

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Sam Wolfskill (SW)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Sam Wolfskill worked for the U.S. Forest Service on the Arizona Strip and the Tusayan Ranger District from 1963 to 1980. Sam recounts visiting with NPS employees John Riffey and Merle Stitt.

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TM: Today is Wednesday, it's July 11, 2018. This is a Grand Canyon Oral History with Sam Wolfskill. My name is Tom Martin. We are at Sam and Phyllis' house, his wife. Sam, what year were you born?

SW: I was born in 1935.

TM: Where?

SW: Redding, Pennsylvania.

TM: What were your folks doing there?

SW: My parents lived half way between Redding and Lancaster, Pennsylvania and I wound up at the Redding Hospital to be born. My dad was working as a salesman for an egg distributor.

TM: OK. Brothers and sisters?

SW: I've got one brother, his name is David and he's younger. He passed away about a year ago.

TM: OK, I'm sorry. Wolfskill is a very interesting name for American pioneering and exploring of the West. Are you related to William Wolfskill?

SW: Indirectly, yes. He was a great, great uncle of some sort or other.

TM: Wonderful, OK. Any family stories about him?

SW: No. Didn't even know about him until I became, oh, probably 35/40 years old.

TM: OK. Did you grow up exploring in the Pennsylvania woods at all? What was your childhood like?

SW: Oh yes. I lost my father at an early age, I was about 14 years old. But Mom always raised us to be independent and as a result we were very active in Boy Scouts, my brother and I. Did a lot of camping and a lot of time spent in the woods in Boy Scout camps and hikes along the Appalachian Trail and that stuff.

TM: Did you get into birding, did you get into botany? Were you interested in the flora and the fauna?

SW: At the time, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do when I was a young person but when I got into college I decided on either one of two majors. One would have been oceanography and the other one would have been forestry. I picked forestry and went for that goal.

TM: I'm sorry, tell me again the year you were born? 1930...

SW: '35.

SW: Did you serve in WWII? Nope, I was in between. I served in the service but it was during the Cuban crisis. No wars on either side until I got out, then Vietnam took off after WWII.

TM: Where did you end up going to college?

SW: I went to Heidelberg College in Tiffin, Ohio, got an undergraduate degree there. From there I went on to Duke University and picked up a Master's in Forestry in 19..., good Lord, I can't remember. But it was '69 I think.

TM: Did you know Charlie Newlan?

SW: No.

TM: Just shooting another forester name out there. He came out and did his student rotations with the mill here in Flagstaff in the 50s. In their forestry program, they wanted them to get out and actually work with the agency out in the field. So they had him out here with the Coconino or the Kaibab, I guess. And so he was out here then.

SW: There were two people out here from Duke. One of them was the founder of the School of Forestry here at the Northern Arizona University. Chuck Minor was his name and he started the School of Forestry here at Northern Arizona University. Then also there was another researcher out here for several years, but he's passed away since.

TM: Started the NAU School of Forestry. What year did you graduate with your Masters?

SW: '59.

TM: So, you're in Ohio...

SW: At Tiffin and I majored in biology. You complete three years... There was a program set up by Duke University where upon completing three years, they would accept you at Duke University for a summer and two full college years. So there you got your Master's in five and a half years rather than stretching it out further. So it worked out real well that way.

TM: When you graduated from Duke with your Masters, then what?

SW: Well, the summer before I graduated, I was looking for a job in the West. I applied several places, got an offer from up in Montana, but that was not a very challenging job. It was just pulling *Ribes*, which is a weed. [chuckles] The other job was a timber inventory down on the Lincoln National Forest in southern New Mexico by White Sands and that area. I took that job for the summer, went back to college, finished. I liked it so darn much out there, the ranger helped sponsor me to come back the next year for a special project. I worked with that ranger on a special project doing a recreation inventory

throughout the entire national forest locating potential camping areas and recreation areas for the future.

TM: Who was that person and tell me more about that program.

SW: It was a program called National Forest Outdoor Recreation Review. The person I worked with was the ranger I had the previous summer. He was detailed on it and picked me as his assistant. So I covered all the ranger districts on the Lincoln National Forest inventorying potential areas for recreation.

TM: How did that turn into a career?

SW: That was my step into the Forest Service and from there on I went on to career conditional. While I was in career conditional, I was drafted of course. Spent two years in the Army and had a pretty cushy job. I was working in Denver, Colorado in medical research.

TM: What kind of research?

SW: Well, we were trying to figure out if a person could synthesis his own Vitamin C.

TM: Wow.

SW: [chuckles] So I spent two years working on that.

TM: Oh my gosh, that's a little far from forestry. You have a biology degree, but still.

SW: It was a smaller lab, maybe had about 40 or less draftees in there. We all worked for high powered PhDs in chemistry and biochemistry and physiology and veterinarians. They were doing all kinds of different studies there. Medical studies experimenting with animals on different surgeries and that sort of stuff as well as a lot of chemical and physiological stuff. It was an interesting two years.

TM: Then after your service in Denver for the Army...

SW: I went back to New Mexico and they took me in.

TM: Back to Lincoln?

SW: Back to the Lincoln. They didn't really have a position there, but they were holding me until something came over so to speak and that's when I went to the North Kaibab, about six months after that. So in about February of 1963, I wound up on the North Kaibab here in Arizona.

TM: Where you based out of, were you based out of Fredonia then?

SW: Yes. At that time Fredonia... There were two ranger districts on the North Kaibab. There was the Big Springs District on the west side and the Jacob Lake District primarily on the east side. I worked on the west side most of the time in timber management which was not much more than marking trees for logging which was a big operation up there at the time. Then spent two weeks in the sawmill measuring logs as they went through to get paid and then back to the woods to mark and that lasted for several years. Finally I slipped over to the other district in what was essentially the assistant ranger where I did lots of different things, you know, in recreation management, range management, timber management. Whatever the other people didn't want to do I seemed to get.

TM: Let's back up a little bit. What was Fredonia like in 1963?

SW: Very small town when I got there. I wasn't real happy being there. It was pretty isolated. By the time it was time to leave, it was the last thing from my mind to leave. I really liked it. I spent a lot of time just enjoying southern Utah and northern Arizona. Went into the Grand Canyon, some areas off the forest which are now the park, which at that time were in the national forest, and into the park. That's where the Mt. Trumbull stories come in of course.

TM: When was the first time you got out to Toroweap, out toward ranger John Riffey's place?

SW: Probably about 1965-66, that's when I went over to the Jacob Lake District from the Fredonia District. That was an interesting story. The Kaibab National Forest had roughly 17,000 acres out around Mt. Trumbull. It was Mt. Trumbull and Mt. Logan. Nobody wanted to go there. It was a long drive out, took maybe three or four hours to get out there on rough roads. So again, I was the one designated keeper of the 17,000 acres. I didn't go out much in the winter which wasn't necessary. The kind of activities we had out there were really limited. There wasn't much recreation of course. What few people ever did come, they went to Toroweap. They never came over to Mt. Trumbull. We did have some grazing permittees that I'd meet with. One mentioned in the book is the Schmutz, that's only one I can remember. But we had about three of them.

TM: Tell me about the Schmutz's.

SW: I didn't know them very well. I just ran across him every once in a while during the summer when he was out there looking after his livestock.

TM: They had been out there a long time. They had developed some springs out there. It was tough.

SW: Yea, that was a rough area. There was no water out there to speak of. Just a tough area. Actually it was one of the few places right next to... Well the monument was there and the forest was there, and from what I understand the rest of it was homesteading and it goes way back. This is where a lot of people tried to make a living and most of them failed. I think Al Craig was the only one that lasted out of all of them.

TM: Let's talk about Al. When was the first time you met him?

SW: It was one of my first trips out there. I was told there were several people you should contact out there, Al Craig being one and John Riffey being the other. I went out to see them. Al was only maybe ten to fifteen minute drive from Nixon Springs where we had to camp. John was a little bit further over toward Toroweap. But, those were the two people I got to know most out there.

TM: So, you were in Fredonia in '63. When was the first time you started exploring? So you were marking timber up on the high country and then down at the mill which was there in Fredonia. So back and forth. But, during the weekends and what not, would you keep exploring sorta south and west and up points east?

SW: Didn't go to the strip too much. I was going up north to Zion and Bryce, all the parks. And of course, I didn't really get out 'till around mid-60s out to... Except one trip out there to look over the edge. I never got out to Toroweap until the mid-60s.

TM: Until you got assigned to Jacob Lake.

SW: Assigned to Jacob Lake and inherited that 17,000 acres.

TM: Can you help me, 'cause I am trying to figure this out. You said there were two districts: there's the Big Springs and the Jacob Lake Districts. When I think about this geographically, Jacob Lake is up on the high country and Big Springs is kind of down low and a little further west. Yet it sounds like when you were managing Jacob Lake you spent time way west out on the strip. How did that work management zone-wise?

SW: Big Springs was the big district. It was the one where all the timber people were and all the big sales. Even if they infringed on Jacob Lake, they were managed by Big Springs.

TM: And they had buildings down there, didn't they? They are still there today. A headquarters kind of area there.

SW: Big Springs? Yes. We'd stay out there and camp all week and mark timber and then come back into town and work at the mill for two weeks. That's how we worked back and forth on that.

TM: Where were the Jacob Lake offices at the time?

SW: At Jacob Lake. Well the main office was in Fredonia, we shared the building. The field camp was at Jacob Lake. Just like Big Springs was the field camp for Big Springs.

TM: So when you went out, ended up spending time out at Mt. Trumbull out at Nixon Spring out there, then you would be based out of Fredonia. Is that right? Or would you have to go up to Jacob Lake up to that area and then go... How did that work logistically?

SW: You just left Fredonia. For some reason or another, they just assigned... Even though it was further west, they assigned Jacob Lake the isolated island. That's the reason. And you'd leave from Fredonia to go out. There's a normal road everybody uses to go out to Toroweap.

TM: What was that road like back in...? This would have been in '66 or '67, '65?

SW: Mid-60s on to the later 60s.

TM: What was that road like?

SW: It was rough. [laughs] Of course, that's all part of Mohave County and very few people live in Mohave County north of the canyon. I think there's Bundyville and of course there's Colorado City. Hilldale is in Utah. That and a few other isolated ranches and that was about the extent of it until you got down to that little town, right on the corner. Greenfield or something. Right on the way to Vegas on the highway from St. George to Vegas there's a little community. Can't remember the name of the town now.

TM: I keep thinking of Mt. Trumbull but that's not what you're thinking.

SW: This is on the highway, this is the main freeway that goes between Vegas and St. George. Littlefield I think it was called. It's just a really tiny little spot. Just a little piece of Arizona that's surrounded by Utah and Nevada. Just that little corner you cut through. That was about the extent of people in Mohave County on the north side. They did have a county road maintainer up there, a fellow by the name of Finnegan. I can't spell it. It's Irish, Finnegan. I think one of them was just killed a few years ago. Had an incident up in Oregon. They were closely associated with the Bundies. I think one of them was killed up there. But the father and son did all the road maintenance out there. It was just a tough thing to keep up with and the roads were always bad.

TM: Right. It is hundreds of miles of dirt roads.

SW: Oh yeas, all over.

TM: And it rains and it snows and there's nobody out there.

SW: No, not very many.

TM: No, no. So how long would it take you to drive from Fredonia out to John's place, to John Riffey's place?

SW: Three/three and a half hours, something like that. Almost a half a day. It depended on the weather, too, cause a lot of times you were going out in muddy conditions. Never did get stuck but came close.

TM: So the Grand Canyon National Monument was a wedge of land surrounded by forest service land to the north and the homesteading land. Grand Canyon National Park was actually further east, this was before the '75 enlargement.

SW: Yea, the North Rim was up there.

TM: Right, the North Rim and South Rim.

SW: The Monument was still...

TM: Nankoweap.

SW: The Monument was still just a separate item out there. John was not a typical forest ranger, he was one of those fellows that was a land manager rather than a people manager.

TM: How long did it take for you to figure that out?

SW: [laughs] Well, based on his personality, a long time. He was really out there not to entertain the public but to manage the land. There was grazing going on on that land. All those homesteaders had permits to graze on the park as well as the forest and the BLM land also adjacent to that.

TM: Right. So it would have been '65 the first time you met Riffey?

SW: '65/'66, yea.

TM: What do you remember about that first encounter?

SW: Not a whole lot. When I got to know him a little better, I got to meet him. I don't remember a whole lot except I really liked the person. That's about the extent of it. Then once I'd gone out there several times and ran across him, why I got to know him a little bit better. He was one of the... Well, the book describes it all. He's just a very helpful person. One time I was out there... John Riffey had an airplane he called Pogo and he would fly air patrol for the park in that end, or the monument, as well as the forest for us. There was an agreement. He called me one day while I was out there on the radio and told me there was a fire. I said OK. He said I'll land this plane and meet you up there. So I went around... I had to go all the way around the mountain it was on the backside of Mt. Trumbull. So I went around the mountain and walked up to the fire and there was John. He already had the fire just about out. That's when I had one of my real long chats with him, you know, and visit with him.

TM: What did you learn?

SW: The best thing I learned is his personality. It's a pleasure to be around. I don't think he ever met a stranger. He was just one of those people that was a delight to be around. Actually, far as work goes, he was a hard worker, I know that. He knew that country very well! [laughs] So I relied on him a lot after that for certain things. One summer I had the good fortune of having enough money to hire two summer students to work out there in the summer as fire prevention people and fire control people. John did most of the training for those kids. They were two college students.

TM: Do you remember their names?

SW: No I don't, it's been a long time. And that's the only year I had money to do that.

TM: To hire hands.

SW: [laughs] Other than that, it was me.

TM: OK. So John worked for and was the only employee of the Park Service at Grand Canyon National Monument.

SW: Right, all that time.

TM: He was the superintendent, he was the assistant superintendent, he was the chief of law enforcement, he was the maintenance guy, he was the janitor, he was the secretary, and everything.

SW: He was.

TM: What kind of dress did he wear? When you first met him what was he wearing?

SW: No uniform. [laughs] He was always in Levis and a shirt. Just a plain old dress shirt usually.

TM: And cowboy boots, cowboy hat?

SW: I don't remember the hats so much. He was just a down to earth...just like a regular rancher. I never did see him until this photograph and he's still not in uniform, if I remember right. Nope, he's still in...

TM: The photograph you are looking at, Sam, is John Riffey receiving his 40-year ruby pin from Superintendent Merle Stitt. Here's Superintendent Stitt all dressed to the nine, Class A uniform, not a speck of dust on it and there is John Riffey in his floppy hat and his plaid shirt and his puffy jacket.

SW: That's him. Fun guy! [laughs]

TM: Wonderful.

SW: I really liked John.

TM: So you guys were connected by radio?

SW: Yes, not all the time. I mean it was one of those things.

TM: How did that work?

SW: When John went in the air he went on 10-8 to fly. That's about the only time.

TM: So, the Forest Service would of have had its own radios to connect its people together.

SW: And he had one of our radios. He had a hand-held set and of course we had them in the trucks as well as hand-held, so that's how we communicated. But there weren't a whole lot of communication. It was always if you want to see John, go see John. You can't get him on the radio unless he's in the air.

TM: Did the plane make sense to you guys? Why didn't the Forest Service have a plane cause you got 17,000 acres, that's a chunk of change and that's just the west side, not the east side.

SW: There was a special agreement with John somehow or other because we did fly air patrol on the regular Kaibab Plateau, and that was out of Kanab. The contractor out of Kanab flew patrol there. I guess rather than send that plane all the way out there, John was willing to do it and they paid him to do it.

TM: Oh great. I appreciate that. That would make sense. Keep him in gasoline and maintenance of the plane. Wonderful.

SW: Somehow or other the gasoline... All that was through the Park Service, it wasn't John personally.

TM: Which was great 'cause it is was a super idea, it's so remote there.

SW: He was going up anyhow, so why not fly an extra 17,000 acres you can fly over in five minutes.

TM: Did he ever take you flying?

SW: No, I never went up with him.

TM: OK. So John had a way, as the book talks about, of naming things in a creative kind of way. Did you catch on to that pretty quickly?

SW: Not too much, I didn't catch on 'till I read the book. He probably used those words but they just kind of came natural, I mean I understood what he was saying when he said them.

TM: OK. So it took 3 hours or so to get from Fredonia out to his ranger station and that wasn't at the rim. To the rim was even a further drive. How many vehicles did you go through?

SW: Ah, none really, they just... The government replaced them before they were totally out. If you took your time, it wasn't that hard on a vehicle. That's why it took so long. You could probably go out there a lot faster and be hard on a vehicle.

TM: But you'd lose your muffler...

SW: A lot of things.

TM: Tires, yea.

SW: So no, we didn't go through any vehicles. I know I always had an older vehicle [laughs] but it was reliable.

TM: OK, nice. And the maintenance, was that done in Fredonia then or was the maintenance out of Kanab. How did that work?

SW: Really, what happened was the Forest Service every month had a preventative maintenance check. That's where you yourself went through your vehicle and checked the list of a whole bunch of things off. If anything was wrong mechanically, it usually went to a service station locally.

TM: OK, that makes sense.

SW: They did take pride in their vehicles and people taking care of their vehicles. You had to because you were doing it every month.

TM: And you really needed that vehicle. You wouldn't want it to break down out there 'cause it would be a long, long walk.

SW: Not too much to hitchhike with either.

TM: Was John's wife living with him at the time, '65, do you remember? Did you meet... He had two wives.

SW: I met the second one, I never met the first one. She was a birder. She was an ornithologist really and as a result she had study plots all over. She called me to talk to me one day and says, "I'm putting up...just designating an area for a plot. It's nothing physical going on to it." She said, "Do I need a permit?" I said, "Nah." [laughs] I didn't see any purpose in it. She went back and visited those plots for years. There was nothing there except an inventory of birds.

TM: She knew the area and would walk in that area and that was that.

SW: That was it. I'm sure she needed a permit but I wasn't about to hassle on that.

TM: So there were other people out there besides John Riffey. There were a few other families trying to survive out there on the Strip. Did you ever met Chet Bundy/Chester?

SW: No, I think I had one run-in with the Bundy's on all my trips out there. And that was... I guess I got to go back to get this story squared away a little bit. Mt. Trumbull was 17,000 acres. Back during the Kennedy administration, Congress allocated a large sum of money, and I don't know how much, to be spent by the Forest Service in Mohave County. And the only piece of land in Mohave County that was national forest was Mt. Trumbull and Mt. Logan. As a result, they got this chunk of money. I think it was to help... This all happened a little bit before I got there. The money was probably to help the Native Americans. They hired the Native Americans to do pre-commercial thinning on that area. They put a brand new fence all the way around the forest, on that 17,000 acres. Then they also built at Nixon Springs, they built a duplex and a garage and put in a generator and a gigantic butane tank. And there were two rooms to live in out there at Nixon Springs. That's where I would stay when I'd go out and it was only maybe a 15 minute drive to Al Craig's place but quite a ways over to John. As a result of that... I lost track of where I'm going now.

TM: We were talking about Chet/Chester Bundy. And then there was Orville and Atwood Bundy. There were a lot of Bundy's out there.

SW: There was a whole village of Bundy's. It was called Bundyville and it was further down the road quite a bit of ways.

TM: A little further to the west out the other side of the Hurricane Cliffs there and then down toward Whitmore Wash, that area down that side.

SW: That's right. Anyhow, I think one night one of the guys I worked with out there, we were spending the night and heard some shots over around the pond. At Nixon Springs there was a pond. It was one of the few springs around and it was continually running water. So we got out of bed and walked over there. I think they were Bundy's, I think they were poaching. [laughs] We didn't push it too far cause they had the guns. [both laugh]

TM: And that was your only run-in with them?

SW: If that was Bundy's, that's the only run-in I ever had with them. Otherwise, I never did.

TM: The more I'm thinking of this, of course the Forest Service land was further east of that western Strip land.

SW: It was quite a ways down.

TM: Cause Chester/Chet was down there in the 50s and 60s. Lots of family there. I guess the Bundy's just had a large reunion out there either last year or the year before, which I did not get a chance to get to.

SW: I really never met any that I know of, you know.

TM: So then, without connecting to the people to the west, again, that was the homesteaded land more Bureau of Land Management land out there. Actually near Nixon Spring would have been Al Craig. Was Jim White still alive then...

SW: No.

TM: ...or he had already been shot?

SW: The only one I remember, the only places I remember were Al Craig's and also the Schmutz's place and they were only there part of the year. They weren't living there, they just came down for a weekend or something to look after their cattle and then went back up north into Utah. Wherever they lived, I have no idea.

TM: So not a lot of people out there. Do you remember the first time you met Al Craig and his wife Mary?

SW: I can't remember specifically the first time. Somehow or other it was one of those... I think what it is, is they told me if I needed gas to go over to Al Craig's and I think that's how I met him. Al, whenever he come to Fredonia, he'd bring in at least a 55 gallon drum, maybe two, on his truck and fill them up with gas. Al had one of these old fashioned gas pumps that you crank and gravity flows into the... And that's where we'd get gas at that time.

TM: So you would pull this thing back and forth and it would pump gas into a clear glass chamber?

SW: Yes, up about 6 foot high up above.

TM: And there was a hose off of that.

SW: And gravity fed into the truck.

TM: Did you watch that go back down into the truck. He had one of those set up at his place.

SW: He had and that's how I think I got to meet Al was through getting gas so I could get home. [laughs]

TM: Would you pay for that? How'd that work out?

SW: That was fun. The government had credit cards at that time.

TM: They didn't have credit card swipers out there, how did that work? [laughs]

SW: For a while it didn't. Everything was filled out by hand. Then later on he got a swiper but it was still a lot of hand-filling, too. That was it. It was interesting cause it was an event to get gas. Then we got to know Al and Mary cause they loved to visit, too. You get to hanging out with them a lot. They were one of these place... I stayed out with them one time. Instead of staying at Nixon Springs I went over there and they had me stay. They had a dugout next to their house. I stayed in the dugout and what a delightful place that was. It was cool in there when it was hot outside. That was quite a deal, cause we didn't have air conditioning. It wasn't that bad to sleep over there in Mt. Trumbull cause it was still pretty high. But that was even cooler. It just stayed a pleasant temperature all night long. It was just one of those things you just go over and every time you went you might as well kill an hour or two cause they don't ever get much company and as a result it was just just what you did.

TM: Would you talk about the news, talk about the range, talk about...?

SW: Oh, just about anything. I can't remember anything that really dug in deep like politics or anything like that. Never talk about that. But it was interesting.

TM: Al was a very good mechanic. Did he do any mechanic work with you out there on anything?

SW: Not on our equipment, no. Not that I know of. I don't think we ever had a problem. But he did, he was a good mechanic and he could make things work with his junk pile, really.

TM: With very little, yea. Of course there's a great story of him picking up the 150-mile rights to use that area proved by... I'm not sure whether he got that from Riffey or from the fellow who was there one summer when Riffey wasn't there. But he ended up going out looking over the edge and saw that. I know he went out there with Riffey, helping to get his cattle down there, and there was water down there. It was a precious, most precious thing because there was no water like that anywhere around. It just saved his livestock.

SW: Is this when he got his permit to down into the canyon? I read about that. I knew nothing about it at the time, but I did read about that.

TM: When you met him out there in... I'm assuming this is '66 or '67. Was he still running cattle? Or had he stopped it?

SW: There were no cattle. The only thing I can remember is he was a stickler for closing his gates. One day I drove out to Nixon Springs, decided I'd go see Al. So I headed over there and the gate was shut. So I got out of the truck, opened up the gate, drove through, closed the gate. Right next to you on the left hand-side there was this shallow grave. [laughs] I looked at it and there was a headstone on it and it says, "Here lies the last S.O.B. that didn't close the gate." [TM laughs]

TM: That's nice.

SW: That was one I'll remember forever.

TM: And did Al set that up?

SW: Yea, he made that himself.

TM: As a way to help people who didn't know if the gate's open leave it open, if the gate's closed leave it closed. His idea with gates.

SW: Caught my eye real big.

TM: What other neat things did you see like that?

SW: The other thing that's so neat is the hospitality. That's the thing that really got me with both those individuals. They just never met strangers, they were always welcoming and always glad to have you there. Whether they were busy or not, they'd take time out to visit with you. And you did a lot of visiting when you're out there. When you're out there three or four days, in the evening things get pretty dull when you're by yourself so you go visit.

TM: Nice, very nice. Would you guys play any musical instruments at all...

SW: No.

TM: ...or just visit?

SW: Just visit.

TM: Would you bring any food over there, would you bake a pie or something?

SW: No. I wasn't much of a cook at that time. I was more or less eating out of a can. [both laugh] When I go out there it's just about what you had. You had a refrigerator but it was gas operated. You had to turn it on when you got there and you had to keep things cold before you got out there. So I didn't bother with anything but what you could eat out of a can basically.

TM: Do you know the history of Nixon Springs, how the Forest Service ended up getting that land and that location there?

SW: I have no idea why they have the 17,000 acres out there. It was really isolated and just... It belongs to the BLM and that's who has it now. And that's great as far as I'm concerned. I don't know if you've been out there, but they built a real big lodge out there.

TM: They did, yea.

SW: It surprised the heck out of me. NAU was doing a lot of studies out there back in, what, 90s? Wally Covington over at the university had a whole lot of different studies going on in there. The BLM I guess built that sort of lodge. That's where the old administrative site was. I went out once with a couple of the fellows that worked at NAU. Spent the night there and went around to see what they are doing and that's about the last time I went to Mt. Trumbull.

TM: So when you were there in the 60s, you said there was a maintenance garage there, there was a couple buildings, you had water, you had propane. Did you entertain the Craig's? Did they come over to your place sometimes?

SW: I always went over there cause they never knew when I was coming. I wasn't out there that frequently, maybe seven/eight times a year is all I'd be out there. And then only for several days.

TM: OK.

SW: We had the Colorado City people logging on the forest there. I'd go out and check out on the loggers and then also check on the ranchers. So most of that time was usually in the summer months and the fall and the spring.

TM: Then besides your occasional trips out to that area, what were you doing over on the Jacob Lake side, up on the high country there?

SW: Oh, a little bit of everything. I was working on range management. I was doing all the studies on the grazing areas. We had the Buffalo Ranch down below in House Rock Valley. That was part of the forest, too. We also had great ranchers on the top of the mountain grazing. This was the days when there weren't that many buffalo on the north side. [laughs] They were all down on the ranch instead of all over the park and the forest. They were on their designated area on the forest. On occasion we'd have a rogue buffalo or two. I think they'd run out into the forest and nobody would bother with them because they were... They were run-off buffalo is what they were. Nobody wanted them anymore and they just went out there and went to die, I guess.

TM: Or find some greener pasture from House Rock Valley which is...

SW: Always singles, it was always a rogue by himself out there on the other side of the fence.

TM: Managed to get across the fence.

SW: Oh, it's easy.

TM: Do you remember who were the caretakers out there?

SW: Golly, I wish I could remember his name right now. He was good. I mean, he knew where those animals were. I don't think it's like the people that are out there today. I can't remember his name, but he was outstanding as far as knowing where they were and keeping them where they should be. I don't know what happened after I left there, why now they're everywhere but where they should be I guess. I wish I could remember his name. It might come to me later but I can't now. He was just a plain ol' cowboy.

TM: So how did that work? There's the Forest Service and the BLM and of course the Park Service was way further south where their land was. And then of course... I'm kind of leading into 1975 with the Grand Canyon Enlargement Act that all brought that up together. Before the Enlargement Act, the northeastern boundary of the Park Service was at Nankoweap. Upstream of there was Marble Canyon National Monument, if I get that right. BLM land went to the rim top, and then BLM land as it started going up the hillside graded into Forest Service land up to the top of the plateau there.

SW: Basically the foot of the mountain so to speak. Except I think some places it went to the rim what I'd say the far west end. I think it went to the rim, but I'm not sure. I can't remember specifically the boundary.

TM: There was the Buffalo Ranch on the east side, the heavy timbered land up on top.

SW: Right. All the way up the side of the mountain and down the other side.

TM: Gaylord Staveley ran a hotel down near the park border. Did you meet him there?

SW: No. He wasn't the owner at that time. It was a family out of the valley somewhere, Tucson or Phoenix. Here again I'm missing a name but I know it very well.

TM: No worries.

SW: But they had it for years and they also had the store across the street from the Kaibab Lodge. Somebody bought... I think one of the McCormick kids from Fredonia bought the store. Actually I don't know if they still have it or not. Then I'm talking about kids, they were kids when... [laughs] This is much later. And then I think Gaylord bought the Lodge eventually.

TM: OK. And then who was operating the Jacob Lake Lodge?

SW: John... It's the same family that's been there forever.

TM: The Wright family?

SW: No. This one I should remember. Rich.

TM: Rich. Thank you, the Rich's.

SW: Our field camp was right next to the lodge there, within a couple hundred yards.

TM: That must have been good pies, good eating up there at the lodge.

SW: [laughs] And of course they shut down at that time during the winter. There's only one person...they usually had one person up there during the winter to...

TM: Would you keep somebody up there all winter?

SW: It wasn't that bad, the road was maintained all the time over the mountain. The highway camp was right up there anyhow.

TM: That's true, they got the yard up there with the snowplows and what not.

SW: They kept the road open so they always had one person there. Sort of like they do at the North Rim. I think the concessionaire keeps a person there and so does the Park Service during the winter.

TM: Just as a maintenance. Shovel snow if it gets too heavy on the roofs.

SW: And fix the pipes if they bust. That sort of stuff.

TM: So today, that 89A going from the cut there on 89 going to Page, it goes on up over Jacob Lake and then back down to Fredonia, has a lot of semi-truck traffic on it. Did it have that much traffic, big trucks on it, back then?

TM: Not very often. Not at that time. I don't think the interstate was done between Vegas and St. George at that time. Was it? And if it wasn't... This was a shortcut for people coming out of Phoenix to go up and over the mountain. At that time, about the only trucks I can remember are state highway

trucks or cattle trucks and a few, maybe occasional, commercial trucks. People making deliveries to Fredonia or something.

TM: Logging trucks?

SW: There was not much traffic in the winter over that road.

TM: OK, OK.

SW: The best route would have been to go through Page, anyhow, rather than all the way over that mountain. Timewise, I did it both ways coming from Flagstaff for instance, it was about the same because you could go faster on 89 than you could 89A. So by the time you went to Page and came back to Kanab, why it was just about as fast as going over the mountain.

TM: OK, going up that way. Forest fires on the Jacob Lake side would have been, I would assume, much more intense than forest fires on the Nixon Springs side just because the range was so different.

SW: Yea, the biggest fire they had that I can remember was right down near the park, on the east side. It was called the Saddle Mountain Fire but that was already happened before I got there. For some reason or other, all those other fires that have been happening after I left, I have no reason or rationale why they should happen that much. Except the number of people going over that mountain increased. Carelessness. Most of the fires, except for Saddle Mountain, weren't all that big when I was there. We had one right on top, just to the west of Saddle Mountain. Oh no, that was a blowdown that we salvaged. Then we had another one back towards Saddle Mountain that was another blowdown. But those were winds and not fires.

TM: OK.

SW: As a result I can remember... Well that was one of the logging jobs that I worked on was that one blowdown that's towards Saddle Mountain. It was Hosie Irvy. He was a jippo logger, a little guy that hired a couple people. Hosie bought that blowdown. It was in the mixed conifer up there. Just east of Kaibab Lodge there was a blowdown years ago. That's the one I'm talking about and Hosie got the job. Hosie was one of the neatest guys [chuckles] I ever met, too. He was a black man from somewhere back in the southeast. Just as a side point, that Caterpillar tractor you see down at the Pioneer Historic Museum, that was Hosie's. All his equipment looked like that. [laughs]. They know about him at the Historic Museum that's for sure, cause they told me that's his Cat. It always took him probably 40 minutes to get that thing fired up to go to work. [laughs] It was just fun going over there. He'd always only have a couple swampers working with him. It was just a delight. He was quite a guy. He lived here in town and he raised Tennessee Walkers. High powered horses.

TM: OK, so now I'm connecting up... I did an interview with a Grand Canyon National Park law enforcement ranger at Phantom Ranch in the mid-1960s, mid- to late-1960s named Ken Hulick. Ken ended up then being transferred to North Rim Lodge and he was up there for a while, but he had a Tennessee Walker that he would take down to Phantom Ranch from the South Rim. He loved that horse. I was like, "Where did he get that?" Maybe he got it from Hosie.

SW: I don't think Hosie got rid of his horses, he just loved to ride 'em.

TM: Oh, he wouldn't sell them.

SW: He just had one or two. He didn't raise them, he just had them. He was quite a guy. The Park Service also, while I was at the Grand Canyon, had those ride horses. They had a couple pair of them. I don't know how long they had 'em, but...

TM: They still have a couple horses today.

SW: The ride horses?

TM: Yea. For special events and on the rim ride.

SW: When I was a ranger at Tusayan, the fellow that was in charge, I can't remember his name, who was responsible for those two horses. He was responsible for park service horses I think. Whenever he went on vacation, he'd bring the horses to us because we'd look after them for him. He didn't trust anybody else. At Tusayan we had a stable and everything and we kept them there with our horses.

TM: Nice, nice. There was a slow but steady push to enlarge Grand Canyon National Park in the early 70s. Because the Grand Canyon goes from Lees Ferry in the east to the Grand Wash Cliffs in the west, that's about 280 miles. And yet the park only went from Nankoweap to Deer Creek, which was a distance from roughly Mile 55, roughly, to Mile 100 and...I don't know, maybe 60 miles or so, 60 or 70 miles. So we're missing out on quite a chunk of change. What was your role with the Forest Service?

SW: The Enlargement Act? I got there just after it happened.

TM: Did you? Well that was 1975, so were you stationed up over there... So you didn't get a chance to work with that?

SW: No, I moved in after the Enlargement Act and that's when the Havasu got that grazing allotment that they had on national forest, they picked that up.

TM: And traditional use land into the park, they got some park land access.

SW: Before they actually took it over, I think the only thing that happened was I was lucky enough to get a helicopter ride into the canyon to do an archeological survey for about a week. That was forest that we were turning over to the Havasupai.

TM: OK. This would have been 1974ish?

SW: Yea, I think so.

TM: OK. Do you remember who the helicopter pilot was?

SW: No. Well, it was one of the locals, it was Grand Canyon...

TM: Halvorson?

SW: Halvorson's helicopters, yea.

TM: OK, alright.

SW: We just chartered it. And then we stayed down there several days and had 'em make a beer run after two days and bring us some... Then we came out two days after that. [laughs] It was kind of a fun

deal. It was more of a junket than anything. But we walked the canyon and found a lot of ruins that were on the national forest that were about to go back to the Havasupai.

TM: Which were probably theirs anyway. I mean...

SW: Yea, that is right.

TM: ...it was their land.

SW: Some of them were rather modern. One of them was a train somebody etched/pecked into the rocks.

TM: Really? Oh my gosh.

SW: It was rather interesting. But it was a fun trip. That was right after I got there.

TM: So, when did you make the move then from Fredonia to the south side?

SW: Well, I didn't go right to the south side. I spent six years at Springerville. I left Fredonia, went from assistant ranger there to timber staff over in Springerville.

TM: What year did you leave Fredonia?

SW: Good Lord. It was probably the late 60s/early 70s, I can't remember specifically. I spent six years in Springerville and then went to the South Rim of the canyon.

TM: And that would have made sense why you weren't conversant with all of the north side, Forest Service, Park Service, we're going to coalesce all this stuff phase.

SW: No, that was all happening while I was in Springerville and I just got there on the tail end when we lost everything. Which was no big deal.

TM: What was the thinking at the time? Because it was funny that the Forest Service, was it the Forest Service that actually had the Esplanade above Deer Creek and Tapeats Creek, they had the Thunder River trail there.

SW: That was all... I can remember going down Thunder River in the winter. Our crew was down there working on the trail in the winter months. I don't think there was a whole lot of objection to it. On my part, I thought it belongs to the Park more than it does the forest anyhow, because it's just nothing but sandstone down there.

TM: It looks like the canyon, anyway. [laughs]

SW: It was really a nice spot. We had Thunder River at the time. I don't where Thunder River goes when it comes out of the side, whether it was... When it came out of the mountain I guess it went on to the park after that because that was the sand rocks.

TM: Yea. I guess the boundary came to Tapeats Creek and then jumped across the river. I get confused, you have to look at the maps. And there was a campground down there Where Thunder River met Tapeats Creek, there was a campground there. I think that was Forest Service.

SW: That campground wasn't there when I was there.

TM: Really, OK.

SW: That was just... It's where we camped [laughs] but there was no campground there. There wasn't anything there at the time. It was just a nice beach.

TM: Oh, all right. Were there any people coming out with stock to ride that trail or were there backpackers out there hiking that?

SW: Very few people knew about it. I think there were some avid canyon hikers that knew about it. But when we were down there, you know, we were down for four or five days just camping and it rained the whole time. We were spending most of our time under a tarp. Then when we came back out, we got all the way to the top and it was brand new fresh snow. So, the trail crew says, "Well, come on, come on down, we're coming out tomorrow." So we went back down and camped with them that night in the sand rocks. Came back out again the next day. The trail crew had a grader cause they knew that was nice weather down under but it wasn't up on top. They had a grader so they just plowed our way out because the snow was too deep. We couldn't go through it in a pickup.

TM: And you just followed them out?

SW: Just had a two wheel drive pickup. Put chains on it and followed them out.

TM: Excellent.

SW: We got lucky.

TM: Did you meet Harvey Butchart at all?

SW: Never. No. Never met him. But I knew a lot about him, a fair amount about him, heard of him.

TM: And Springerville now, there's forest over there. Were you part of the logging operations going on over there, what were you doing?

SW: Yes, I was timber staff over there on one of the districts, on the Springerville District. At that time in the 70s, there was a lot of logging going on, and late 60s. Also the pulpwood at Snowflake was open and we were cutting pulpwood to feed that mill, too. There was a big sawmill in McNary, there was a sawmill in Eager. That's where most of the timber went, to those two areas. That was an interesting time.

TM: How so?

SW: It was a total timber job. Full time. I mean, it took all your time to manage. Well, we had a lot of loggers running around every different direction. I had one sale administrator, plus I'd do a lot of the administrating myself because it was just too much for one guy.

TM: And you'd have to make sure that they were cutting where they were supposed to cut and what they were supposed to cut?

SW: Designating the trees to be cut. Measuring the stuff at the sawmill. I had a scaling crew that was at the sawmill all the time. They ran two shifts usually. So, it was a busy time. And that was the one in Eager. Of course McNary, that was on another district, so somebody else was running that, measuring the loads on that sawmill. There was a lot of activity at that time for timber which is no longer happening.

TM: How was it that you ended up getting moved from Springerville out to what would have been the Tusayan Ranger District?

SW: Yea, it's a promotion is what it was. I was timber staff and then I went Tusayan I became the ranger, which is...

TM: And when was that?

SW: In the early 70s I guess.

SW: Well, see it was the late 60s to Springerville and you were there for six years? So maybe '74ish?

SW: '73/'74 somewhere in there, cause I was there during the Bicentennial.

TM: OK. At that time then Merle Stitt was superintendent. Robert Lovegren had left.

SW: Yea, he was gone. Merle was superintendent. When I left, I'm not quite sure, I think Merle had already retired and Dick Marks... Was it Dick Marks? ...came in for a short period of time. Then I was gone and I went from there to ranger at Happy Jack.

TM: OK. What was your first meeting with Merle like? What was he like?

SW: I think the first time I met him was after I got there I was invited to join the Rotary. That's where I met Merle. And of course, he's one of those people who never met a stranger, too, you know. We got to chatting and found out he grew up in the rough neighborhood I did back in Pennsylvania. So we had a little bit in common, chatted.

TM: He had a science background. He wasn't up through law enforcement. He was a very interesting fellow that way.

SW: He was a forester I think, that's what he was. I don't remember where he went to school, but I think he was a graduate in forestry.

TM: Alright. Nice.

SW: That's about the best I can come up with.

TM: Who else do you remember was on Rotary at the time?

SW: Oh... Bruce Shaw was the Deputy Superintendent. He's passed away since. They were good friends of ours. They live here in town or they did. She's still alive.

TM: What do you remember about Bruce?

SW: He was a good deputy superintendent. He picked up the slack where Merle left off. Let's see who else, trying to think. Names are really slipping fast on me now. Names I thought I'd never forget.

TM: Oh, no worries.

SW: We had the U.S. Magistrate there at the time.

TM: That would have been Tom/Thomas McKay?

SW: Yea, Tom McKay. That's it.

TM: His nickname was Mumbles. I just learned that.

SW: Oh really?

TM: What do you remember about him?

SW: Not a whole lot. He was just a real good U.S. Magistrate. He handled things pretty well, but I never got to know Tom really that well.

TM: OK. Did you guys have any court dealings, were there any things you needed to use him for?

SW: No, the park handled them. We handled, we dealt with the U.S. Magistrate here in town.

TM: OK.

SW: Let's see who else was there? Golly names just are slipping by. Most of them I thought I'd never forget. Just about anybody that was in management somehow or another, either for Fred Harvey or for the park, was in the Rotary club.

TM: Trying to remember who would have been the head of Fred at the time. I'm not sure.

SW: Stu Korbitz was one. Allen Mayo was...

TM: That was Fred Harvey, that was AMFAC I guess. OK. How many people did you have on your staff there on the Tusayan side?

SW: Primary staff, I had three. I had a clerk and I think about two other full timers. It was a small district. I had a timber staff assistant along with the timber staff. I had a recreation staff. I had a range staff.

TM: Where you doing any timber sales?

SW: Small ones, yes.

TM: OK. Were you staying right there at the compound at the ranger station there in the housing there?

SW: That's where we all lived, yes. The office was down in Tusayan. The office used to be at the ranger station. When I got there, of course, they leased a building down in Tusayan and we were there for several years. Then I guess, they finally decided to build the ranger station back up on the government property again.

TM: OK. Who did you lease that building from, do you remember?

SW: Yea. He lived here in town. Oh, shoot.

TM: So, I'm thinking of Seibold, thinking of...Halvorson of course was over there, and Rotter, Thurston's.

SW: The fellow that who owned this piece of land was here in town.

TM: Mace? No. Trying to remember who that...

SW: He was quite a character. He and I had this deal, if anything was wrong don't call GSA, call me and we'll get it ironed out together. [both laugh]

TM: Yea, get it sorted it out. That's nice. Where was the building?

SW: It's gone now. You know where the campground is just before you leave Tusayan, it was just a little bit south of that.

TM: So where the Ten-X is, or where the trailer park on the north side?

SW: I'm talking about the trailer park in Tusayan.

TM: Trailer park on the north side. So there's the We Cook pizza, the cooks there.

SW: I don't even know if the building's still there.

TM: Probably not. Was Josie Lopez working...was the little bar going out there? What was happening in Tusayan at this time?

SW: They were trying to grow up and not getting anywhere with it. [laughs] It finally happened, I guess, a little bit. They got a fire department finally and a few other things. It wasn't incorporated at the time. It was pretty much owned by one person.

TM: That would have been Bob Thurston or the Thurston Family.

SW: The family, yea.

TM: Did you know Clarinda Vail at the time?

SW: No.

TM: Any of the Thurston kids? Johnny?

SW: Johnny I know, he was a kid then. My wife just saw him a few weeks ago. It was usually Bill that I dealt with. Bob was pretty old. Very little dealings with him, really. I think that's what stymied the growth of Tusayan, you know, it was their land.

TM: It was very complicated and I do not, I shouldn't...

SW: I have no idea what's going on there. Most of the land was Thurston's land.

TM: Did you participate in the Legion there?

SW: No, I didn't.

TM: I just remember that Rotter ended up, Franz Rotter/Frank, ended up getting some Legion land. They had a little bit of land there.

SW: His restaurant went on that.

TM: When he split up with Elling and Seibold and their three-way, I think, into the Squire, then he was able to get that land over there and build that hotel.

SW: Build that restaurant. I don't even know the history of that area. I don't know whether Halverson he owned the land or leased it. The water tank across the highway from there went in while I was there cause they were hauling water like crazy and didn't have a place to put it, really, to speak of so we worked on getting that tank on national forest, that water tank.

TM: Were the helicopters starting to come and go out of town there?

SW: They were there all the time. Yea they were downtown before they moved. I guess they're all at the airport now, I'm not sure. I don't get back that much.

TM: OK. So let's go back to Merle for a little bit. Any good Merle stories?

SW: Not really. About the only time I'd see him at Rotary but not always converse with him. We'd meet once a month for... Our Society of American Foresters would have a meeting in this area. He would always drive in with us when we went to go to a meeting here. That's how I got to visit with him and know him the most. Just an outstanding man. Two of my favorite people, I can't say they were in the Forest Service, I they're these two right here. Both of them in the Park Service and I was in the Forest Service.

TM: Stitt and Riffey, yea, interesting.

SW: So I was thrilled to death when I got that photo.

TM: Yea, very nice. What else do you remember about your time at the Tusayan District?

SW: It was probably the best assignment I ever had. The mixture of people was just outstanding. We had cowboys, we had Indians, we had hippies, we had people that would drive several hundred miles for fine dining in the evenings, people that went to the symphony. Just a really neat assortment of people. And you get to know all of them cause they were all right around there. That was one of the better things that I liked about that place. Plus we had a good time there. The guys I worked with liked to have a good time and we did.

TM: Nice. Do you remember some of the names of the other people that were there?

SW: Forest Service? Oh yea, let's see. I started off with a timber staff by the name of Gerald Ganino, he was a Philippino kid. He was American really, but he was Philippino origin. He was followed by, let's see... And then I had, Mike... Oh Lordy, my names are going bad on me. But Gerald was timber staff. Then I had Tommy Beddow as a timber staff later on. I had a fellow by the name of Gary Loving he was recreation. His wife Nancy worked for the History Association there.

TM: OK. For the Grand Canyon...

SW: Natural History, well whatever they call that now.

TM: Its Grand Canyon Association now, but I think it was Grand Canyon Natural History Association.

SW: I was on the board of that for about seven/eight years.

TM: Was that when you were at...

SW: At the canyon. And then shortly after, too. When I moved to Happy Jack I'd go back for board meetings once a month. Let's see, a guy by the name of Cal Wettstein, who went on to be a ranger up at Colorado. W-E-T-S-T-E-I-N, I think. Wettstein. I can't remember. It's Swiss. [laughs]

TM: OK, OK.

SW: Let's see. A guy by the name of , Ron Melcher, who was fire. He's down in the Verde Valley right now. Gary Loving and Tom are over in the Eager area. Let's see who else? Loretta Gonzalez was my clerk and she was outstanding. A guy by the name of Martin Freshour, he was my range staff.

TM: Did you have any poaching, did you have any people camping out-of-bounds? What sort of stuff did you have to deal with there?

SW: Well. there was no living areas there, so all those people come for summer jobs would move out onto the forest and set up camp and we'd have to move them off after their 14 days.

TM: So would they then just go a quarter mile down the road and set up another 14 day encampment?

SW: Or find another hiding place. [laughs] I got a cute story to go with that. At the time, the deputy sheriff up there was a fellow named Steve Luckeson, have you heard that name?

TM: No.

SW: He was the County Deputy Sheriff up there.

He was one of these guys that was always anxious to do stuff. Just bully himself around. [laughs] I got two stories really. One of them, we had a fire right behind the old Moqui Lodge. Had a crew on it and I was over there. Steve shows up, says, "I want to help!" I said, "You need a hard hat." So he goes back to the trunk, puts on his motorcycle helmet that the Japanese wear. [both laugh] He says, "Now," he says, "can I go?" I says, "Go." So he's out there fighting the fire and all of a sudden I hear bang, bang, bang. He lost the bullets out of his belt and they were falling into the fire. [both laugh]

TM: And then exploding as they got hot. Oh my gosh.

SW: They didn't go anywhere. Another time Ron Melcher, I sent him and Ron out to get rid of some people out behind Tusayan there that were well over their 14 day limit. Some kids. So Ron and Steve go out there and they find these kids. They're in their tent napping, guess they had a night shift or something, but anyhow. Steve wakes them up and they were definitely close to under age, they're not 21. And laying out there in the sun was a couple of beers, new cans unopened. So they roused these kids out of bed. Steve starts giving them a hard time about camping there and they're going to have to move. Ron's just standing there letting him do his thing. He always had to take charge. While he's talking to these kids he's kicking this one beer can around. Then he says, "Oh, by the way, are these your beers?" They said, "No, that's not our beer." He pulls out his buck knife, opens it up, and plunges one in, and it just... [laughs] It was cooking in the sun. Ron said he couldn't... He had to turn around and walk away he was laughing so hard. That's just typical Steve. He was a quite a character. He was married to one of the girls that worked at the Squire at the time, I think. But, I don't think that marriage lasted. That was just a side story I always thought it was kind of funny.

TM: Wonderful. Poaching, poaching a problem?

SW: Not much. The only one, like I said I told you earlier, is that one at Nixon Springs. I didn't see the deer and I wasn't about to look for it, but I knew it was there somewhere getting a drink. [laughs]

TM: Just trying to think about, of course the visitation through the district was huge cause everybody was going to the park.

SW: Yea, we were swamped. We had that Ten-X campground, we remodeled that while I was there. And other than that, we took the overflow cause the park would kick them out. As a result we'd just send them down the east side road. You could go down some of those side roads, there'd be 20/25 RVs and campers all just barely pulled off the road camping the night there.

TM: It's the same way down the Arizona Trail, the old Moqui Stage trail, out by Grandview lookout. Down that way, that road is just pullout, pullout, pullout.

SW: By Grandview lookout you mean?

TM: Yea.

SW: That's too bad. We never had much activity there, but right along the highway into the canyon from Williams it was just a pain. We'd throw garbage cans out. They'd use them, that's the good news. Things usually stayed pretty clean because they were only one-nighters, you know. A lot of them had trailers and RVs which they carry their own garbage out, anyhow.

TM: So, you were there from the mid-70s to the mid-80s?

SW: Early 80s. '73/'74 to '80. Then '80 I went to Happy Jack.

TM: You mentioned remodeling the Ten-X campground. Did you enlarge that at the time?

SW: We changed the entrance. The campground got a little bit bigger, but not much. We put water in it. That was the main thing. We put a water storage tank and got an agreement with the park. They'd send their trucks out and fill the water so they had water in the campground there.

TM: The water that the park had would have been the Roaring Springs water coming across the canyon.

SW: That's all we had, too, at Tusayan at the house.

TM: So you guys didn't have your own water catchment system set up.

SW: There was originally and it was right next to my house. We put up a tower at Tusayan and a water storage at the campground. You've seen the tower probably, water tower, at the ranger station on the right. It's pretty well hidden but it's not totally hidden. While I was there we put those in. Then the park had a pumping system. The park just off-loaded and pumped it all the way to the top of the water tower.

TM: And then gravity-feed back out to the buildings.

SW: Of course when I was there originally, all that was there was the Forest Service. Then the FAA moved in and then Game and Fish moved in. Then the County Sheriff moved in. So these are all trailers that had happened afterwards. Cause there's no place... The best thing about Grand Canyon was if you had a place to live, you had a job.

TM: That's right, that's right.

SW: My kids never had trouble getting jobs. They had a place to live.

TM: They had a place to live at the end of the day. Very interesting. I knew that FAA was over there but I didn't realize that everybody else...

SW: FAA, then the sheriff, then Game and Fish. Those are individuals though, they weren't groups like the FAA. I don't know who else is in there, but there's probably some other agencies.

TM: Is FAA housing still in there now?

SW: As far as I know it is.

TM: I never even thought about it. They got the tower there and where did those people live? I thought they had some housing for them actually by the airport. But maybe not.

SW: I don't know. I think, as far as I know. Of course, I've been out of there so many years now I don't know for sure. But the houses... I think the buildings are still there. They were those modular homes. They'd bring them in on wheels and take the wheels and axles off.

TM: Put up a little skirting and there it is. Interesting.

SW: So I became mayor. [laughs] There were usually some disputes going on but not too many. It usually wasn't my people, it was always the FAA people didn't like each other. They ironed it out themselves, I let them.

TM: Yea. What else do you remember about those times?

SW: Let's see, what else do I remember? We were busy all the time, there's no doubt about that. There was a lot of work to be done there. And we accomplished a lot. Like I said, we got a whole lot of stuff in there that was really needed like water supplies, a remodeled campground, and set things up. And of course today, they're leased out now. Not leased out, but private people run them now.

TM: Manage the campgrounds and host and do all that.

SW: Usually an association or something that takes it on and then gets the hosts for the campgrounds. At the time I was there, we did everything. We picked up the garbage, cleaned out the outhouses, pumped out the outhouses.

TM: Where did you put the garbage?

SW: There was a landfill just about three or four miles out on that road right across from the Squire.

TM: Going east?

SW: Going east. That's where the landfill was. Then a couple enterprising young ladies that worked for me for the summer one time, they decided to open up their own garbage business. So they took care of some of the houses and some of the businesses to haul garbage. Free enterprise. They took on the job. I don't know what's happening now, I'm sure they're generating a lot more garbage than they ever did when I was there.

TM: I remember someone told me there was a group of people that started a trash hauling business called Super Trash.

SW: Super Trash, right. That's them.

TM: Do you remember who was doing that?

SW: They were a couple young ladies. I can't remember last names. One was Michelle. I'm having a hell of a time with memory any more.

TM: No worries.

SW: But those are the ones that started it, called Super Trash. That was it.

TM: Fun. Yea, quite some changes with helicopters all moved out to the airport, airport got a lot bigger. There was a lot of flight traffic coming into the airport at the time. Certainly when you would have been there.

SW: We had one plane crash while I was there, up in that burned area just by Tusayan just to the north and west of the ranger station. There's a big open area there before you get to the old Moqui Lodge. One went down there, but nobody was really hurt. Yea. It was scary. Just minor bruises and cuts. I don't remember if it was a takeoff or a landing or what. I think it was a takeoff and they couldn't get enough altitude. Density...

TM: That was the big issue at 7,000 feet. Thin air, not enough power, overloaded. You'd load up with fuel and you get a bunch of people on board and that plane would not want to take off. You'd burn up the runway, and then...

SW: At that time we did have the slurry bomber in the summer months for about six weeks or seven weeks during fire season. The bomber worked out of the airport at Grand Canyon.

TM: And the crews would stay where, would they be in hotels at the time there?

SW: They were private people, yea, they'd stay in hotels. Before I got there, there's a story about one of the pilots that came home kinda 'lit' and saw the Canyon Squire was on fire. He drove out to the airport, got into the bomber and dropped a load on top of the Squire. That was before I got there. [laughs] Of slurry...

TM: Woops.

SW: No fire department.

TM: What are you going to do? That's right. Oh my gosh.

SW: I don't whatever came of it or anything. It happened a couple years before I got there.

TM: I never heard that story!

SW: That was his hotel, that's where he was staying. [laughs]

TM: I'll take care of this! I'll just drop a bunch of slurry on you. Hang on. I remember Franz Rotter talking about a story where they did have a fire out there. It was touch and go for a while.

SW: Oh, yea. It's rough because there was no fire department. It was us and that was it. We only had a little, I think at that time, a 200 gallon...

TM: Brush truck kind of thing.

SW: ...truck and a 50 gallon one, too, and that's about it.

TM: Small.

SW: It was really interesting.

TM: Very fun. Anything else you want to add as we're sitting chatting, before we...?

SW: I can't think of anything. That pretty much covers my entire career. [laughs]

TM: Sam Wolfskill, thank you so very, very much for this wonderful interview.

SW: You're quite welcome. It's going to be interesting.

TM: Today is the 11th of July, 2018, it's Wednesday. My name is Tom Martin and this will conclude this Grand Canyon Oral History interview. Thank you Sam.

SW: You're welcome.