they actually did open up one of the crossings by setting up a... You have to take your passport, and if you get a passport, it can be scanned at some remote location that the Border Patrol links in with Border Patrol in El Paso. And so once again, people can cross to Mexico, have their taco, and buy a little trinket or something and then come back, but they have to have a passport to re-enter the country with.

TM: What about the Mexicans coming across?

PG: I don't know if they can come across.

TM: A cultural day, and you know, that just sounds like... Coming over to the store to buy things, and...

PG: Right. I don't know that... Since I left things have... When I was there, it was as I described to you. Since I left, and especially after 9/11, it changed and I don't have a good sense of whether they have those cultural days, whether they have an ability to come over and use the phone anymore. I'm not sure what's going on there. But when I was there, it was part of the richness of the experience of working there, in my mind. So that was the community feel with Mexico, and then within the park, there was a nice community feel of park staff, or at least those that wanted to participate in community events. Once a month, people kind of got... I think there was little committees that were assigned. I was assigned to one month with three other people, or four other people, and we'd plan some event, and people who wanted to participate each took a month. So every month there was something that was held, like a Christmas party, or a Valentine's party, or a... Sometimes it was a dance and sometimes it was a potluck or maybe a Thanksgiving dinner, or something like that. So we would have this... We had a little community room at park headquarters and we would set up some kind of event, and people would go there and have a fun time. We had a little park newspaper that... It really was just a... Gosh, I don't even know how often it came out, maybe every two weeks, where it was just: so and so had a baby, and so and so is going to be moving to somewhere else, or that kind of stuff, that level of things.

TM: So and so has just arrived from...

PG: Yeah, you know, we welcome so and so.

TM: Regional so and so came for a visit and...

PG: Yeah, yeah. There was a small school at park headquarters area there, where children of employees could go to school. I think it was just one or two schoolrooms. I think it was two classes, so maybe it was first and second and third grade; and then fourth, fifth and sixth, something like that in the other class. By the time kids got to either middle school or junior high, I forgot which, they had to go somewhere else to go to high school because...

TM: Where would they go?

PG: Well, they would go to Alpine or go to live with a relative. Big Bend, the closest high school was two hours away in Alpine. That was true also of the town of Terlingua, just to the west of Big Bend. Their kids had to go up to Alpine to go to high school. There was no bus or anything like that, it was a two-hour drive, so people just either found a relative somewhere to live with or families decided that it was time to get a transfer or move on or... That was a real problem, but something that basically people there had to deal with one way or the other.

TM: It's interesting, because a lot of the western parks in the 30s and 40s and 50s had that problem because they didn't have high schools anywhere nearby. The Wasatch Academy in the Salt Lake valley was where a lot of park people sent their kids to go to school.

PG: I wasn't aware of that.

TM: I'm just like, huh, that reminds me of the old Wasatch Academy days, where there's just not a school nearby. Interesting. So it does put pressure on the parents. Either they have to say goodbye to their kids and send them to boarding schools or they have to move their job.

PG: Or one of them moves, usually the wife, maybe, to some place with their kids, and the husband stays and works. That didn't happen too much. I can't think of an example but I know that could have been an option that would have been considered.

TM: A two-hour one-way ride. That means four hours a day just sitting in a vehicle, just to go to school.

PG: Yeah, so nobody was doing that. Although now I understand there is a bus from Terlingua that takes kids up to Alpine to school, or at least there was after I left, a bus. I'm thinking that Terlingua might have set up a high school. I don't know what's going on now. But yeah, it was a long drive to school for the upper classes. It was a long way to get groceries. You'd go to town once every couple weeks and really stock up. There was somebody who drove a Schwan's truck. The company would come into the park once every week or two, maybe it was once a week, and they would have frozen food. You could put in an order and they would deliver to you there, and you could augment your...

TM: That's interesting because the Schwan's truck would come through Grand Canyon, as well.

PG: Well, they figured something out there with the Park Service at least, didn't they, that was remote and people wanted to... Yeah.

TM: Yeah, bring it up cold.

PG: Yeah, I'm trying to think of the other... All the doctor's appointments were usually further away than Alpine. So it was a remote station. I guess that's what I'm trying to point out. And maybe because it was

remote, we generated our own community and community feel, and entertainment in the form of get-togethers or barbecues, or something like that. I found it really an enjoyable community to be a part of. So contrary to my fears of going to live on the border, I was quite pleased with how it turned out.

TM: Nice.

PG: Yeah. We had good relations with the Border Patrol guys. One of the rangers actually ended up marrying one. We had good relations with... There were some river outfitters that would run through the park, and generally that was pretty good so it was... It was not... There were some incidents. I know there was a shooting in the park, but there was a murder in the park when I was there and I don't know enough of the details. Was in a campground a body was found, in a remote campground. We never caught the person that did it. The body was found and by then whoever did it was apparently gone. There was speculation that it might be drug related somehow. It was like a person from Houston or Dallas or something that had come camping there and was found dead. So that was a little spooky. It wasn't resolved and there was no other incidents like that. Nothing much... In general, there was not too many violent crimes. That's the only one I can think of.

There were heavy thefts, of which I was a victim before I ever got a job there. I think it was 1988 that I went and boated through Santa Elena Canyon in a raft with some friends that were working there at the time. That was actually my first trip through Santa Elena, I had forgotten about that last night. When we camped overnight at the campsite where we camped, before you go into Santa Elena Canyon, we went for a hike up this nice side canyon. And when we came back, someone had been in our camp and taken... I think they took all the candy bars and the beer. So we felt it was probably kids rather than somebody who was... And I think I might have had a camera in my ammo can, or something like that. They didn't seem to take anything that was of real value; they just took the candy bars. Yeah, so there were people who would come across. That was probably some people from the Mexican side that came across and saw an opportunity to go into some campsite and see what was there, and take what they wanted. We had other times where people camping in the more remote backcountry areas that were near the river would leave and go on a hike, and then report that somebody had come into their camp and taken some things. At one point, one of the rangers who was in charge of the land along that area, decided they were going to set this sting. They had about five of us, maybe four or five of us, go out there like we were campers, just go on out. We took a couple of unmarked vehicles and went out. (laughs) We took the doll that you practice doing CPR on. So that the next day... We set up tents, we camped there. The next day, we tried to make it appear that everybody was leaving, so the doll was one of the bodies that was sitting upright in one of the vehicles driving away, because several of us were hiding in the tents. We wanted to make it look like vehicles had bodies in them that were driving away.

TM: Oh, right, got it.

PG: I think there was at least three, and maybe four of us, each in a tent. Our instructions were to stay quiet, really silent, because we were hoping that someone would walk into the camp and steal some stuff, and then we'd all spring out and catch him. So I can remember sitting in...

TM: What could go wrong?

PG: Right! (laughs) What could go wrong is that nobody ever came into camp. So hours of sitting in this tent, and the littlest things are so noisy. Like if you pull Velcro apart, it's really loud, so you realize how

much sound there is that you are unaware of. We all had pee bottles, and I had to go. So you pee in a bottle – that's super loud!

TM: Lots of noise, yep.

PG: Lots of noise, right. I had to kind of laugh at some of it, in a way. But nobody ever came into camp.

TM: No wonder the bad guys didn't show up. I don't know what they think that was, there's really lots of noise coming from over there.

PG: Yeah. So we never caught them. You know, it's kind of hit and miss, on and off, with this minor theft along with river. I don't know that we ever caught anybody. But maybe nobody went camping for a while, and they decided it wasn't worth their time going over there anymore.

TM: If it was happening a lot, it would make sense. But if it was just kind of hit or miss.

PG: Well, I think there had been several, kind of a clump of this, and that's why they thought, oh, sounds like there's some activity, we've got a reasonable chance of catching someone. But we didn't catch him, and then I don't know what happened. But I didn't go out there any other day and sit in a tent all day. So they gave up on that idea, I guess.

TM: Yeah, it seems like the way to do that would be to set up a camera so at least you could, you know, a motion-detector camera.

PG: Well, it's not like we can go across riding in the Mexico, and say, "Hey, we caught you on film, you're under arrest."

TM: Oh, that's true.

PG: You gotta kind of catch them on site there. One of the things we... I forgot if I mentioned yesterday, that my boss was Rob? I mean, the superintendent in the park was Rob Arnberger for part of the time I was there. I was there about six and a half years in all. He was later superintendent at Grand Canyon. I know that other people might know of him and his name might have come up in some of your... Well, he got interviewed. So, I thought I'd mention that he was in Big Bend and it was really fun to work with him and for him. I know you've interviewed Butch Farabee. I had known both of them through these activities called "ranger rendezvous" where rangers who were so inclined, on their own time and on their own expense, would gather at some location for some seminars. Mostly it was social, but they always would have some different seminars. Sherry Collins showed up at several of them, and she gave, I think, some kind of a first aid or... She gave some kind of a presentation, now I can't remember what it was but I'm thinking it was on first aid because that was what her strength was. People would volunteer to teach some things and attendees could have options to go sit in on these different sessions. But it largely was about just getting together and meeting people, and seeing people that you used to work with two parks ago, and they show up. Rob Arnberger and Butch were both regular attendees at those, and I had run across them both. I knew who they were, I didn't know them well, or at least Rob that well. Butch had been working in the Grand Canyon when I was there in '86. I think he was there in '86, so I had met him there. Actually, one of the rangers in the Grand Canyon had this little dance class, and I had gone to it. He had been an Arthur Murray, or something like that, dance instructor and so he was teaching rangers how to dance, who wanted to. Butch was there with one of, or maybe both of his kids.

And I showed up. There was probably 15 of us that were there to dance. So I had met Butch and danced with him, or maybe one of his kids, who were like six and eight years old at the time. So I knew Butch a little bit. Butch was the superintendent at Padre Island when I was in Big Bend.

Rob and Butch...so they were kind of sharing information; they were both in parks in Texas. Somewhere along the way, Rob invited Butch to come over and go on a river trip. The idea was that Rob and Butch were going to go down the river and just kind of have, you know, a superintendent-to-superintendent time together. It was just the two of them and I was the ranger that went with them to make sure that they didn't drown or something like that. We were all in different canoes, and we went through Lower Canyons. Neither of them was real proficient with canoes, and by that time I was at least sort of moderately proficient at it. We went down through the Lower Canyons and it was so fun. I got to tell another piece of the story... But what I enjoyed was, I was kind of like this kid, because Butch is a good 10 years older than me and Rob's probably, maybe five years older than me and they were much more advanced in their careers. So they're talking about people, who's doing what, and a lot of the names I knew from this ranger rendezvous stuff. I was like the kid at the Thanksgiving table. I was just sort of keeping quiet and listening in on all this stuff they were talking about back and forth. I really enjoyed just listening to their sort of gossip in a way.

TM: Yeah, cool.

PG: Yeah. And they were talking about personal issues that they had. Rob was going through troubles in his marriage at the time, so I'm just feeling like this fly on the wall as the two of them go down the river and sit around evening campfire and talk about different things. In one of the little rapids, the water pushed into a wall on the left side and I don't know quite... I think what happened is we stopped to sort of take a look at it, to scout it. It wasn't particularly bad, but you wanted to stay off that wall. I think what happened was that Rob didn't get stopped, because he went sailing on down and I don't think he would have gone first if we had gone in an organized fashion. So all of a sudden, Rob's down there and he gets up against this wall and his canoe dumps over and the canoe goes floating off. There's quite a bit of water pressure there and kind of an eddy and a surge against the wall, and Rob is just clinging to the wall and kind of getting pulled down a little bit by the water. He said he thought he was gonna maybe die! Butch and I are up, up above and I'm like, Oh, my god! I jumped in my canoe and...

TM: Save the superintendent!

PG: I was gonna try and save the superintendent but I could not pull over there. There was not enough of a quiet water for me to pull into it all and I went right on past him as he's clinging to this wall. But meanwhile, Butch, who knew better than to get in the canoe, because for one thing he wasn't that good of a canoeist, but also he was much better with ropes and rocks and stuff, he goes running down the shoreline and kind of up along this cliff, which was maybe 12 feet above the water level where Rob was. It was 300/400 feet down there, it wasn't just right close, but he gets down there with a rope above Rob and he lowers a rope down and Rob grabbed it with one hand, he's clinging to these rocks, and Butch basically saves Rob. I went down and saved the canoe. And then... I don't remember how it happened. No, maybe I didn't save the canoe because I had to... We had solo boats, but I remember Rob had to ride on the back of my boat or, you know, we both shared the solo boat going downstream to get to his boat. That was pretty traumatic for Rob, actually, and I think if you ever bumped into him again and ask him about it, he'd say, like, "yeah, I think it was... I thought it was my time." But he was rescued by Butch, and we finished the trip up and he survived to move on to another superintendency. Jim Northup was also there and he later worked in Grand Canyon for Rob Arnberger, I'm pretty sure.

TM: That's right.

TM: I think Jim came in after I had started there, just a year, maybe, later. He was the kind of guy that came in and got things done. Some rangers that I worked with or for, were more laid back and some were more on the, like, "Okay, this is how it's going to go; we're going to do this, this and this," and Jim was the latter. We had a pretty good program of a variety of training in Big Bend because since we were so remote, we were our own fire crew. We had two structural fire engines and would regularly have structural fire training. We'd go out and qualify to go in and put fires out. We had some rock rescue and rope rescue training that we would periodically have. We had medical training that we would periodically have. That really seemed like it was strongest, in my memory, under Jim's tenure there. He was all about rangers being well skilled and able to take care of problems that came up. He kind of pushed me more than I was used to being pushed. And I think I was fine with it. You know, I was just a little bit like, hmm, he's a little bit pushy here, but then it was such... I couldn't argue with the quality of the stuff we were doing, and what we were doing and I was like, yeah, this is good stuff. I came out much more broadly trained out of my time at Big Bend than I ever went in because I gained the whole structural fire training, and we maintained rescue skills, maintained the medical skills. We did have an ambulance there and we would transport people to Alpine, Texas, two hours away there was a hospital there. I was more routinely just the driver of the ambulance. I was an EMT, and there were rangers with park medic status, meaning that they could start IV lines and administer some drugs. They had just a higher level of first responder training or initial response training. So I would be the driver driving into Alpine with the ambulance. At least half a dozen times I was on a drive in there for one thing or another taking people into Alpine. So we had a need to have good medical skills, and Jim was good at doing that. He liked to get on the river. I enjoyed working for him. I consider him a friend. I consider him also the person who increased my skill level the most, or under whose supervision I gained more skills and more professionalism.

TM: Was he the chief ranger? Was that the position he was in there?

PG: Yes, he was chief ranger.

TM: Okay, because that's what he was at Grand Canyon.

PG: Right. And Mary Risser was just temporarily there at Grand Canyon, recently, as an acting superintendent, I think, for about six months. She also was in Big Bend when I was there. She and I became good friends in the park. She was doing concessions, and part of that was the river outfitters on the river. So I had a work relationship with her, but we also became friends off of work because she enjoyed getting out on the river, and had a boyfriend that was also Park Service that was a river runner. Mary didn't actually row or... She was a passenger on river trips, but she liked being on river trips. She and I and Glen Fuller, her boyfriend at the time, would go on river trips together here and there. So I got to be pretty good friends with Mary and enjoyed that. I made some real good connections, or reinforced friendships that I'd already had, with different people while I was at Big Bend and really enjoyed it.

TM: Nice. And six and a half years there?

PG: Yep, six and a half years. And then I guess I just... Well, I had a relationship there and that kind of fell apart in late 1997 and I said, well, I guess it's time to move on. So, that was probably the impetus to move to a different park.

TM: Yeah, that's tough. Because if you break up with your partner there, everybody knows it in the small community, and you're still seeing each other in the community. It's not like you can avoid that. It's not like a big city where you're, okay, we're gonna split up and I'll never see you again, kind of thing.

PG: Yeah. And that's the downside of a small community. In park service communities there always were people that were getting together and people that were breaking up. I mean, that was just a fact of life in those communities, whether it was the Grand Canyon or Big Bend or any place where there was a bunch of park people living together in a small space. That was going on behind the scenes and that would affect people's work, you know, their desire to stay there or to not stay there. Gary and I got along just fine after we broke up, but I really didn't want to continue working there with him in the same park. A river district ranger job in Dinosaur was open, so I applied for it and I got that job. So in the spring of 1998, I think it was about March, I moved to Dinosaur, Colorado and began a new job there.

TM: March of 1998, okay. Was that a regular permanent river ranger position, or were you the river unit district ranger?

PG: Yeah. I was the district ranger, once again, for the river district. I think that's the formal verbiage for how we described the position. Actually, I was the district ranger for the river district in Big Bend, and when I went to Dinosaur, I was a district ranger supervising the river and the Colorado portion of the park. There was only two district rangers, and I had basically Colorado and the whole river, and the other one had the Dinosaur Quarry chunk of it. I had the rangers that were stationed at Lodore, which is where you would launch on a trip on the Green River to go through Dinosaur. I had the ranger that was stationed at Deer Lodge, which is where you would launch on a trip on the Yampa River to go through Dinosaur. I had supervision over a ranger that was at Echo Park, which is where those two rivers came together and where people could drive a vehicle down there and camp down there. We had a small campground and so there was a ranger station there. Those were all in Colorado and all kind of related to the river, so I was the district ranger over all of that.

TM: Was there a ranger at the Split Mountain put-in? There's a different name for that, but it's...

PG: No. You mean Rainbow Park area, above...?

TM: Yeah, Rainbow Park, thank you.

PG: Right; yeah. There wasn't anybody that was stationed there. The people who worked out of Jensen, who worked over near the quarry, they would do a patrol up into that area just to check on things. We didn't have anybody that was stationed there all the time. They handled that and they handled any problems that were at the takeout at the boat ramp there at the exit to Split Mountain. I think they had volunteers working there for a while, too, trying to get boats to consolidate and not sprawl over the ramp, and then the next trip coming down would have trouble finding a place to pull out. I think that they used some volunteers to do that, and I didn't have anything to do with that.

TM: Okay, all right, interesting. So the Split Mountain ramp, it's called, is the takeout for people doing Lodore, people doing Yampa. And that ramp has a...what's the word I'm looking for...reputation, I think, so we'll kind of talk about that, maybe, in a little bit. Had you run Lodore before you got the job, or had you run the Yampa before you got the job?

PG: I had run both of them. When I was in Canyonlands, it wasn't that far to go up to Dinosaur to do a trip. I had done both of those when I was in Canyonlands at least once. I don't know if I'd done them twice or not. You know, from this vantage point, I've done the Yampa on a private trip, probably four or five times, but I can't remember exactly when they all were. But I know I had done both of those before I got the job there.

TM: Okay, so you knew where they were, and you knew what the rapids were like, at least a little bit, and how beautiful the Yampa was, and how fun the rapids in Lodore could be. And Jones Hole, this wonderful side canyon coming in. So you would have been familiar with the mosquitoes that could really chew you up there some times of year.

PG: Right, right -- all of it. Yeah. Before we got into there, I didn't know if there was anything else that you wanted to bring up about Big Bend? I think I've run out of my own thoughts, but I didn't know if there was something else that you had in mind that you wanted to ask about Big Bend before transitioning to Dinosaur?

TM: No, unfortunately I don't know enough about Big Bend to ask questions about how some of the things might have worked. I think you did a great job covering things and bringing up the beauty of the relationship with our friends across the border as a park that borders another country, and how that interplay worked, and some of the tribulations of working at a small park. I mean, you know who's drinking too much and who's, you know, having marital problems or, you know, boyfriend-girlfriend problems.

PG: Who's seeing who, and who's not seeing who anymore. All of it; yeah.

TM: Yeah, very small. So interesting there. And the relationships between the people that are working for the Park Service. So that's, you know, superintendent-superintendent, or just how that works as well, because you really need a team. And the trouble is, it sounds like, those teams form up and they can be really good, and then they break apart.

PG: What was the first word you said, teams?

TM: Teams, yeah, meaning... I was thinking of Superintendent Arnberger knew Chief Ranger Northup, and worked well with him. They worked well together at Big Bend and then Arnberger went to Grand Canyon, that team split apart. Arnberger asked Northup to come to Grand Canyon, that team rebuilt over there, but that left Big Bend in disarray with a new superintendent trying to find a new chief ranger. So it seems like as you work your way through the Park Service, you can pull teams together that form and breakaway.

PG: Right, right. And people find people that they work well with, and then they, you know, given the chance, would try and get that person to work in the next park with them, too, because they know that they have a relationship where they can communicate, and understand each other, and respect each other and... Sometimes that takes a while to build, or sometimes it's just completely missing between employees, or supervisors and the supervisees, or the workers. I think people in the park would consciously pick people that they knew and could work with when they had a chance to hire someone because it's... That's called the "good old boy network." Some people balked against it because it excluded people who weren't part of that network from breaking into it. But you can understand why someone would choose to work with someone that they had a relationship with already, and knew that

they worked well with, and knew that they could accomplish the goals that they wanted to accomplish in the place. So it both was good and bad. There was griping against it, but at the same time I could see value in it. So there's two sides to that.

TM: Did you ever come up with an idea for another way where it could work as good or better?

PG: No, I don't think I put a ton of thought into it and I don't feel like I got caught up in it one way or the other much. But I had heard people talking about the good old boy network. And oftentimes it was women, because it oftentimes was men that were the good old boy network and women tended to not break into it so readily. But I understood why it was there. I understood both the upside and the downside of it. I did not have another way of approaching it. Actually I did have some thoughts on this. One of them is that the Park Service in a lot of ways would evaluate people on... They tried to be objective in evaluating people for jobs so when they were announcing for a job, they would have some very specific things that they were looking for. But so much is hard to measure; like, does someone have good judgment, is someone responsible? There's these soft skills that are real hard to show on paper and those are usually the things that you get by doing interviews with someone who knows that person, or supervised them, or worked with them. You can ask questions like: are they responsible? Do they follow through with their work? Do they use good judgment? Are they a team player? Anyway, those were potentially muddy waters that were always hard to distill into real objective ways of evaluating people. And no, I don't think there ever was a real good way to get around that old boy network, in a way.

TM: That's interesting, because some of the other interviews I've done, very much so, people would be looking to sort of maybe change position, and other parks would be talking to other parks back and forth at a higher level about these people saying, is that person good? Are they skilled? Do they wear their uniform well or do they not care? Dick Marks at Grand Canyon had a term for that. I forget how it... I'm sorry, I forget how he actually worded it. It was like, are you one of us? Are you going to work for us? Are you trainable to become park management staff, or you can sort of become a team player. But it sounded like it really was a good old boy...are you in the good old boy network or not?

PG: Well, it really came down to, do you have people who think well of you that I know so I can trust their evaluation of you?

TM: Right. And if you knew, you know, Sally of another park, you could ask Sally about Bill. And Sally could tell you Bill's really good at this, he's not so good at that. And if that worked for you at your park, then you would ask Bill to come over based on what Sally said. Or those names are all reversed in gender roles, and that would be the same as well. Did you go to Dinosaur because of the river or were you asked to come over there because of your skills at Big Bend in the good old boy network? By the superintendent over there, who said, oh, I want Grediagin because she's good on the river?

PG: I think what happened was, basically, they had an announcement out that said we need a river district ranger, or a person... I'm gonna say river district ranger in Dinosaur, even though I forgot what I might have been called, since I had some land responsibilities, too. I'll say river district because that was predominantly where it was. I don't know who else applied, so they would have looked at what other jobs each of us had done. You know, had we worked along rivers much? What was our experience level? Then they would have called and said, okay, tell me about Pat. Does she take criticism well? Does she take suggestions? Can I tell her what to do? You know, is she gonna act independently and go off and

do...? So they would have asked all those questions to follow with their evaluation of the skill level based on the experience that the person had.

TM: So they would have asked Arnberger and Northup, sort of your immediate bosses.

PG: Right, right. Not Arnberger so much, because he was a level above me. I would have always listed who my boss was, and that person usually would of got contacted. Unless they happened to know Arnberger sort of offhand, they would maybe call and say, hey, tell me about...

TM: Who was the Super at DINO?

PG: Well, let's see. I can visualize him, but I cannot come up with his name right now. If you said it, I'd go, yeah, yeah, that's him but I can't come up with his name right now off the top of my head.

TM: Okay. And who was the chief ranger, do you remember?

PG: It was Dave Panebaker.

TM: Had you known Dave from anywhere else in the Park Service?

PG: I did not. No, didn't know him.

TM: Dinosaur is an interesting park. Talk about, you know, Big Bend with its really remote center hub. Dinosaur has a quarry, the fossil quarry near Vernal and Jensen, but the headquarters are in Colorado, and there's a long history about how that came about.

PG: Right.

TM: So it's, you know, 30/40 miles away from right from the quarry and it's in Colorado, and that's sort of the headquarters for the Yampa. And then Lodore's way...is a hard, long drive, to get around over there. So it's a big, spread-out park that's hard to get around in a car.

PG: Right. So I lived on the Colorado side near park headquarters and the visitor center there. There was, I think, maybe six houses, maybe five or six families that lived there, maybe only five, and then some seasonals that lived in some apartments there. I never had that same sense of community at Dinosaur that we had in Big Bend. I don't know if it's just the people who were living there at the time, or that there was fewer people there? It was kind of a lonely place to work, actually. There was not much at all going on in the town of Dinosaur. It's a small, little nothing town. Then Vernal would have been where I went and got groceries. It's a predominantly Mormon town, so there wasn't a lot of... Well, there were some river runners that were out of that part of the world, Vernal and Jensen over there. But I just didn't have a lot of people that I was able to connect with when I worked at Dinosaur. I'm not really prone to loneliness, but I do remember just kind of thinking like, there is absolutely no social life here, because there just wasn't.

But what was great about it... On the other hand, I started thinking of my opportunities to get out and explore around, in terms of this. If you're on the coast, you'd have 180 degrees worth of land that you can go off in 180-degree directions and explore. When you're in Big Bend, you only have really 180 degrees worth of land you can go off and explore, because you couldn't really go exploring in Mexico

that readily from Big Bend. But when I was in Dinosaur, it didn't matter if you went north or south or east or west, there was something really interesting. Some great landscapes and places to go explore and poke around in any direction I went. And they were different. There was deserts to the south or the high country to the south; there was Colorado high country to the east; Flaming Gorge and the canyon... What's that little...? Red Canyon, I guess, out at Flaming Gorge. So, anyway, I just loved having that as a center. So when I had days off, I could go explore in different directions because I still loved getting out and exploring and seeing the country I was in. I hadn't poked around up in that zone of the US much before, so I really enjoyed that.

TM: Nice. Okay. Were you able to make any friends there that went exploring with you?

PG: No. You know, I was very comfortable doing a lot of the stuff on my own, so I did. I had a friend who actually had been a river...I think he was a river ranger. I think he was the river ranger before me, maybe just right before me -- Jim McBrayer. I had run across him somewhere, before. He was a river ranger I think somewhere as river ranger... Oh, I think he'd come down Cataract and gone down on a river patrol in Cataract with us when I was in Canyonlands. We did that sometimes. We would swap river rangers going to different places just to talk to other rangers about what life's like here. He was living in Steamboat Springs. I can remember going over there and just kind of visiting with him a few times. He had a group of people that he would go do hut-to-hut ski trips with in the winter, up in the... What did they call it? Oh boy, anyway, forgetting the name, but there's huts all through Colorado and there's some that he and friends would go to. So I got invited to go on a ski outing up to a hut. We didn't go from hut-to-hut; we went to a hut and stayed there for a couple days and then skied out. I think I did that twice. So, through Jim I got connected with a couple of fun things. There was something else I was thinking. Oh, so socially I guess I probably went down to Moab a few times. But it wasn't a real socially-rich assignment there.

Actually, I forgot I wanted to describe something else about that job that's a little different than what we were just talking about. I was predominantly involved with the river operation from maybe April until September, and then there was a long winter. All the seasonals left and what we had going on... I shifted into basically being a backcountry ranger again during the winter, to patrol the backcountry parts of the park in the Colorado part because there was a world-class elk herd that hung out there with great antlers, and there had been poaching in the park in the past. The Fish & Wildlife Service had even had an undercover guy that'd gone in and they busted somebody that was basically local, on the east side. Not from Dinosaur local, but halfway from Dinosaur to Lodore. He lived along the park boundary in that area by Maybell, north of Maybell. He still lived up there. It was illegal to hunt in the park, and during the fall I would do hunting patrols where I would drive a Jeep around or an ATV – which, I hate ATVs, I really don't like them. But I have to tell you, when I was assigned to ride one and ride along the boundary and look for evidence that somebody might be sneaking into the park, it was so much fun. I really sort of had a guilty pleasure and guilty fun with it, because mostly I don't like them, but it was pretty fun riding them around looking for evidence of hunters coming into the park, or contacting hunters and making sure they knew where the park boundary was and that they needed to stay out. So I did that in the fall.

TM: Hang on to this for a minute. I know Grand Canyon, so big, out west, that they have people on the ground with a motorcycle. And they combine, because he can cover hundreds of miles in a day. And they have a plane at the same time that works with them. Did you have a plane to help you?

PG: No, we didn't have a plane, but that's brilliant. I can see at Grand Canyon where that can be really useful, or anywhere. But we didn't have a big enough operation or a big enough landscape that we would of had a plane.

TM: Okay, so it was all ground patrol. All right, sorry.

PG: Yeah, so it was ground patrol. So I did that in the winter. I really enjoyed being in the backcountry a lot, just driving around seeing the elk grazing on the bench, on the Yampa Bench, around there. Sometimes I would just be driving through and it was gorgeous. It got really muddy sometimes, too, I can remember. I don't think I got stuck, but I had to chain up to get through the mud, I can remember that.

TM: You have a history with sinking vehicles in mud! I've seen your photographs!

PG: (laughs) Yeah. Well, Canyonlands had a reputation for quicksand and mud. And yes, it wasn't the first time I'd been in mud and had to dig myself out a little bit. I was comfortable being out there with my shovel and my chains because I knew how to take care of it if I did get stuck.

TM: Did you know a river ranger up in Dinosaur named Glade Ross?

PG: I met Glade later. He wasn't working there at the time, but he was making these... I met him somewhere, just briefly, once or twice, I think, but he was making a pump. Do you know the pump that he was making? He was making a boat pump. I'm pretty sure Glade was making it, and I think I might have bought one, or something like that. But yeah, I met Glade somewhere along the line, but didn't know him well, and didn't spend much time with him. But I knew of him. I had heard of him before, just as rangers talk about who had been where, before them. I had heard his name, and then I did meet him, yeah. But I don't have any stories about him, or really even much personal knowledge of him.

TM: Was there any talk at all about the old days of Jess Lombard?

PG: I don't recognize that name at all.

TM: Okay. He was the caretaker of the monument before it had a superintendent. And then he became the superintendent, the first superintendent, when they finally started that and they were interfacing. Rocky Mountain had the headquarters. This was before the Dinosaur headquarters; this was before... It was back in the early days. I just wondered if there was any institutional memory at all of Jess Lombard?

PG: No. Nope. Yeah. I knew the probably of the generation or the... I don't know if I even knew of the generation before me. I knew of rangers that had worked there the last 10 years before me, but that's about as deep as it went.

TM: Okay. All right. I wonder if this is a good place to put a comma in this oral history.

PG: I think it is.

TM: Okay. And, and the next time, we'll talk about the river and your experiences on the Yampa and on Lodore.

PG: Yeah, sounds good.

TM: Okay, all right. Well, then this will conclude Part 7 oral history interview with Pat Grediagin. Today is Friday, it's November 27, 2020. And my name is Tom Martin. Pat, thank you so very much.

PG: Yeah, you're very welcome.