Yellowstone Science

A quarterly publication devoted to the natural and cultural resources

Never Running From a Fight:

A Finley Retrospective

Bear Predation on Bison

Savage Christmas

Volume 9 Number 3

The Nature of Change

The familiar adage that the only constant in nature is change is also true of the human institutions charged with preserving nature. As this issue of *Yellowstone Science* goes to press we are in the midst of great change, indeed. A new presidential administration and Secretary of the Interior now direct the future course of our public lands. At the same time, after a distinguished 32-year career with the National Park Service, Superintendent Michael Finley has retired. We will miss his vigilance and his dedication to the protection of Yellowstone's resources. Some of his final thoughts and reflections from a parting interview are included in this issue. We wish him well in his work on global social and environmental issues as president of the Turner Foundation.

Finally, the position of editor of this journal has also changed hands. Sue Consolo-Murphy has moved on to embrace new challenges as the Branch Chief of Cultural Resources for the Yellowstone Center for Resources. I have accepted this job with the utmost respect for those who have preceded me. Paul Schullery, as founding editor from 1991 to 1996, and Sue, from 1996 to 2001, have each established a standard of excellence during their respective tenures in this office that I will endeavor to uphold.

I bring to the position 16 years of experience with the National Park Service in interpretation and resource management, 12 of which have been in Yellowstone. As a young seasonal ranger at Sequoia National Park, I learned from then Superintendent Boyd Evison that good management decisions cannot be made in national parks without good research. When I arrived in Yellowstone in 1984, I read Paul Schullery's *Mountain Time*. In it, he observed, "Had Yellowstone, a hundred years old and thriving, been a person—a grand old lady, to follow the prevailing cliché—she would have been amused at this young ranger with his sudden commitment to defend her honor. And, because at a hundred years of age she had seen many young men transformed by her charms, she could have told me that I had a lot to learn." With these words I felt as if Paul was describing my feelings, too, along with all those who have found themselves passionate about this place.

In the very first issue of *Yellowstone Science*, Paul wrote of helping the public "to celebrate, through the eyes and ears and voices of the researchers themselves, the knowledge and wonder they so often find in this amazing place." In Sue's first issue as editor, she wrote of sharing our curiosity, enthusiasm, and inquisitiveness for the natural world. In this tradition, I reaffirm the commitment of *Yellowstone Science* to providing the best information available on the park's natural and cultural resources, and a bit of the wonder, to our fellow stewards of Yellowstone in the park, in the scientific community, and to the public at large. I welcome any input you may have on how to make it the best publication it can be.

Each day spent in Wonderland reveals that now, just as then, there is still so much to learn.

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On the cover: Superintendent Finley at his desk, February 1997.
Inside cover: The Continental Divide, July 1902. Could a storm at Old Faithful have stranded stagecoaches, beginning Christmas in August? Above: Superintendent Finley making wishes for Yellowstone's future, 2000. NPS photos.

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Yellowstone Science is published quarterly, and submissions are welcome from all investigators conducting formal research in the Yellowstone area. Correspondence should be sent to the Editor, *Yellowstone Science*, Yellowstone Center for Resources, P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190.

Savage Christmas

"…the best of times"

by Leslie J. Quinn

The back of this photo reads: "Walt — O.F. mechanic at this time. Christmas in July?" NPS photo archives, 1954.

The nature of Yellowstone's seasonal operation dictates that most employees, irrespective of the quality of their experience working here, will ultimately head elsewhere in search of career, family, and fortune. Often, for the rest of their lives, some chance lighting, sound, or smell may take them traveling back in time to a summer of bears, geysers, and lasting friendships made in Yellowstone National Park. For many of these former employees, part of their Yellowstone experience included "Savage Christmas," currently celebrated by the "savages" (as Yellowstone concessioner employees are historically known) on August 25. While also celebrated as National Parks Day (the date the National Park Service was created), in Yellowstone it is a day on which you can find Christmas trees trimmed in the hotel lobbies, Christmas dinner served in the concessioner employee dining rooms, and Christmas services celebrated around the park.

But where did Savage Christmas come from? How did it come to be celebrated on August 25? These questions sent me to the Yellowstone Park Archives to peruse what information might be found there. While the information is by no means voluminous, I was to find, ultimately, that (with all apologies to Mr. Dickens) Savage Christmas is a tale of the worst of times and the best of times.

According to Legend

At first, the task seemed an easy one, as all savages think they know how Savage Christmas began. As the legend goes, it was shortly after the turn of the century that one August 24 found a freak blizzard descending upon the Old Faithful area. Visitors at the Old Faithful Inn, marooned by snows too heavy for their stagecoaches to brave, marveled at the weird weather and decided to make the best of their predicament by celebrating rather than lamenting the inclemency. The winter-like aspect brought on by the snow gave someone the idea that it looked like Christmas time, and the celebration became one of caroling, stringing popcorn, and toasting a Merry Christmas to one's fellow travelers. The savages, many of whom returned to Yellowstone in successive summers but were far from one another at Yuletide, were inspired by this impromptu revelry, and so the tradition of Savage Christmas was born and celebrated in subsequent years up to the present.

There are variations on the standard tale, most concerning the year in which the first Savage Christmas took place. Some versions push it back into the late nineteenth century, which would have our resourceful visitors enduring the rigors of the blizzard in the lobby of an Old Faithful Inn that did not exist until 1904. Other versions place it later in the twentieth century, which would have them dependent on a stagecoach that had been retired from the Yellowstone scene years before. (The tale is rarely related using the park's touring cars or visitors' private automobiles.) In yet another rendition, it was a wagon train that was imperiled by the storm, in which case the decision to celebrate Christmas was at least a better one than that adopted by the Donner party under similar circumstances.[1]

This historical confusion notwithstanding, the tradition of Savage Christmas has become firmly entrenched. Each year as the festivities of August 25 approach, flyers are distributed at hotels around the park relating the quaint and charming tale. However, the historical record, while somewhat scant on the subject, does not support the occurrence of such an event.

Furthermore, a number of accounts from former employees provide evidence that Savage Christmas was *not* celebrated at various points in the past. These accounts generally suggest that the celebration was not taking place in the 1930s, or that it was at most just getting off the ground at that time.[2] One long-term concession manager claimed that the story was made up to conceal the actual origin of the holiday, as I'll explain later.

Of course, one cannot say that the snowstorm stranding did not occur merely because there are no records that it *did* occur. But when trying to piece together historical events, even suppositions must

be based upon the evidence at hand—if, indeed, enough evidence exists to support any suppositions or conclusions at all. And based on the evidence, I think it unlikely that the snowstorm stranding ever took place.

"Oh, the Weather Outside is Frightful…"

Weather records have been kept in Yellowstone Park since the 1880s, and details concerning which days of each year had snowfall and how much was present on the ground were kept beginning in 1904, the year Old Faithful Inn opened. The readings were taken at Mammoth Hot Springs, which is a thousand feet lower and will usually receive less snowfall in any given storm than will Old Faithful. Nonetheless, the records can give us an impression of August weather in the first part of the twentieth century.

Between 1887 and 1903, records show the total August snowfall for each year as well as the total August days with snow on the ground as zero. Beginning in 1904 and through 1941, less that 0.1 inches of snow fell on the following dates: August 10, 1907; August 30 and 31, 1908; August 24, 1910; and August 25 and 26, 1933. The only August snow depth of more than a trace during that period was recorded on August 30, 1932, when 1.8 inches of snow fell.[3]

From these scant facts alone, it seems that no snow fell during the stagecoach era that would have snowbound anyone anywhere in the park in August. While the wheels of a stagecoach have no tread, neither do they provide traction: the hooves of the horses drive the vehicle. A few inches of snow (about the most Old Faithful would get when Mammoth gets a trace) would not have bothered the horses, and would have overjoyed the passengers; the chief complaint of stagecoach travel was dust.

Could the 1.8 inches of snow in Mammoth on August 30, 1932, have been enough at Old Faithful to have stopped the fleet of touring cars? Perhaps. But no report of this occurrence has surfaced either. The gearjammers who drove the cars did so through snow of occasionally considerable depths in the early and late part of each season. It is unlikely that a single event in August was enough to stop the touring cars.

What the Record Shows

So how did Savage Christmas come about? Based on the information available, it seems to have evolved largely as a consequence of three unrelated influences: a "Christmas in July" tradition that was observed in Yellowstone and possibly elsewhere in the Rockies; a celebration called *Savage Days* that took place at Old Faithful and probably elsewhere in the park; and the launching of A Christian Ministry in the National Parks.

Irrespective of the month of its observance, the tradition of a summer Christmas in Yellowstone appears to date from the 1930s. Gerry Pesman, who sandwiched a career as an engineer inside two as a park bus driver/tour guide, reported that he heard nothing of a summer Christmas celebration during his first stint here (1926 to 1940), but it was in full swing during his second (1967 to 1975).[4] Of course, if the celebration was just getting started in the 1930s, Gerry may not have heard of it because it was still small.

This possibility is supported by two other sources. In the August 25, 1966, issue of *The Yellowstone Cub*, a newspaper distributed by the park's Recreation Department, was an article titled "Christmas Comes Twice a Year—Once At Home and Once Up Here." After relating the snowstorm tale, former savage Delmar St. J. Sicard, III, pointed out:

> The authenticity of the story may be doubted. Gene Quaw of Bozeman, "Mr. Yellowstone Music," who wrote the official Park song and for many years during the 1920s and 30s led the bands and orchestras in the Park, says that the custom was unknown during his time as a "savage."
>
> Quaw states that there was a "Christmas in July" tradition which was more or less standard through the northern Rockies, but never reached any great proportions in Yellowstone.
>
> In my day as a "savage," during the late '30s, it was a fun-time for us during which we picked one of our number to dress as Santa Claus, the girls chipped in to make ornaments and trimmings, we had Christmas parties in cabins and, above all, it was a chance to get a real feast, welcome change from the daily "savage" fare we ate in the "Zoo," as the employees' cafeteria was dubbed.
>
> It was a chance to cement the ties of friendship that had begun during our summer's employment…to show that "special" girl that she was the "heaver" of your heart…and share the warmth of Christmas with friends from whom you would be long-separated on December 25.[5]

As the parties that Sicard describes taking place in the late 1930s were held in employee cabins, the public at large may have been unaware of them. This theory is supported by a 1977 letter written by late park historian Aubrey L. Haines in response to an inquiry about Savage Christmas:

> I have checked my notes for references to the Yellowstone employee

A parade held by Yellowstone Park Co. Transportation employees—greenery adorns the flat bed truck float. NPS photo archives, 1954.

"Christmas" celebrations, but can find only one reference—a note from Jack Haynes in 1947, "O. F. Savages held annual celebration, 7/25."

I checked the *Superintendent's Annual Reports*, but no result; would suggest you look into the Superintendent's Monthly Report file (start with July, 1947) for months of July following WWII…

The "Christmas" being just employee fun didn't get much official notice. I think it goes away back before the War, as I seem to remember it the summer of 1939 when I was assistant DR [District Ranger] at Old Faithful; but we didn't pay much attention so long as they stayed out of trouble.[6]

Savage Days—and Nights

The fact that Haines suggests checking the Superintendent's Monthly Reports for July, not August, provides further evidence of the role that the "Christmas in July" tradition played in the evolution of the current Savage Christmas. But also significant is his reference to Jack Haynes' note about an "annual celebration" on July 25, 1947. The celebration in question may not have been Christmas-related. According to the August 1, 1947, issue of *Yellowstone's Weekly News*:

> The "savages" (concessionaire employees) at Old Faithful held a gala affair on July 25 known as "Savage Day." Several floats were entered in the long parade up the main street at Old Faithful. The day concluded with a large masquerade ball in the evening.

As with Savage Christmas, the exact origin of Savage Days is lost to antiquity, but its character might be described as the best of times for the employees but the worst of times for park managers and, as such, contributed to the need for something to replace it. The earliest reference to Savage Days in the archives appears in a July 18 letter from Yellowstone Park Company President Huntley Child, Jr., to the managers of Old Faithful Lodge, Old Faithful Cafeteria (a separate structure then), and Old Faithful Tourist Cabins (later to become the Snow Lodge):

> Because service to the guests comes first and because we were subject to severe criticism after the "Savage Day" performance of last year, such a performance must not happen again.
>
> If the employees want to have a parade during the afternoon, between three and five P.M., and a dance at night, provided it does not interfer *(sic)* with service to the guests, it will be all right.
>
> Costumes must not be worn during the time an employee is on duty and employees must wear their regular daily uniform.
>
> Nothing should be said to the guests regarding tips nor in any way should the guests be solicited by the use of kitties, signs, or other devices.[7]

Other references indicate that Savage Days continued as an annual event until at least 1953, but the date seems to have been flexible, occurring from late July to early August.[8] By then, according to the late Trevor Povah of Hamilton Stores, Inc., the festival (and its problems) appears to have become more parkwide, and Superintendent E. B. Rogers finally asked the managers of the three main concessions operations (Yellowstone Park Co., Hamilton General Stores, and Haynes Picture Shops) to put a stop to it. Mr. Povah said that he, Jack Haynes, and Huntley Child, Jr., created the Savage Christmas celebration as a replacement for Savage Days. Mr. Povah also suggested that the story of stagecoaches snowbound at Old Faithful was created at that time so as to tell visitors something better than the truth as to how the celebration came about.[9]

The concessions managers were probably inspired a bit in their decision by a knowledge of the small Christmas in July celebrations that had already been occurring for some years. And it was wisdom to realize that altering the celebration rather than just stopping it was a more likely road to success. The last known reference to Savage Days is for 1953; the first mention in the *Yellowstone Weekly News* of Savage Christmas is in 1955.

Hallelujahs in August

But how did Savage Days and Christmas in July become Savage Christmas in August? Once Savage Days came to an end, there was apparently an interest in changing the annual celebration from July 25 to August 25. For the first few years, the *Weekly News* indicates some employee parties took place on July 25 and others on August 25. But by 1959, the August 25 date had won out, and Savage Christmas has remained on that date ever since.[10]

A likely explanation for the change is that Yellowstone's visitor season was still basically from June through August in the 1950s. By moving the holiday to August 25, it could also serve as an "end of the season" celebration, a fine time for exchanging presents and wishing good cheer to friends new and old. But another organization created in Yellowstone in the 1950s may have also contributed to the interest in delaying the event.

At a program presented on August 7, 1949, the Old Faithful Choral Society was conducted by Warren W. Ost, a bellman at Old Faithful Inn and divinity student at Princeton.[11] Ost saw a need for a ministry for the National Parks in the summer, a time of year when divinity

The "Upper Hamilton Store Queen" float in a Savage Days celebration. NPS photo archives, 1949.

students would be available to serve. He returned to Yellowstone in 1950 with fellow student Donald Bower and launched a "student ministry" that eventually became *A Christian Ministry in the National Parks*, of which Ost was the first director.[12] Whatever other effects the divinity students may have had on Yellowstone, Delmar J. Sicard, III, linked their presence with his observation that the Christmas in July celebration "began to take on a more serious and formal aspect" in the early 1950s.

By 1951, choral groups at Mammoth, Old Faithful, Canyon, and Lake were "working up the Messiah," according to the *Weekly News*. "Plans have now been completed for the presentation of this program in the Yellowstone Park Chapel on Friday, August 17..."[13] This performance of Handel's *Messiah* was to become an annual event, taking place each August until the late 1980s or early 1990s. If the celebration of Christmas in July had still been going strong in the early 1950s when the Messiah tradition began, it would have been logical to have the Messiah performance coincide with it. But with only a short season in which to prepare, an August date for the concert would have been more reasonable, and this may have been a factor in the July-to-August switch. At a time when the restrictions against employees having private automobiles in the park were just starting to be lifted, choir practice would have provided a wholesome way to spend many a summer evening and encourage camaraderie with one's fellow employees. As the culmination of much hard work, a presentation of the *Messiah* would have coincided with a celebration of the holiday of Christmas, with gifts to be given just before packing up for the return to home or school. While the park's season has extended and interest in presenting the *Messiah* has waned, the Savage Christmas survives and is celebrated each year.

A Christmas on Any Other Date Would be as Merry

So it appears that most of what can be offered here is a little historical fact and some quasi-intelligent speculation to go with it. The evidence suggests that a tradition of "Savage Day" in July was replaced by a "Savage Christmas" in July (based on an existing Christmas in July tradition), which was soon replaced by a Savage Christmas in August. It does seem relatively certain that the incident of visitors snowed in at Old Faithful never occurred, and that Savage Christmas owes much of its beginnings to the outrageous antics practiced by those celebrating Savage Days, with a little nudge from the Christian Ministry as well.

But what's really important here? For all the sad commercialization that is a part of the Christmas celebration at the turn of the twenty-first century, many people still consider it one of the best days of the year, whatever their religious faith. We may hang ornaments, string popcorn, and wrap gifts, but hopefully somewhere along the way we also feel humbled and inspired to try to be better people than we are. If Christmas days can do this for us, then we need more of them than we have now anyway. And in Yellowstone Park, we're at least that much ahead of the game, as we celebrate Christmas twice as often as in most places. So, every August 25, have a merry Savage Christmas—surely, the best of times.

Photo courtesy Leslie Quinn.

Leslie J. Quinn holds a B.S. and M.Ed. from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He is the Information Specialist for Amfac Parks & Resorts in Yellowstone National Park, and editor of their in-house publication, the Commentary Newsletter.

Notes:

[1] The author has heard many of these variations related around the park during his tenure here. The suggestion of a wagon train appears in a letter dated 11/21/1977 from Linda J. Miller, secretary to the chief park naturalist, to a Ms. Billie Whelchel Turnbull of Portland, Oregon. Yellowstone National Park Archives (hereafter YNPA) Box H-27, File H-14, "Area and Services History."

[2] Letter from Aubrey L. Haines to a Miss Miller (probably the Linda J. Miller of the previous footnote), dated 11/11/1977, YNPA Box H-27, File H-14, "Area and Services History"; Gerard Pesman, pers. comm. to Lee H. Whittlesey; Delmar St. J. Sicard, III, "Christmas Comes Twice A Year—Once At Home And Once Up Here," *The Yellowstone Cub*, August 25, 1966, YNPA Box YPC-135.

[3] United States Department of Agriculture, Weather Bureau, *Climatological Record for Yellowstone Park, Wyo.*, 1887–1941 (United States Department of Agriculture, no date, no place).

[4] Gerard Pesman to Lee Whittlesey, pers. comm.

[5] Sicard, op. cit.

[6] Haines to Miller, op. cit.

[7] Letter, Child to Managers, YNPA Box C-33, File #900 "Y. P. Co." Part 7.

[8] *Yellowstone's Weekly News*, Volume 1 #5 (August 1, 1947), Volume 2 #30 (July 29, 1948), Volume 4 #30 (July 27, 1950), Yellowstone National Park Library (hereafter YNPL); letter, Richard F. Smith to E. B. Rogers, July 17, 1950, YNPA Box C-32, File 900 General, "Public Utility Operators," Part 5; letter, concessions managers to Old Faithful area employees, July 27, 1953, YNPA Box C-58, File 900-04 "Public Utility Operators' Hours of Labor and Wage of Employees."

[9] Trevor Povah to Leslie J. Quinn, pers. comm. Mr. Povah made no claim to have created the stagecoach story himself, merely that it was created around that time for the purpose.

[10] *Yellowstone's Weekly News*, Volume 9 #35 (September 1, 1955), Volume 10 #30 (July 26, 1956), Volume 10 #35 (August 30, 1956), Volume 12 #29 (July 17, 1958), Volume 12 #30 (July 24, 1958), Volume 12 #34 (August 21, 1958), Volume 13 #33 (August 20, 1959), YNPL; *Loopvine*, Tuesday, July 31, Volume 12 #34 (August 21, 1958), Volume 13 #33 (August 20, 1959), YNPL; *Loopvine*, Tuesday, July 31, 1962, YNPA Box YPC-118.

[11] *Yellowstone's Weekly News*, Volume 3 #32 (August 4, 1949), YNPL.

[12] Program entitled *A Christmas Candlelighting Service*, December 24, 1987, YNPA Box C-18; Aubrey L. Haines, *A History of the Mammoth Chapel*, p. 25.

[13] *Yellowstone's Weekly News*, Volume 4 #31 (August 2, 1951), YNPL.

Grizzly Bear Predation on a Bison Calf

by Nathan Varley

I observed the event through a 40x spotting scope while Bob Landis filmed and Joel Sartore took still photographs. The film footage allowed repeated review, enabling us to clearly describe the incident, which was observed from a vehicle pullout along the Grand Loop Road in Hayden Valley at approximately 7:30 A.M. on June 26, 2000. An adult female grizzly bear accompanied by two cubs-of-the-year was foraging approximately 2.5 km away, on a southwest-facing slope on the northeast side of the Yellowstone River.

The sow was picking around in the sagebrush, foraging on roots and possibly searching for a late elk calf, as there were several elk scattered along the treeline beyond the bears. As the three bears moved downslope toward the river, a cow bison and her calf walked southeast along a bench on its northeast side. No other bison were visible in the area. When the cow and calf approached the base of the slope on which the bears were foraging, they began to trot, the cow in the lead, in what appeared to be an attempt to quickly skirt past and below the bears.

The adult grizzly, approximately 200 meters upslope from the bison, stood up on her hind legs and looked at the cow and calf. Those of us gathered in the pullout briefly discussed the possibility of the bear pursuing these bison, but didn't give it much likelihood. Nevertheless, we were thinking about climbing a nearby hill in order to gain a better vantage when the sow made an unexpected decision. She dropped down to all four legs and ran down the slope in pursuit of the bison, leaving her cubs behind. At this point, the cow changed position and ran behind her calf, keeping herself between it and the bear. In a matter of seconds, the bear had closed the gap and was within a few meters of the fleeing cow and calf.

The chase proceeded west toward the riverbank and reached a swale approximately 1 km from the observers. High sage and this low spot partially obscured our view of what happened at that point. As the bear started to pass the cow, the cow changed direction as if to cut the bear off and confront her. But the bear veered past the cow and continued after the calf. When the three animals emerged from the swale, the calf was running out in front, followed by the bear and then the cow. As the bear drew near the calf, the calf turned and ran in tighter and tighter circles. The chase moved back into the swale again, obscuring the view. It appeared that the bear reached out and swatted the calf down

with its paw. It then made contact again and appeared to bite the calf before jumping out of the way of the charging cow, which lowered its head and appeared to hook at the bear with its horns.

The bear reappeared from the swale, holding the calf in its mouth with the cow chasing it. It stopped, dropped the calf, and stood its ground over the calf while facing the cow. Momentarily, the cow stopped pursuing it. It remained 20–30 meters away, circling and occasionally rushing in and hooking its horns at the bear, but always quickly retreated when the bear did not run. After the cow stopped charging, the bear began to consume the calf. The cow stayed nearby and occasionally nibbled grass. After the bear had been feeding on the calf for approximately 15 minutes, the cow abruptly ran north and did not return.

The bear fed on the calf for about 30 minutes, then spent approximately 10 minutes covering the carcass with dirt, grass, and branches it broke from sagebrush. By this time, her cubs had moved across the slope approximately 300 meters to the east and far up slope from the kill site. The cubs often stood up and looked around. The adult bear then moved directly east up slope to her cubs, and led them up a long draw and into a forested area and out of sight. The adult female grizzly bear and two cubs returned to the carcass at approximately 7:45 P.M., uncovered it, and fed on it at least until 9:30 P.M., when it became too dark to see.

Most bison calves in YNP are born in early May, and calving is generally over by the end of that month, although a few calves are born as late as September. Based on horn size, body size, and coloration, retired Yellowstone biologist Mary Meagher estimated that the bison calf was seven to eight weeks old.

Ungulate meat is one of the most concentrated sources of digestible energy and protein available to grizzly bears in the Yellowstone ecosystem. Grizzly bears obtain ungulate meat primarily through scavenging winter-killed and wolf-killed elk and bison carrion and predation on elk calves. Although predation on elk calves in Yellowstone by both grizzly bears and black bears has been well documented, we are not aware of any records in the literature of bear predation on bison calves. Given the frequency that park employees and visitors observe grizzly bear predation on elk calves, we believe that predation on bison calves is an infrequent, opportunistic event or it would be reported more frequently.

Nathan Varley has lived in Yellowstone Park for more than 20 years. In 1994, he earned a M.S. in Fish and Wildlife Management at Montana State University, studying mountain goat ecology in the Absaroka Range. Since then he has worked with a variety of wildlife species including wolves, moose, and otters. More recently, he has been instrumental in the creation of a biological consulting company which specializes in ecological research, filming, and interpretive enterprises in Yellowstone.

Grizzly Bear Attacks Bull Bison

by Travis Wyman

On September 23, 2000, I responded to a common call of a grizzly bear and her two cubs-of-the-year in front of the Lake Lodge. The bears were digging for pocket gophers and grazing vegetation in the meadow adjacent to this facility. Several different bears use this meadow along the lake shore, not only for its concentration of high quality bear foods (*i.e.*, local cutthroat trout spawning streams, vegetation communities, elk calf populations), but also because an old road bed extends from this part of the Lake area to the Yellowstone River 1.5 miles away, serving as a convenient travel corridor between the two locations. These particular bears had frequented the area all season.

A large, wet snow of about six inches had fallen the previous evening, stranding a number of park visitors due to road closures and poor traveling conditions. Therefore, it was an unusually large group of people for the time of year that gathered to watch the bears grub and dig while waiting for road closures to lift and conditions to improve. I monitored the bears for several hours, interpreting them for visitors and watching to make sure that both bears and people were kept safe.

Around noon, the bears began to follow the old road toward the Fishing Bridge area to the east. As this is a regular pattern for bears frequenting the area, I realized that they would most likely reach the main road between the Lake Village and Fishing Bridge Junction sometime in the next hour or so, and asked several rangers to assist with the bear jam which would probably result. At around 1:00 P.M., the bears showed up at Fishing Bridge Junction. We blocked traffic and allowed them to cross the road safely.

Once across the road, the sow walked into an area where a young adult bull bison was laying under a tree. The bison stood up abruptly, which startled the bears. The sow then stood up on her hind legs, and the cubs followed her example. The bison assumed an alerted posture, with his tail raised and his head lowered, and stood his ground approximately 15 feet away from her. The bear lunged forward as if in a bluff charge, probably in defense of her cubs. This convinced the bison to turn and start trotting away, along a bench directly above the road to Fishing Bridge. The sow engaged in a slow chase, appear-

ing more curious than anything else, while I followed them down the road and watched from below the skyline of the bench.

After about 50 yards, the bison began running at full speed, and the bear gave chase. At the crest of the hill above the Yellowstone River, the bear swiped its right paw across the bison's hindquarters, kicking its back legs out from under it. The bison, now inverted and completely off the ground, struck a tree with its front quarters and slid down a social trail toward the bridge boardwalk. Meanwhile, the sow leapt onto the underside of the bison and skidded down the hill on top of it while attempting to bite at its neck.

When they came to a stop on the boardwalk of the bridge, the bear continued to bite and pull at the bison's neck as the bison tried to get back onto its feet. In spite of the bear's continued attempts to tug and pull it back down to the ground, the bison succeeded in standing up, and then struggled to remain up. It was evident that the bear had inflicted a severe injury to the bison's hindquarters, and the animal soon buckled under its own weight. The bear took advantage of this, jumping onto the bison's back while biting and clawing at it, inflicting a number of wounds around the bison's hump and lower back region. With a quick head motion, however, the bull managed to free itself from the bear and stood up once again. A second injury was evident at this time, with a noticeable fracture of the bison's left front leg. The bison, fighting to continue to stand, fought off the bear with its horns for several minutes.

At one point, the bear stood up and swiped its paws and claws at the bison. The bison reared and fell backward into a ditch adjacent to the boardwalk. The ditch provided the bison with a position of advantage from which it could fend off the bear with its horns during subsequent attacks, and the bison managed to keep the bear at bay for several hours in this way.

Unfortunately, Travis only had a disposable panoramic camera available. Although of poor quality, this photo depicts the adult grizzly attacking the adult bison. NPS photo.

The two cubs observed from the top of the hill during most of the incident, and stood nearby for an additional two hours while we managed crowds and traffic. During this time, the bison struggled to keep upright while bleeding profusely from its back and hindquarters. The bear made several attempts to finish off the bison, but was unsuccessful. The bears then left the area for several minutes and returned, at which point the sow attempted another attack, but was rebuffed once again. The bears left and came back several times in this way, with the time interval increasing between each visit.

After the last occasion, I investigated the bison in the ditch. It was startled by my approach, and attempted to climb out. The bison fell down due to its injuries, however, and was unable to pull itself out of the mud. A decision was made to dispatch the bison, because of its relatively unsafe location in view of the public, and the high potential for a bear–human conflict that could occur during the night while the site was unattended by park staff. The carcass was moved a short distance away so that the bear could return to it during the night.

The next morning, the sow and her two cubs returned to the area where the attack had occurred. The bear behaved aggressively toward several visitors who were trying to get pictures close to the attack site. I was called out again to manage the bears and keep visitors away. The sow behaved in an agitated and aggressive manner as it investigated the site where the bison once was, probably because traces of blood were still present from the dispatching activities the evening before. Personnel agreed that the bear danger was too high for further activity of this nature to continue, and the bear was run off with aversive conditioning measures.

Several days later, a large boar grizzly was seen scavenging on the carcass and eventually consumed most of the remains. A week after that, a large male black bear sat with the carcass for an additional week. The sow and her two cubs were not seen during the remainder of the season.

A necropsy was done on the remaining carcass. The bison was determined to be a bull of about three years of age. It appeared to have been in good health prior to the attack and, although slightly skinny, had no major evident health faults that would have hampered its ability to function normally.

Travis currently works for the NPS in Yellowstone as a biological science technician in the Bear Management Office. He's been in the park since 1974, and worked for the NPS since 1991 in various capacities. He attended San Diego State University where he played baseball for three years before transferring to and graduating from Iowa State University.

Never Running From a Fight

Mike Finley Looks Back on His Park Service Career

While each of Yellowstone's superintendents has left behind some written record, we can only imagine what we might have learned by sitting down for a talk with Philetus Norris before he retired in 1882. To provide a more complete picture of Yellowstone for future generations, a collection of tape-recorded interviews is being assembled. During his last weeks at Yellowstone before leaving to become president of the Turner Foundation in Atlanta, Superintendent Mike Finley met with Lee Whittlesey, the park's archivist, and Charissa Reid, a cultural resource specialist in charge of the oral history program, to share his thoughts for posterity. The following text has been adapted from that transcript.

His First Summers in Yellowstone

Mike Finley (MF): I was born in 1947 in Medford, Oregon. Medford is surrounded by national forests, and I spent a lot of weekends outdoors with my father, hunting and fishing. My mother didn't really like those activities very much, so she took me to San Francisco to see plays and shop. To this day, I feel very comfortable in both worlds, the city and the country.

My first association with a national park was at Crater Lake. I would roll my eyeballs because the family tradition was, if we had company, we had to take them to Crater Lake, and I got carsick on those curvy roads. At that time, the superintendent spent the winters in Medford. The Park Service built the house just a block from where I lived. Later on, my parents bought that house and moved into it.

But I was going to be a dentist. I went to college at what was then Southern Oregon College—it's now Southern Oregon University—and majored in biology. I worked the first two summers for the government, as a firefighter. It was an inter-regional hotshot crew at the Rogue River National Forest, Star Ranger Station, and it was great. I fought fires in Montana, southern California, and Nevada. We flew to fires all over the 11 western states. The problem was I never got to see my girlfriend and never got to date. I got so sick of the word "overtime." I got so sick of dirty socks and underwear, that I thought, "There's got to be a better way to spend a summer!" So I took my Forest Service fire skills test in the early spring of '67, and applied at Glacier, Yellowstone, and Grand Teton. I was offered a job at all three, on their fire crews.

Yellowstone Science (YS): Had you ever been to any of those parks before?

MF: As a boy I'd been through Yellowstone. In about 1957, we drove through the park. I remember bears looking in windshields and the family feeding them out the window when they weren't supposed to. So it was a real pleasure to come back and find that those things had been corrected.

YS: Was it hard to decide which park to go to?

MF: Well, not really, because Yellowstone offered me a position with the helitack crew. I'd flown a lot with the Forest Service on helicopters and I loved it. I flew so much here during the summers of '67 and '68 that I really got to know the backcountry. You could have blindfolded me, opened my eyes, and said, "Where are you?" and I could have told you where you were in Yellowstone. So I reported for duty here in Mammoth for training and lived on the third floor of this administration building, which was then a barracks dormitory.

We all did horse training because we were supposed to pack in to the lookouts. And then we were sent out to the districts. I went to live at West Yellowstone in the helitack shack. Joe Frazier was the subdistrict ranger at the time, a former border patrol officer. Even though we didn't work directly for him, on days when there weren't fires, he was our boss and he assigned us project work. We painted boundary posts up in the Gallatin, the ones that are now white with the international orange cap. We did lots of those.

And we tore down the corral and the barn. We also went out to the Upper Blacktail cabin and tore down the old Army corrals that used to be up there.

YS: Isn't that about the time they started to take notice of the elk pens up there too?

MF: Could have been. I think we did take some pens down. We also tore down the phone line from Bechler to Snake River Ranger Station. In fact, there's probably still some rolls of number nine copper wire that are out there somewhere in the woods, because we didn't get them all packed out.

YS: Was it a big fire year, '67?

MF: I don't think so. One of those years, '67 or '68, was really cold and rainy. We didn't make a lot of overtime and that didn't sit too well. But it was great because we got to fly a lot. At that time, there were no designated campsites in the backcountry. And even though it wasn't kosher, if there was an administrative flight, like the helicopter was going to take the geologist out to do a study, and we had a day off, we could throw our backpacks in the helicopter and the pilot would just set us down somewhere. We had a radio, and then we'd call ranger patrol when we were ready to come out and they'd shuttle us back to West. So I camped all over this backcountry on my days off and fished.

YS: Where was the helicopter based back then?

MF: I was stationed at the Interagency Fire Center at West Yellowstone, Montana. We flew a Bell Model 47. "Crash" Shellinger was the pilot. He crashed several times, I think. His real name was Bob. He had an Airstream trailer behind the ranger station at West. And because he was single at the time he'd bum around with us—he was kind of like our older brother. We'd go to the Stagecoach Bar and Crash would be in there looking for a date, I guess. But Bob, we thought, was a very safe pilot. He was the one who did a lot of the elk herding in the '66–'67 era. One of the reasons they called him Crash is because his carburetor iced up during the winter.

There were three of us on the helitack crew at that time at West. We used to date at the dances at Old Faithful. I had a great scheme worked out. I would stand next to my Volkswagon just beyond the entrance station with an empty gas can. People would automatically stop because I had a gas can. I never had more than two cars pass me by. They'd say, "Run out of gas?" and I'd say, "Yep!" I'd get a ride to Old Faithful and then hitchhike back the same way, with an empty can of gas.

Becoming a "Lifer"

MF: I remember that we used to call the permanents "lifers." My first summer, this one fellow who was one of the fire control aides from Oklahoma said, "You going to be a lifer?" I said, "Hell no! Lifers are screwed up. I'm not going to be a lifer."

YS: Why did you think they were screwed up?

MF: Well, just the bureaucracy. And quite frankly, some of the permanent employees we worked with didn't seem very competent or motivated to us. The second summer, I remember being asked the same question. And as I said, "No," I knew I was being less than truthful—the national park system had captured me.

YS: Dentistry school was fading out of the picture?

MF: Yes. My dentist helped me make my decision. I spent a lot of time in his office—Saturdays, after school and so forth. I was really serious about it. It was like being an intern. He said, "You know, you'd probably make a pretty decent dentist, but that's not where your heart is." So I began applying to other parks, and I was hired as a seasonal at Redwood National Park. That was about the same time I got married. I was trying to avoid service in Vietnam because I didn't believe in the war, but I also didn't believe in going to Canada, so I joined the National Guard. Me and Bill Clinton!

In December of 1968, I went to Fort Lewis, Washington, to do basic training and then advanced infantry training. So I didn't graduate on schedule with my classmates in June of '69. That summer, when I came off active duty, I delivered furniture. I applied at Redwood National Park for the summer of 1970 and went to work there as a fire control aide. They converted me to a ranger in the fall.

YS: Back in those days before formal commissions, did they just give you a gun or did they send you to FLETC?

MF: No, they gave me a gun, a citation book, and a pickup. I didn't wear the gun a lot but it was in the truck. I had traded my orange fire shirt for a gray shirt, so I thought I was making progress. Then I went to graduate school in natural resources and environmental education. In June of 1971, I was hired at Big Bend National Park in my first permanent job as a park technician, GS-4. You know, that pissed me off! It's the same thing that's irritated me about personnel rules ever since. I had been a grunt, a GS-5 seasonal, so why wouldn't the bastards pay me a GS-5 as a permanent, particularly since my position description was a GS-7 with a piece of tape over the grade that said GS-4! I was selected off a bilingual register because my Spanish was pretty good at the time.

YS: In what part of Big Bend were you?

MF: I was at Boquillas. There were two technicians. Both of us lived right down on the Rio Grande River. I think I moved down in June of '71. In about October or November, the superintendent called us into the office and said, "Boys, the Park Service has an Urban Intake Program and I'm going to recommend you both to become rangers, but

Mike with his wife, Lillie, at the dedication of the new Old Faithful Snow Lodge, May 1999. NPS photo.

you've got to have an urban/small park experience. Are you interested?" I said, "Hell, yes! I'm interested." I was interested in a diversity of experiences—that's why I was in Brewster County, Texas! I learned a lot there.

In 1972, I spent three months at the Albright Training Center at Grand Canyon and was then shipped to Washington, D.C., as a GS-5. I remember we couldn't even afford magazines or film. It was so expensive to live there. But the program was rather interesting. I worked at Oxen Hill Children's Farm doing environmental education and shoveling manure. I worked on the Smithsonian Mall, telling 10,000 people where the bathrooms were. I worked with the designers on parking lots and so forth at Wolf Trap. I gave interpretive programs at the D.C. jail and at St. Elizabeth's mental health facility. I learned a lot. It was amazing to me, when they sent me into the D.C. jail, how I was going to talk to these prisoners who were mostly black. This fresh-faced white boy comes walking in.... But I talked about fishing in the national parks. A lot of these guys had grown up fishing, so we had something to talk about.

My first permanent law enforcement training was in Washington, D.C. We had a combined class of park police and rangers that summer. Then in the fall of '72, I received my assignment to Pinnacles National Monument in California. Pinnacles was great—it's just a wonderful spot! I worked on the fire plan and on upgrading the training. I did a lot of rescue training and a lot of climbing on my own.

Finley left Pinnacles in the fall of 1973 to participate in an exchange program that Yosemite had with the California state parks. After nearly a year at Big Basin State Park on the coast north of Santa Cruz, Finley moved with his wife, Lillie, and their two daughters to Yosemite, where he worked first as a park ranger and then as the law enforcement specialist.

Specializing in Law Enforcement

YS: So you got to be the chief criminal investigator for a year.

MF: Yes. At that time, Yosemite had a pretty sophisticated program. We had two FBI agents that were assigned to the park, out of the Merced office. I remember hiring snitches that we paid to work plain clothes. All kinds of drugs were being sold in the park. The most difficult assignment for me was when dope showed up in the Park Service school. I remember having to lead a public meeting about drugs with parents from the Yosemite grade school and having to interview children with their parents about possible drug use.

I was Acting Chief Criminal Investigator until April of '76, when I was offered the job as the law enforcement specialist in the Tetons. I was really thinking that career-wise, I should get out of law enforcement, because Yosemite is pretty specialized. And the Park Service had this huge prejudice about specializing in law enforcement at the time. But I thought, "Doug McLaren and Tom Milligan and these other legends in the Tetons have been occupying these positions for 20 or 25 years. When do you get a chance to work in Grand Teton National Park? I've always wanted to live and work in the Tetons. I'm going to take this job."

My biggest accomplishment there, the one I'm most proud of, was getting concurrent jurisdiction for the park, so that the feds and the state had equal footing. But I have to tell you, I went through an intellectual slump there. I found that the job was too narrow for me. I almost quit the Park Service to enroll in law school. Fortunately, in 1978, the Park Service offered me a job in Ranger Activities in Washington, D.C. While I was there, I did take two night classes at Georgetown, but I decided that I couldn't do both my job and law school justice. I was in charge of service-wide regulations. At Yosemite, we had to prosecute misdemeanors, and I became very familiar with the elements of criminal law and regulations, rules of evidence, and rules of procedure. At the Tetons, I prosecuted all the misdemeanors on behalf of the United States Attorney's Office. So I was really comfortable with doing the regulations job and working with the attorneys in Washington. And then again, I've loved diversity in everything I've done.

After a year and a half, they called me up from the Office of Legislation and said, "How would you like to be a legislative affairs specialist? We'll give you the Pacific Northwest Region, and the Western Region and all the general authorities for the Park Service. You'll work with Congress." So I went over to the Office of Legislation in 1980. I was there for the transition from the Carter Administration to the Reagan Administration.

From Assateague to Alaska

MF: Then in the spring of '81, I was asked by the Superintendent of Assateague Island National Seashore, Dick Tousley, to be the assistant superintendent. Assateague's a great place. We were working on the General Management Plan. And it was about 1982 that Dick transferred to Boston as the Associate Director for Operations. The position was downgraded, and Russ Dickinson, who was Director at the time, appointed me Superintendent of Assateague.

YS: That was your first superintendency?

MF: That was my first superintendency and the first time I found out that my children would get dinged in school because of my decisions. My wife would get challenged in the supermarket because of my decisions. I tried to protect my family, but I steeled myself at that point. I always felt strongly about protecting park resources. I remember standing up in public meetings with all these screaming off-road vehicle advocates who were mad because we were reducing the area open to off-road vehicles and limiting their access on the beach. I said, "We're closing just a small percentage, but we're going to close it. I think it's the right thing to do."

I never planned to be a superintendent. My career goal was always to be a ranger, and just a field ranger. And those are probably some of my most rewarding memories—collecting campground fees in Big Bend National Park and working with the public in Yosemite at the park ranger level. There's that interaction and vicarious enjoyment you get from the public, that feedback of, "Oh, ranger, we did the trip you told us today. Tell us what to do tomorrow." I must have done 150,000 itineraries. But there was a point where, as rewarding as that was, I felt I

wasn't fulfilled intellectually. So, while I initially didn't aspire to be a superintendent, somewhere along the path, as I looked at people who were superintendents—and quite frankly, a lot of them were marginal, if not less than marginal—I wondered how they'd got there. I felt that I could do the job as well as they could, but that I had to play the game. In other words, I had to get the experience and compete to get there. It wasn't just going to happen because I wished for it. And the reason that I sought to be a superintendent was that I wanted to bring about change. As frustrating as it is to sit in that office—because you can't make change as fast as you want, you have to sell a lot of ideas, you can't mandate everything—it's quicker to do it from the superintendent's chair than it is lower in the organization. You can't make those decisions unless you're the superintendent.

Not long after, in the spring of '83, Roger Contor, the Regional Director in Alaska, called me and said, "I want you to come to Alaska as Associate Regional Director for Operations." When I asked my wife, "Well, where should we go next?", she said, "I don't care. There's only two places I never want to go, Alaska and the Everglades." But Lillie and I talked it through and she said, "Well, I guess we'll survive." I remember I was walking on the beach with one of my daughters and the tears were in her eyes, because she had friends in the school at Assateague. I said, "Well, how about moving to Alaska?" She wanted to know if there were boys in Alaska.

Actually, Alaska was good for me because I picked up a lot of new knowledge in concessions, maintenance, planning, interpretation, and mining and minerals. We had a Mining Office in Spokane that was a satellite office. I got into validity claims and all the stuff that goes with mining. We were trying to build up the Park Service presence in Alaska and protect it. Bill Mott came up and we gave him a tour around Alaska.

YS: He was the NPS Director then?

MF: Yes, he was the Director. We were eating caribou steaks in one of the government quarters overlooking Brooks Lake in Katmai National Park, and we got into a pretty strong discussion, close to an argument, over the use of law enforcement, park rangers versus park police. He was advocating park police and I told him he was nuts, because they weren't multiple-skilled, and they didn't have training or experience in natural resources. Anyway, it was one of those kind of tense moments. When he left I thought, "Well, I'm screwed with this Director."

But lo and behold, his assistant called me in the spring of '86 and said, "The Director wants to interview you for the superintendency of the Everglades." Then I had to go to Lillie and say, "Lillie, do you want to go to the Everglades?" Lillie said, "Oh, I'm not sure I want to go." I said, "This is your decision, seriously." So she looked at real estate and came back and said, "I don't want to stay there forever, but for a short time we'll go."

Then I met Bill Mott in Washington National Airport. I said, "I'm here to interview for the Superintendent of the Everglades." And he says, "No you're not, I want you to take the job! I want you to go to the Everglades and save the Florida panther. I want you to raise hell. I want you to do everything you can to protect that park." And I said, "Well, can I talk to my wife first?" He says, "Go ahead and talk to your wife, but I want you to go!"

Taking on the Sugar Daddies

MF: In June of '86, we packed up, drove to the Everglades, and bought a home. Everglades was probably the most interesting intellectual job because we had 13 endangered species in the park. We were trying to balance restoring fire and water cycles. We had a huge political infrastructure, in terms of jurisdictions, counties, state, water management district, and the Corps of Engineers. It was a bureaucratic nightmare. We ended up suing the state and the water management district. That's why I had to leave town, because we sued without the knowledge and consent of the Secretary of Interior or the Attorney General.

YS: Was that a decision by the law enforcement people there?

MF: That was a decision by the Acting U.S. Attorney and me.

YS: Why is it that those other people didn't know?

MF: Because we kept it quiet.

YS: You must have felt strongly about threats to that park's resources.

MF: That park was dying! And no one would take on Big Sugar. Big Sugar was part of the reason that the park was dying. I was the first superintendent that started saying the "S" word. Then I got so that I would say to the press, "This is an industry born of subsidy because it was created by the Corps of Engineers and all the canals, maintained by subsidy through the South Florida Water Management District, and now they want us to subsidize their waste disposal," which was pumping their wastewater, loaded with phosphorous and nitrogen, into the Everglades and destroying the ecosystem. I told the executive director of the water management district, "I'm going to do everything I can to protect this park, including litigation."

YS: So you took them on?

MF: Well, it wasn't me alone. I was working behind the scenes with the Environmental Defense Fund and the Natural Resources Defense Council on filing a lawsuit against the sugar industry, the water management district, and the state. The state and the water management district had the authority and responsibility to protect the Everglades, but they were afraid of Big Sugar. They just didn't have the political will to take it on. I was looking for a partner for a lawsuit. And, of course, a private lawsuit by a conservation group doesn't have the standing of the United States.

But there was a former Democratic state senator by the name of Dexter Lehtinen, who had switched parties and was now a Republican. He had grown up in Homestead and was everybody's hometown hero. Well, I had learned that a lot of protection that I couldn't get done at the federal level, I could get done under state law, so I began working with Dexter. I had testified before committees in Tallahassee. I'd testified before the Governor and cabinet on behalf of the Everglades. And because he was a golden boy in the Republican Party, when the United States Attorney left Miami, Dexter was appointed Acting U.S. Attorney. Previously, I couldn't even get in the door of that office because mostly it was big drugs and so forth.

I'd been thinking about how I could meet this guy in his new office. I'd known him before, but what's my aegis? He's going to be so busy! Then he called me out of the blue and said, "Mike, I want to help you save the Everglades." And I thought, "God, this is great!" I said, "I'm ready!" He said, "Well, we're going to take some risks." We met at the Firehouse Restaurant, which was an old fire station. I'll never forget that lunch. He said, "Let's sue them," meaning the state and the water management district. I said, "How are we going to do that? You need a client in the Interior Department." It was during the Hodel administration at that time, and Reagan was not going to give the authority to sue Sugar. They would never approve that. But Dexter said, "Well, we won't tell them. You have your technical people work with my attorneys. We'll draft a complaint. We'll file suit."

So the United States sued the state of Florida and the South Florida Water Management District in October 1988, just weeks before the national elections. The allegations were that they were destroying federal property by delivering water that was heavily laden with pollutants. We had a contract with the water management district to deliver water at a certain standard, and the State Department of Environmental Regulation was failing to enforce state regulations. We filed the lawsuit on Monday at 4 o'clock in the afternoon so the state couldn't call the Justice Department in Washington and get the suit dismissed.

Then Dexter said to me, "Now at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning we're having a news conference, and I want you there in uniform. The two of us are going to hang together." Well, I called my Regional Director and said, "Bob, we're doing something here that's probably going to rock the boats." He was anxious, but I said, "Just trust me—we need to do this." I called up Mott and he was ecstatic. He said, "Do it! Do it!"

It felt great. There were 24 cameras there that morning for the news conference, and of course everything breaks loose. There's a media bias in favor of the Everglades and that helped. Dexter switched over into Spanish for the Spanish-speaking stations there. He was a good politician, a little bit of a crazy man, a Vietnam vet—lost an eye. And because of him and his willingness to take the risk, we filed that lawsuit.

Then, serendipitously, we didn't even know it, but Thornberg had launched this program to protect our nation's waters.

YS: This was Attorney General Dick Thornberg?

MF: Yes. When the media got a hold of him, they said, "Is this the first example of your program?" And he said, "Well, not really, but it's similar."

YS: He couldn't quite take credit for it?

MF: He couldn't quite take credit for it, but he couldn't deny it when the heat was on. So then there's the election in November. Dexter and I were called before the Justice Department in December. It was raining, and as I closed the umbrella I pinched my finger and I dropped a little blood on the step. Dexter looked down and he said, "If that's all the blood you lose in here today, you'll be lucky."

Mike during his stint in the Everglades. NPS photo.

The outgoing Reagan politicals said, "You guys have violated all the Justice Department rules. Dexter Lehtinen, you'll never be confirmed as the United States Attorney. You'll be lucky if you're not fired. Superintendent Finley, you may be fired also. Before the United States sues a sovereign state, you're supposed to consult the Governor." So after they've been beating up on us for an hour or a little more, Dexter looks down at his watch and says, "Gentlemen, excuse me, I have a luncheon date at the White House." The luncheon had nothing to do with him, it was for his wife, the first Cuban-American congresswoman.

We'd also been working on federal legislation called the Everglades Protection Act, to expand the park boundaries right up to the urban agricultural zone. We arranged for Governor Martinez, a Republican who had been working on it, to discuss it with Hodel. That happened in a van overlooking Florida Bay, where the Governor of Florida said, "Mr. Secretary, how about we expand Everglades National Park?"—Republican to Republican. Hodel said, "Let's do it." And it was ultimately enacted in 1990. We had great support in the Governor's office at that time. That's why I hated to sue the Governor.

Showing the Maps to George Bush, Sr.

MF: The President-elect, George Bush, Sr., had been fishing in the Everglades many times when he was Vice President, but I just sort of ignored it. I had too many other things to do. But after the election, I thought, "Okay, it's important to make contact." So I went to his fishing guide, George Hummel, and I asked, "What do you and George Bush talk about? Is he really concerned about protecting the waters in Florida Bay?" He said, "Yes." I told him, "You need to tell him that his fishing hole's dying." And he asked, "How do I tell him that?" So I came down with all my maps and charts and my nitrate columns. He told me, "I can't remember this. You talk to him." And I said, "The administration's never

going to let me talk to the incoming President." He said, "Well, I'll rig it."

Then Howard Baker, who was Chief of Staff under Reagan in the first term, was bird watching in the Everglades and he calls and says, "Can a former Chief of Staff still get a boat ride from a ranger?" And I said, "Do you have a few minutes to spend with me to talk about this park?" I drove down on Sunday and met him in my office. I said, "You know, Howard, this park's dying. We need political help to get this thing on the radar screen. I need to meet with Bush, because he's got to coordinate this mess down here between the Corps of Engineers, EPA, Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service." He said, "Okay, we'll see what we can do."

Lo and behold, I get this call, "You're supposed to meet the President-elect for lunch on Florida Bay when he's down there fishing." This was in January, just before his inauguration. So we just went up alongside the President's boat. He's fishing with George Hummel. And he said, "I understand we've got some problems, Mike." And I said, "Yeah, but I know you're on vacation." And he said, "Well, come on over here and talk about them." And I said, "I have maps and charts." And he says, "Bring them over." So we sat there for 20 minutes. And then he says, "Well, Mike, what do I need to do?" And I said, "Don't let your Justice Department dismiss that lawsuit and support the park expansion." He said, "Okay."

So anyway, this all came together. The Justice Department wouldn't support the constitutional violation of property clause, and they didn't want it on the record that a court would uphold the Organic Act, but it was settled out of court. Then it was time for me to move to Yosemite because we had irritated a lot of people.

I had more fun with politics in Florida than I did anywhere else, because there was so much connectivity. But I felt I had to leave because I'd sued the people I had to work with on a daily basis. I couldn't then be partner with the South Florida Water Management District. I had violated that trust.

YS: You don't regret it?

MF: No, I don't regret it one bit, but it was probably the closest I've come, in all the things I've done, to losing my job. It was worth it because the park was important. The sugar industry is just too powerful in Florida.

Selling Fudge in Yosemite

YS: So what was it that needed to be done in Yosemite that made you an attractive candidate for that job?

MF: I asked to go to Yosemite and they needed to get me out of Florida. It was kind of serendipitous. There just happened to be a vacancy at Yosemite and my mother had Alzheimer's. I needed to get closer to Oregon.

YS: It wasn't like you had some kind of an agenda there?

MF: No. Yosemite was very difficult for me politically. In Florida, I had the conservation groups all on my side, but at Yosemite the conservation groups were beating up the Park Service for a fudge table in the village store, for renting videos to employees, and for selling pizza. I was testifying against cloud seeding, which was changing the climate over Yosemite, and some bigger issues, such as ozone destroying pines at six to seven thousand feet, but I could never get the interest of the conservationists—Yosemite Restoration Trust, Yosemite Action—to focus on protecting natural resources. They were totally focused on amenity values. I remember saying, "Should I stop selling Hershey bars?" The building was there, it's not like we built a fudge factory. It's only a table.

To the Bay Area and that affinity, Yosemite is the temple, and you don't sell fudge in the temple. They said, "This is such a travesty! They have a video rental!" Well, it was an old service station that we converted. We didn't rent the videos to the public. It was a place for the employees. We were trying to cut down on alcoholism and drugs, give them something to do. You can't hike 24 hours a day!

We did a huge concessions plan for the next contract. I remember people standing up and saying, "They don't need showers. Tear down the Ahwahnee Hotel," which would be like tearing down the Lake Hotel here. You wouldn't build it in today's world, but these buildings have become cultural icons. I had people sing to me in owl suits. There were demonstrations in Yosemite Valley. I went from being an environmental hero with all kinds of awards at the Everglades—the Sierra Club, two awards from Audubon—to being a bad guy in Yosemite. It was amazing to me.

The *San Jose Mercury News* did a survey when I was at Yosemite, They called Park Service managers and said, "Would you like to be Superintendent of Yosemite?" Most of the superintendents said "No." When asked why, they said, "Because it's an impossible job." And Yosemite is difficult, just like Yellowstone's difficult. But Yellowstone is not impossible. You could do certain things.

Taking On the New World Mine

YS: How was it that you came to Yellowstone?

MF: In February of '94, Roger Kennedy, who was then Director of the Park Service, told me he wanted me to come to Washington as Acting Associate Director of Operations. While I was in Washington, John Reynolds, the Deputy Director, asked me if I'd like to go to Alaska as Regional Director. I said, "Well, I don't know. I'll see." I had just left there in '86—same cast of characters, same political issues—and I didn't know if I was ready to go back. He said, "Go ahead and think about it." Then about two weeks later he asked, "How would you like to go to Yellowstone as Superintendent?" I said, "I thought you wanted me to think about Alaska." He says, "Don't think about it anymore," which helped me figure out that Bob Barbee was going to Alaska. That's why the Yellowstone position was open.

I had been following Yellowstone issues, anyway—the vision document and that kind of stuff—but I started my learning curve when I came out in August to meet with Secretary Babbitt for the New World Mine field trip. I remember saying to him, "I want to take on this mine. This is wrong. It's going to be a serious threat to the park." He didn't want me to do it then, because the 1872 mining law was up for amendment in the Congress and he didn't want to upset any negotiations.

YS: He actually thought they were going to do something?

MF: He thought something might happen. So I said, "Well, if that doesn't

happen, I need your support on this." So later on, when the 1872 mining law revision went down in flames, I was already starting to make some statements, but I wasn't as blunt and provocative as I wanted to be. I didn't want my legs cut out from under me by the Park Service Director, and I wanted protection at the top, so I called him and said, "I want to take on the New World Mine as powerfully as I can. I still think it's a great risk to this park." He said, "You have the longest leash in the world." So I began to use my leash.

But then I criticized the EIS process that the Forest Service was doing. Of course, the Forest Service went crazy. They went to the Secretary of Agriculture and he called up Babbitt. Babbitt called me and said, "Mike, a little friendly admonition for you. You've got to lay off the process, and the Forest Service. I promised the Secretary of Agriculture that I would get you to lay off in exchange for an improved process." And I said, "So you're shortening my leash." Babbitt said to me, "Well, we're just taking it up a notch or two."

So we invited the World Heritage committee to come to Yellowstone. We put that together with the Department of the Interior to get one more press event, one more set of issues out there to demonstrate that this mine was a bad thing for the park. But it almost backfired, because it really irritated the Wyoming and Montana delegations. They've all been supporting legislation that would require these designations [World Heritage Site, International Biosphere Reserve] only be done with the approval of Congress. Then the Secretary called me again and said, "I don't want you to play the World Heritage card anymore." I told him, "I've already stopped. I figured it was backfiring on us." And he said, "You're right."

Every year since the hearing we had here on the New World Mine with the World Heritage Committee, there's been a bill introduced by Don Young in Congress called the American Lands Sovereignty Act, to do away with these designations except when approved by Congress. So that was the other leash shortening.

But I have to tell you, I conspired with the Secretary a lot. I was trying to be careful not to damage my NPS relationships too much, but the park was more important than offending some NPS official who didn't have the guts or vision to protect this place. Fortunately, he would call me on something or I would call him. And that's something that happens in Yellowstone and Yosemite and some of the bigger parks, where you can have that direct relationship with the Secretary. You don't abuse it, but you use it wisely.

Superintendent Finley with President Clinton and Mike Clark (former director of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, seated left) during the New World Mine buyout celebration, 1996. NPS photo.

YS: You mean, because it doesn't go through the Director?

MF: It doesn't go through anybody.

Tour Guide for the Clintons

MF: When the Clintons came in 1995, I was supposed to do an aerial tour with them, hike at Canyon, do Old Faithful, fly over the mine, feed the wolves. We were flying in a Blackhawk, one of the presidential helicopters. I started chatting with Hillary and she knew I'd been at Yosemite and started talking to me about issues at Yosemite. She'd either been well-briefed or she's well read. Smart woman!

When we were getting ready to land at Old Faithful where the President was to give a speech out on the balcony, the President said to me, "You know, I don't follow a speech. I just sort of jot down notes and extemporize. What do you think about fees?" I made some suggestions about keeping the fees and he used it.

Then after we took off from Old Faithful for the mine, the pilot said, "Now you'll have to take us there." I could see Silver Gate and Cooke City from where I was sitting, but I had a limited view out the side. I said, "Now go past Cooke City and then take a left and look for the scarring and the mine waste." Well, pretty soon we're out somewhere. I looked out the window and, we're flying out over the wilderness. I don't recognize any features. The pilot's saying, "We're getting low on fuel. We're getting short on time." And I'm going, "Damn! If I blow this and I get lost out here and we don't get to show the President the New World Mine, I'm going to get toasted by everybody, from employees to environmental groups."

So finally I said, "Go back down toward the road." So we went back down there and I said, "Okay now." Then we saw it. You could see the springs—there's like 13 springs that come out of the side, above Miller Creek, that are tributaries. And they were all green. And I remember how important it was to talk about how Miller Creek was a tributary of Soda Butte and how this acid mine drainage would come into Yellowstone. So I said to the President, "Now if you and I are not successful, that won't be a green strip, that'll be rust brown coming down there."

And he told me afterwards, just as we were landing, he put his hand on my knee and he said, "Look, we're going to protect Yellowstone."

We flew to the Rose Creek pen and then went up and fed the wolves. The Secret Service didn't want him in the wolf pen. I said, "Oh, come on. I've had ten percent of the United States Senate in there." The agent said, "Not this President—you're not going to risk this President's life." But Hillary's saying, "Oh, we're going to get to see the wolves." And I said, "Well, the Secret Service doesn't want you to do that. They've said you can't go in the pen. Of course, it's your decision." She said, "Don't worry about it. I'll take care of it." And she did.

Then the second trip he made, I flew up with him from Jackson Hole for the New World Mine ceremony. And again, when we landed, he said, "What's your take on my message on this mine?" I said, "My take is two things. One, you protected Yellowstone National Park, which is the most important thing. But two, you protected private property rights. So you get a little boost there." And he used that.

But those things were all calculated, all part of the strategy to protect Yellowstone. Very, very important. There are a lot of people that deserve credit for the New World Mine victory. But Mike Clark, the former director of the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, is probably one of the most prominent leaders in terms of protecting Yellowstone.

His Yellowstone Agenda

YS: When you came to Yellowstone, did you have a particular agenda? Was there a list of things you needed to take care of?

MF: I've always had my own agenda. I had big picture items I wanted to do. I knew we had to do a bison EIS, because when I arrived at my desk here, I had three or four calls from Governor Racicot. In fact, my first meeting was with him. I'd only been here two weeks and went up and talked to him about bison. That's a different story, how he reneged on the deal and sued me in a sneak attack.

The benefit-sharing agreement for microbes was something on our own initiative that we did here. John Varley and I went to Costa Rica, and we had the initial workshops here. That was something that was extremely important, but it was discretionary. I could have said no, but Varley was persistent about it, and he was right.

YS: Probably the same with the Yellowstone Park Foundation.

MF: Establishing the Foundation was one of my goals. I consider it a large one, not because it's controversial, but because it has the potential to have a huge impact here. I'd seen it at Yosemite. I always thought, "What can I do that's going to outlive my tenure here? What do you leave as a legacy that keeps giving?"

We've set up three non-profits since I've been here. The Foundation was the first one. We created another one with Mike Clark, the Yellowstone Heritage Trust. Mike Clark and I sat at my coffee table and drank beer after the New World Mine victory, because we'd worked very closely together on that, and discussed what to do next. I said, "Well, what's the next greatest threat to the Yellowstone ecosystem?" He said, "Habitat fragmentation." I said, "I agree. What can we do to acquire easements to protect open space in the greater Yellowstone?" He said, "Let's form an institution." We did that. It's now incorporated and has a board. Mike's now the Executive Director and he's raising money.

The third one we signed into existence May 11. It is the Yellowstone Art Trust. It is to facilitate what you see on the walls of the superintendent's conference room, donations of original artwork by major artists—"Imagine Yellowstone," the children's art program, and workshops for the public and so forth. The first one is down at the Old Faithful Inn, by Paco Young. I just happen to think it's important, which is why we did these purchase awards and started a public collection to be displayed in the new Old Faithful Visitor Education Center.

YS: How will that get funded?

MF: Mostly through the sale of art. There are already artists' works for sale on the walls in the Snow Lodge. Amfac has agreed to allow the Yellowstone Art Trust to sell art on consignment, and Amfac will get a percentage of the sale. A gallery takes 50 percent, so if you have the Trust taking 10 and Amfac taking 10, that's better than selling a painting at a gallery. We'll have the Art Activity Center, which is now Hamilton's Photo Shop, that will be moved, probably over by the lodge, and assigned to the Yellowstone Art Trust. It will be for art education, and there'll be art supplies and artworks for sale. We'll have more paintings made into notecards, and a percentage of those sales will go to run the trust.

YS: What was the genesis of that?

MF: We have all these free prints in these offices because of Laurie Simms, former owner of Mill Pond Press, who had given me prints in Anchorage. We framed them, but the prints were free. She gave me free prints in Yosemite. So when I came to Yellowstone and looked around, I said, "You know, we can do better than this." I called Laurie and she sent boxes of prints which we farmed out to various offices around the park. Then we wanted to get original artwork. Right now we're sitting here and I'm looking at seven original art pieces that we bought with Chip Davis money to start a public collection. The Old Faithful Visitor Education Center plan has 2,000 square feet set aside for art.

I get the criticism that I'm never in the park, but you don't start a foundation by staying in the park. You don't raise funds for an Old Faithful Visitor Center by not going to New York City and meeting with Canon and Unilever and Sony. If you believe in the goal, which is to sustain the foundation and help it grow and become more credible, and you believe in the Old Faithful Visitor Education Center, that doesn't happen by sitting in your office in Yellowstone. You can't be in Idaho Falls or Cody with the chamber of commerce, be fundraising, be in the backcountry meeting with the trail crew. There's just not enough time to do all those things. Every once in a while, for example, I got down to Lake to talk to the troops and look at the dock. I don't get to do those things as much as I want. And those are the really fun things.

Digging for Dollars

YS: You've really worked hard on getting the word out that the infrastructure in parks is really in need of more money. If you're looking at this legacy, how do you feel about that particular issue?

MF: The improvement of infrastructure was a need here. We diverted a lot of fee money to the roads. The roads are better than they were four years ago. I think everyone will acknowledge that. We worked with the Senate to get the money doubled for the national program, which also got Yellowstone's share doubled. We've got a 19-year program now to get the roads done. The infrastructure will be fine over time with continued funding.

I've always kept my mind on various levels of opportunities, not just all big ones. If I feel good about this job, it's because we have a bus shuttling employees now to Livingston. I got the three surplus busses by signing an agreement with INEEL. It doesn't benefit the park, park-wide, except for field trips, but it's the right thing to do. I feel good about some of the more moderate issues, like the two new fourplexes at the East Entrance. I feel really good about the new fourplex at the Northeast Entrance. I feel good about the fourplex at Canyon. I allocated $220,000 to build two garages at West Yellowstone for interior employees. I feel good about that. We set aside $325,000 of coin money [raised from the sale of commemorative coins produced for Yellowstone's 125th anniversary] to buy part of the Davis Collection, one of the best and most complete collections of historic Yellowstone-related material known to exist. I feel good about that. Those are mid-range issues.

My biggest concern—and Park Service-wide, not just in Yellowstone—is that the operating budgets are deficient. Right now, we can't afford to fill 14 percent of our permanent positions. That's shameful. You have a President up there saying, "We took care of our budget and now we're going to give everyone a tax break." He didn't take care of this budget or any other park's. That's my biggest disappointment.

The Wyoming delegation has not been particularly supportive in terms of policy issues. They didn't support wolf reintroduction. They don't support the snowmobile ban. But when it comes to the road program, Senator Thomas has been very supportive. When it comes to the Old Faithful sewage treatment plant, Barbara Cubin's been very supportive. Mike Enzi's staff supported the buyout of the CUT—the Royal Teton Ranch, located north of Gardiner, Montana, that was previously owned by the Church Universal and Triumphant. But other than that, he has not been particularly helpful in Yellowstone. Max Baucus has not been supportive. Representative Hill was not supportive at all. Senator Burns has been awful. He has just been at philosophical odds with us. He doesn't think that I run the ranch right, I'm not a very good rancher. I keep reminding Conrad this is not a ranch.

Receiving a $300,000 check from Canon, U.S.A., in 1997. Pictured (left to right) are John Varley, YCR Director; Keith Paglen of Canon; Marv Jensen, Assistant Superintendent; Mike Finley; and Wilke Nelson of the National Park Foundation. NPS photo.

YS: What do you see for the future at Yellowstone?

MF: A lot of it depends on funding, which is why I spent some time doing *The State of the Park* report and the Business Plan. It will say, "Here are the resources we need based on a workload analysis to do the job up to a standard." It's got a high cost. Sure, it's got a sticker shock, an extra $70 million. So what! The University of Wyoming's budget is almost $250 million a year. It takes about $296 million a year to run one aircraft carrier.

As a society we have accepted costs for hospitals and universities at hundreds of millions of dollars—for managing smaller geographic areas, with fewer functions, and not the multiple disciplines we have to support here. The parks have been chronically under-funded for years, particularly Yellowstone. So to say you have a standard, and here's where we derived that standard from, and here's what it costs to run this right. You can see the jeopardy of not running it right. You don't get a $700 million backlog if you have a preventive maintenance budget. In natural resources, if we had the money to do inventory and monitoring, we could have done some mitigation earlier. We might have found lake trout much earlier if we had been doing more extensive monitoring in Yellowstone Lake. We just did the minimum that we've done every September for so many years.

That's a regret I have, that I was not able to communicate this and increase the operating budget here. We did it one year when we closed Norris Campground. The next year we got a $1.5 million budget increase. Isn't it a shame, though, that you have to resort to a closure?

YS: I recall your closing the Dunraven Road or threatening to close the Old Faithful Visitor Center or Grant Village. Do you find those things tend to work?

MF: You have to do it. The way we got the roads program was by closing the Dunraven Road. That was legitimate because there was safety at risk there. Some

of the road crew named that one section of potholes Beirut, after Beirut, Lebanon. They couldn't keep it patched. I saw a pickup one afternoon actually hit those holes and shimmy across into the other lane. If there'd have been a car there, you'd have had a head-on collision.

YS: So why do you think there hasn't been the impact that you wanted on the operating budget?

MF: Maybe this administration will look to doing more than just bricks and mortar, which is what they're doing now with the $5 billion that the President has pledged, because that's always safe. That's what's so disheartening about it. The National Parks and Conservation Association is meeting with the Secretary saying, "You need money for research and interpreters and all the other aspects of the parks." But there's no political risk involved in fixing things up. It's really passed through to a lot of contractors, so it's pork barrel that's going to the roofer in Livingston and the road guy from Casper. It's a way to say you're doing something for the parks, which you are and you can't deny that these things need to be done, but it's really just a pass through to the local economy. You're not hiring federal employees, which a lot of administrations don't want to do. It's an easy way out, which is why they chose it, in my view. That's why the Watt administration chose PRIP when they came in, the Park Restoration and Improvement Program. It was all about improving infrastructure too, radio towers, bridges, and sewage treatment plants. This is all safe stuff. It doesn't get you crosswise with any of your constituency groups. Just think, if we did research we might find that we have to do something. We might have to act to protect the park.

Moving On to the Turner Foundation

YS: Why did you decide to leave Yellowstone now? Was it the change in administration? Was becoming President at the Turner Foundation just the perfect job?

MF: I love the parks and the national park system, but I have an ambivalent feeling toward the Park Service. I've always had this love-hate relationship. The parks themselves, most of their employees, have never disappointed me. The National Park Service has disappointed me many times in its decision not to protect park resources and in its lack of vision. That's just the nature of bureaucracy and the changes in personality and leadership, or lack of it, in the organization. I found I spent more time fighting internal paperwork, fighting people inside the organization, than I did fighting outside. Over these years it's become worse and I think my peers would agree with me. That's a terrible shame.

So, after 32 years, it's time to move on. I had always said that I wanted a second career for some portion of time. This is the fourth job Ted offered me. He wanted me to run the Vermejo Park Ranch after he bought it, 580,000 acres, and Mike Phillips to reintroduce the Mexican wolf. Neither of us was ready to move down there at that time. Ted then offered me the job of running some other aspects of his operation. I really thought about that, but the timing was wrong. There were too many things I really wanted to finish here at that point, He recently talked to me about being a vice president of the U.N. Foundation, but then this came along. It's the perfect job for me at this stage of my life. The programs that the Turner Foundation supports—clean water and clean air, alternative energy, mass transit, population—all these issues are important to me personally and appeal to me intellectually. I believe they're critical to society.

The Turner Foundation supports a lot of grassroots groups. For example, I met with the Gallatin Valley Land Trust just the other morning. The Turner Foundation gives them $10,000 a year. That land trust is doing great things to help preserve Gallatin Valley. The Turner Foundation just gave the Yellowstone Park Foundation $40,000. They gave the League of Conservation Voters $15 million for the education fund for this last election, and Planned Parenthood got $7.5 million. He wants me to grow the program into new areas. Ultimately, the Foundation will be endowed with over six billion dollars.

YS: Do you have any political aspirations or anything, beyond the Turner Foundation?

MF: When I get back to Oregon I might want to be on a fish and game commission or something. I'm not going to run for office.

YS: So you plan to retire in Oregon?

MF: Yes, we own a home in Oregon that's rented out right now. We'll retire to Oregon. I don't know how long I'll be at the Turner Foundation. I'll do it as long as I'm interested and having fun.

Partners and Neighbors

YS: Does it worry you, who they're going to put in your job when you leave?

MF: It does. If I wasn't uncomfortable about this administration and if I thought they were just going to bring in another good, solid Park Service professional, I wouldn't have any regrets about leaving.

Mike (front right) with Ted Turner (standing second to right) on a wolf-watching visit, June 1995. Photo courtesy Douglas Smith.

We all emphasize certain programs in our careers. What you do as a manager is try to sustain the good things that someone else has done and build off of that. I hope the superintendents who come after me will sustain the arts program, whether they like the arts or not.

I worry because some of the local neighbors said to the politicians that I wasn't a very good neighbor, I didn't get along well, and that they need someone who can partner up and form more associations and get along better with the gateway communities. Well, we have all kinds of partnerships. We formed a museum association partnership with a number of the museums around the region. It was my idea to do that, to meet with the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, the Yellowstone Art Museum, the National Museum of Wildlife Art, and the Museum of the Rockies. I think I counted up 35 partnerships that we have here, from the Northern Range Working Group to the Trumpeter Swan Working Group. We've been partnering all over the place in this park and have done so for years.

Conrad Burns drives me crazy when he says we're not a good neighbor. We do EMS in Cooke City. We haul their garbage. We plow their highway for them. We paved the runway for the Gardiner airport. We sent our dump trucks down twice for flooding in Livingston, at no cost to them. So when they say that we're not a very good neighbor and we don't partner, it's because we won't do what a gateway community wants, irrespective of the damage to the park resources or park experience.

I've found there are wonderful men and women in Cody, Jackson, West Yellowstone, and Livingston who care about the park. But often they don't have the economic power to make the policy calls that some of these leading snowmobile rental vendors or others have. I have had several meetings in West Yellowstone where 20 or 25 people who own businesses can only meet with me quietly, because they'll either be shunned or lose business if they're seen taking the park's side. Craig and Jackie Mathews are wonderful people and they've stepped outside the box, but they've suffered business-wise, as owners of Blue Ribbon Flies in West Yellowstone. Several people told me, "I'll lose my insurance contract and I'll go out of business, but I want you to know I think you are right and we need to protect the park." But they have to say that with the shades drawn, or economically they're punished. Shunning is alive and well. And greed is alive and well. And so it's really the loudmouth, greedy entrepreneurs who look at Yellowstone only as a commodity that I find most offensive and that I've stood up against. That resistance will need to continue in the future.

So anyway, I'm sure they're going to say, "We want someone who will get along better with the gateway communities." Does that mean roll over? The answer is "yes." If I had any trepidation about leaving here, it's that I've never run from a fight. And that's the only thing that gives me second thoughts—am I running from a fight?

YS: With the new administration?

MF: Yes—or any user group who views parks as commodities to be exploited by a few to the detriment of the many. But actually I'm running to a fight, because I'm going to a place with more allies and more money. I am going to make the protection of natural resources my highest priority. And we will be there every time the enemies of conservation try to engage in a rollback of environmental safeguards or implement some other program that's contrary to law, policy, good sense, or the long-term protection of natural resources.

Mike (back right), Bruce Babbitt (front right), and Mollie Beattie (front middle) carry in the first wolf, 1995. NPS photo.

In June 2001, the NPS announced the recipients of the six Natural Resource Stewardship and Science Awards for 2000. The Director's Award for Superintendent of the Year for Natural Resource Stewardship was awarded to Mike Finley.

"Mike's leadership has resulted in making progress in several complex controversial resource issues. Under Mike's stewardship, the gray wolf (Canis lupus) *has been successfully reintroduced into the park. He has championed the protection of park resources in a joint bison management plan with the State of Montana and the Department of Agriculture, and in the Record of Decision for Winter Use in Yellowstone, issued in November 2000. Finally, Mike was instrumental in leading efforts to conserve the Yellowstone cutthroat trout. Mr. Finley has shown strong support for scientific research and professional resource management. He has recognized the importance of good information in decision-making, insisting that management decisions be science-based. Under his stewardship challenging issues have been addressed and resolved in the park, in the arena of public opinion, and in the courtroom."*

The Dot Island Bear

On May 26, park rangers at the West Entrance received a report from the Edgerton family of West Yellowstone that they had observed a small grizzly bear on the shore of Dot Island. Park staff investigated the island on May 29 and observed fresh yearling grizzly tracks along the island's perimeter as well as an old set of adult-size tracks and some adult-size scats, indicating that an adult female had probably been there with the yearling at one time.

On May 30, a scent-lure station with two remote cameras was set up to determine if an adult bear was still on the island. More fresh yearling tracks were observed on the beach, but there was no fresh sign of an adult bear. By June 1, there were no pictures and no fresh tracks of the adult, just fresh yearling grizzly tracks around the island's perimeter again.

A trap was transported to the island and baited. By the following morning the yearling had been captured. The island was thoroughly searched for the adult bear or her remains. Although numerous adult-size scats and day-beds were found, the mother bear was obviously gone. Because the grizzly is a threatened species and the yearling's chances of survival on the island were nil, park staff relocated the bear to the mainland.

The bears had been grazing graminoids, ripping open logs for insects, digging truffles, and eating cow-parsnip on the island. A den was also found, indicating that the bears had probably come across on the ice in mid- to late December and denned for the winter. After emerging from the den, probably just shortly before or after the ice had gone out (May 14), the bears had remained on the island eating what little vegetation was available. As food became scarce, the adult female probably swam back to the mainland. The yearling may have been afraid to make the 1.5-mile swim, and so was abandoned by its mother. An adult female grizzly accompanied by one yearling was observed on the mainland west of Dot Island a few days prior to the capture operation.

The Dot Island bear. Photo courtesy of the Edgerton family.

Bison Symposium

A special symposium titled "Conservation Management of Bison in Northern Landscapes: Advances in Ecology and Epidemiology" was held as part of this year's Wildlife Society meetings, held September 24–29 in Reno, Nevada. The organizers were Peter J.P. Gogan and Edward M. Olexa, both of the USGS Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center; Francois Messier, University of Saskatchewan; Mietek Kolipinski and John A. Mack, both of the National Park Service. Sponsors were the USGS, the NPS, and TWS International Wildlife Management Working Group.

Topics included:

- Yellowstone bison distribution and abundance in the early historical period;
- The impacts of management actions on the demographics of Yellowstone bison;
- Epidemiology of brucellosis in bison in the Greater Yellowstone Area;
- Adaptive risk management for bison conservation in Yellowstone;
- Bison habitat selection at the landscape level in Yellowstone; and
- Bison, elk, vegetation, and climate—interactions and dynamics on the Yellowstone landscape.

Publications Available

If you would like a copy of the three-volume bison EIS, the summary, or the CD-ROM, please contact Becky Anthony at (307) 344-2223.

Copies of the proceedings from the fifth biennial scientific conference, "Exotic Organisms in Greater Yellowstone: Native Biodiversity Under Seige," are available in the Yellowstone Research Library and Archives, located in the basement of the Albright Visitor Center, and in various university libraries. The proceedings were published in the *Western North American Naturalist* volume 61(3), July 2001.

Volcano Observatory Established

To strengthen the long-term monitoring of volcanic and earthquake unrest in the Yellowstone region, the U.S. Geological Survey, Yellowstone National Park, and the University of Utah have entered into an agreement to establish the Yellowstone Volcano Observatory (YVO). This agreement provides for improved collaborative study and monitoring of active geologic processes and hazards of the Yellowstone volcanic field and caldera, site of the largest and most diverse collection of natural hot springs, mud pots, and steam vents in the world.

YVO operations will be based from existing facilities at the USGS, the University of Utah, and Yellowstone. The new observatory is modeled after other USGS volcano observatories in Hawaii, Alaska, California, and the Pacific Northwest. The observatories employ a variety of ground-based instruments and satellite data to monitor active and restless volcanoes, and conduct a variety of studies to understand their eruptive and seismic histories and potential hazards. Together, the five observatories monitor 43 of the 70 or so potentially hazardous volcanoes in the U.S. They are operated under the auspices of the USGS Volcano Hazards Program.

The Yellowstone area encompasses the largest active magmatic system in North America. The spectacular geysers, boil-

ing hot springs, and mud pots that have made Yellowstone famous owe their existence to volcanic activity affecting the region during the past two million years.

Information is available online at:

- *http://volcanoes.usgs.gov/yvo/*
- *www.nps.gov/yell/*
- *www.seis.utah.edu/yvo*
- *www.mines.utah.edu/~rbsmith/RESEARCH/UUGPS.html*

Parks to Prepare Supplemental EIS for Winter Use

The controversy over winter use in Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway continues. On January 22, 2001, following a rigorous effort to complete the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and a Record of Decision (ROD), a final rule was published and became effective April 22, 2001. The rule required the National Park Service (NPS) to implement portions of the ROD for winter use in the three park areas. It provides for interim actions to be implemented to reduce the impacts of snowmobile use during the 2002–2003 winter use season and, effective the end of the 2002–2003 winter use season, allows for oversnow motorized recreation access by NPS-managed snowcoach only, with limited exceptions for snowmobile access to other public and private lands adjacent to or within Grand Teton National Park.

The ROD followed many years of study to determine what kind of winter activities are appropriate for the three parks. Studies done for the EIS showed that snowmobile use in the three parks so adversely affects air quality, wildlife, natural soundscapes, and the enjoyment of other visitors that park resources and values are impaired. That is contrary to the mandate of the NPS Organic Act that parks be left "unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." Executive Orders issued by Presidents Nixon and Carter and the Service's own regulations on snowmobile use also prohibit it in national parks where it disturbs wildlife, damages park resources, or is inconsistent with the park's natural, cultural, scenic, and aesthetic values; safety considerations; or management objectives. According to the ROD, the decision to phase out most snowmobile use by the winter of 2003–2004 in favor of multi-passenger snowcoaches best meets the legal mandates and protects park resources while offering winter visitors a range of experiences. The phase-in period would help mitigate economic impacts to surrounding communities.

On February 16, 2001, the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association and other organizations filed a lawsuit stating that the decision to ban snowmobiles was "arbitrary and capricious" as well as being "politically motivated." They also claimed that the NPS "disregarded and misinterpreted critical facts and science." The lawsuit asks that the decision to close the park units to snowmobiles, as reflected in the FEIS, ROD, and the final rule, be set aside.

A settlement agreement between the Department of the Interior, Department of Justice, and the plaintiffs was reached on June 29, 2001, in which the NPS is required to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) by January 21, 2002. By March 15, 2002, the NPS will make available printed copies of the Draft SEIS and will issue proposed rules, if applicable. A 60-day comment period on the Draft SEIS will commence on March 15, 2002. The NPS will issue a final SEIS on or before October 15, 2002. A ROD will be issued and a final regulation promulgated, if applicable, on or before November 15, 2002. Should the outcome of the process be a new decision and final rule, the final rule would be in effect on December 15, 2002.

Under the terms of the settlement agreement, the NPS will act as lead agency to prepare the SEIS. The states of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming; Teton and Park counties, Wyoming; Fremont County, Idaho; Park and Gallatin counties, Montana; and the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are cooperating agencies in the process. Recently, the NPS and cooperating agencies met to clarify the SEIS schedule, roles, and responsibilities, and to solicit and document ideas and proposals from the cooperating agencies for the alternative to be analyzed in the SEIS document. Meetings with the cooperators will continue throughout the process.

NPS Launches Review of Benefits-Sharing Agreements

An environmental assessment (EA) has begun regarding the potential impacts of implementing "benefits-sharing agreements." Benefits-sharing usually refers to agreements between researchers and their institutions or companies and the National Park Service that return benefits to parks when the results of research lead to the development of commercially valuable applications. The NPS currently facilitates research in the parks, but if an approved research project results in a valuable discovery, no direct benefits are returned to the parks. If implemented, benefits-sharing would only apply to research results from projects permitted under NPS research permit regulations (36 CFR 1.6 and 2.5). Additional regulations prohibit harvesting or commercial use of park resources; thus, benefits-sharing agreements would not permit these activities.

Additional information about this effort is available online at: *www.nature.nps.gov/benefitssharing*. You may contact the team at BenefitsEA@nps.gov or at NPS Benefits-Sharing Team, P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190.

Register for the Sixth Biennial Scientific Conference on the GYE

For more information on the conference, "Yellowstone Lake: Hotbed of Chaos or Reservoir of Resilience?", contact Kevin Schneider at (307) 344-2233 or kevin_schneider@nps.gov. For registration only, contact Tami Whittlesey in the AmFac Reservations Department at (307) 344-5518 or tami@travelyellowstone.com. Conference information is also available at *www.nps.gov/yell/technical/conference.htm.*