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Teresa Ford
October 29, 2013

Interview conducted by Lu Ann Jones
Transcribed by Teresa Bergen
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Oral History Project

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[START OF TRACK 1]

Lu Ann Jones: —get this started. And what I usually do is I just do an introduction to the recording. This is Lu Ann Jones. And today is October 29, 2013. We're in Saint Louis, Missouri. And this interview is part of the Association of National Park Rangers Oral History Project. We're at the Ranger Rendezvous. And this is wav file 023 on my recorder. So, Teresa, do you want to give me a brief introduction and maybe just tell me, introduce yourself just in terms of when you were born and where you were born. And just a little bit of background on you here.

Teresa Ford: My name is Teresa Ford. That's my married name. I'm from Grand Junction, Colorado. I'm the second oldest of six children. My dad was an American history teacher, and my mom was a stay-at-home mom of the six kids. They instilled in us a great passion for education. We knew, even though we had little money, that each one of us would go to college and earn a degree and find something to do that hopefully could become our passion. I finally discovered mine, and it was journalism. Writing, interviewing and publications.

Lu Ann Jones: I do have a great bio on you on some of your early journalism. But you were just talking about one of your particular features that you liked a lot, the Choice People. So why don't you talk about that a little bit. We'll focus primarily on ANPR, clearly, but just a little bit of highlights in terms of the journalism background that you brought to the table when you took over *Ranger* magazine.

Teresa Ford: Sure. It was the early 1980s when I was working as a newspaper reporter in Fort Collins, Colorado. My husband was a Ph.D. candidate in toxicology at Colorado State University. So, I was the sole wage earner, and it was before our children were born. But I did get a job at the newspaper there. It became intense and really fun, too. After covering city hall and doing general assignment reporting, the kickoff of the Colorado Lottery and all kinds of crazy news stories that happened, fires, etcetera, my editors and I got together to think what kind of feature we could start. Fort Collins is called the Choice City, and so we decided to call this new feature Choice People. I was the only one who did it at the paper. It ran every Monday for, I think I was there four years. And what we did is go out and find interesting people in the community, which is easy to do if you have your ear to the sidewalk and you can find fascinating people in every walk of life. But the university being there also made it even more stimulating. And we requested, though we didn't have Facebook or Twitter, any of that then, from readers to give us ideas. So, I had a whole notebook of ideas that I could keep on doing forever.

Lu Ann Jones: So, you were saying that you won an award with three of those. Who were the three that were the award winners?

- Teresa Ford: One was a shoeshine man. I think his name was Pete Bustos. A really interesting character. I didn't go back and review old articles to remember details about him. You might know more about that. But he was in downtown Fort Collins in a little barber shop with the post outside that rotated with the red, white, and blue. And he was really honored and a very fun interview to get.
- Teresa Ford: Another one was a I think, 99-year-old woman sitting on her rocking chair on her porch in Fort Collins and talking about the good old days, pioneer life, almost. I heard later, just a few years after the interview, that she had died. So, we were glad to get some of her history before that sweet lady [died]. I always took a photographer with me to get color photos that ran on the front page on every Monday.
- Teresa Ford: The third person was an astronomer at CSU, and you might call him the mad scientist who had really fun things to talk about and intrigue his audience.
- Lu Ann Jones: Well, that sounds like a lot of fun. And four years, I mean, even though there were a lot of ideas, that's a long time to keep a feature going regularly.
- Teresa Ford: It is. And I can't say as I ever got burnt out on it or wondered where the next interview would come from, but covering the regular city hall beat at the same time, but always making time for a Monday feature and rotating with other staff members on a Sunday special, we called them, which would be a more in-depth feature with many parts to it, a newspaper can be exhausting to all of the staff people.
- Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. Absolutely. Well how did you decide to apply for the job of *The Ranger* editor? How did that come about?
- Teresa Ford: Let me back up just a little bit.
- Lu Ann Jones: Okay.
- Teresa Ford: So, I worked at the newspaper for four years. We had then decided to move closer to Denver to be closer to my husband's work. We had both been commuting opposite directions. Our daughter was a toddler. I took a job with Jefferson County Open Space, as the public information specialist, which to me was very unusual to go to the quote "other side." So, I was in newspaper work for many years, and then I go to a government agency and work there for maybe four years. Both of our children were born, well, the second one was born when I was there at the Jeff Co Open Space.
- Teresa Ford: Which got me into the natural resource end of things. I also started doing some work with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, fish hatchery publications. I can't remember. I didn't review all the things I used to do.
- Lu Ann Jones: That's okay.

- Teresa Ford: One thing led to another. By that time, 1990, our daughter started kindergarten. And that's where I met a few parents. My daughter wanted to be in Brownie Scouts. I had never been a Brownie. Never been in Scouts. My parents couldn't afford it, nor had the time to let us do that. But it was interesting, and I asked Melissa, "Do you want to be a Brownie?" And of course, she did. I am a firm believer that if your child or you want to do something, you should help volunteer for the organization, not let someone else do it.
- Teresa Ford: So, I agreed to be a Brownie co-leader. And the other person – other, there were three of us together, but the other person was a National Park Service employee, Chris Shaver [phonetic], head of the air quality division in Denver. She was a neighbor, also. I didn't know her until our children, our daughters were in school together.
- Teresa Ford: Her husband [Dave] at the time was the head of Geologic Resources Division, and he's the one who saw the ad in *Ranger* magazine looking for a new editor. Bill Halainen had been the editor for years, and he was ready to give it up.
- Teresa Ford: So, Dave came to me with this little announcement and said, "I don't really know what you do, but this might be something you're interested in."
- Teresa Ford: And I decided, yes, it was, and gave up the Jeff Co Open Space job. I took the retirement money that is put in and invested in computer, printer, the whole thing, of my own. I bought the software, taught myself how to do desktop publishing, starting with the old Adobe PageMaker, leading up to all of its versions until it's Adobe InDesign now. And that's how I create *Ranger* magazine.
- Lu Ann Jones: So, you're doing all the layout. Everything.
- Teresa Ford: Mm hmm. I'm the publisher, also. And design, layout.
- Lu Ann Jones: Wow. So, was there an application process? Or what did they want to know from the person who might be editing their magazine?
- Teresa Ford: I think they had been announcing it for many issues, and no one was coming forward. So, they were out recruiting. That's how I heard about it from Dave Shaver, and he informed the powers that be within the organization that he had found a possible person to do this.
- Teresa Ford: They were meeting in Denver – I wonder if it was the George Wright Society, possibly, I don't even know – at a downtown hotel. It was Ken Mabery [phonetic]. I can't remember who interviewed me. Pat [Tolle] – that's a woman – and one other person. And we just clicked, and they offered it to me. So, I think it was because they hadn't found anybody for so many months. Bill needed to give it up, and I fit the bill. I gave them my resume, of course. But they knew I could do it.

- Lu Ann Jones: When you looked at it, what kinds of ideas did you have for things that you wanted to stay the same, to perhaps bring changes to the publication, those kinds of ideas that you brought to the table?
- Teresa Ford: Bill Halainen would readily admit that he had not kept pace with technology. I had educated myself with it, although of course our newspaper was owned by Gannett Company and we printed *USA Today* for the western region. Had beautiful color presses. We were on computers for a long time. So, I knew how to do all of the word processing, etcetera.
- Teresa Ford: He did it the old-fashioned way and sent in the text to a printer. Someone else typed it and then laid it out in columns. I just knew I could go faster and have more control over all of the words and the layout. He wanted to give it up and move the next steps forward.
- Teresa Ford: So he took me under his wing to help me with the National Park Service issues. I'd visited many parks even by that time, but I've never been a park service employee. So, he stayed with me, via phone and email. Did we have email? Gosh! I bet we didn't.
- Lu Ann Jones: You were just, '90.
- Teresa Ford: I'm trying to think. I think we started email in '92 or three.
- Lu Ann Jones: Yeah. The early issues, or issues around the time you take over, people are beginning to give their email address.
- Teresa Ford: I started with this in '93. I would say it's probably a year later we all started getting emails so we could communicate. We must have talked on the phone. How about that?
- Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) How quaint.
- Teresa Ford: He was the first what we called editorial advisor. And after that, when he was ready to give it up completely, Tony Sisto stepped forward, and he and Deanne Adams were very supportive and would help me with ideas and themes and round up the articles. They had broad reach with other employees who were educated on certain issues we might want to talk about or feature. Then it was Ken Mabery, and he was a wealth of information and very good connections all over.
- Teresa Ford: After that, let me see. I can't remember who was next. I've worked with many people. Mark Herberger. How could I forget him? He did it for almost 10 years. I found him at a Ranger Rendezvous and asked him if he would do it. You seek out the right person you're pretty certain will say yes and is capable. And he did.
- Lu Ann Jones: And so, what was the role that that person played? I mean, they were helping recruit articles? Is that the main—
- Teresa Ford: Yes. They'd recruit the articles, because they had the connections with the Park Service. So, they know the people. I didn't have to go out too much. But when the articles would come in and they would need to be edited or

questions asked to establish things were perfect in them, I could handle all of that. But I would lay out all the pages and send out a proof to the editorial advisor, the president of our organization and a board member, usually, internal communications. We'd work as a team to get it right. I am very conscious of deadlines because I was a newspaper reporter, a daily newspaper reporter, for several papers.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah. Yeah.

Teresa Ford: And I respect deadlines and work under them well. That's the only way you can get out a publication in the same season that it's supposed to come out. (laughter) So, yeah, after Mark Herberger decided about a year and a half ago that he had exhausted his ideas – no, I guess I'll take that back. Mark is always filled with ideas and creative, but his job at WASO became too demanding. He needed to give it up.

Teresa Ford: So, I recruited Emily Thompson, and she did it for about a year. Then Emily recruited her husband, Kendell, who is probably one of the most creative that I've been in partnership with on the publication. We've done two or three issues together, and he has a whole treasure trove of ideas. So, we never run out of ideas.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, had you thought very much about the role of a magazine like this to an organization? I mean, the purpose it serves to an organization, both members but people outside the organization, but you're communicating the message of the organization. Or have you thought about that over the years and how the role of the magazine might have changed? Or your own ideas about how it might have changed?

Teresa Ford: Well, we want it to be professional, first and foremost. We want to use it to educate people about issues and about us as an organization. And to communicate with our readers, now becoming more old-fashioned, in a sense, a printed publication. We do have a digital version and some 75 people get it that way. It's in full color that way.

Teresa Ford: But I brought it from an all black-and-white publication to spot color on every page to full color on a four-page spread, front and back. I still think there's a role for printed materials. Many magazines are still being published successfully, so I hope that ours can, too. I think we've had the administration be aware of us. National Park Service. I can't say as it goes above that, necessarily. Maybe the Department of the Interior. We have comp copies on our list to congressmen and senators. We always treat our authors, especially if they're not members, with respect, and send them an issue. And many times, they want to buy more issues, and so it spreads further. We hope that readers, that our members, readers, will place a copy in their break room, and more people can know about us.

Lu Ann Jones: One comment I read from Ron Mackie, I guess two or three years after you had taken over the editorship, and he said he felt there were more articles of substance in there. And I don't think he was criticizing

anybody, except to compliment you on how he felt like there were kind of the editorial matter had bulked up some. So, when you think back on some of the issues that you feel like *Ranger* was particularly good at kind of helping people understand, are there any things that stand out to you?

Teresa Ford: Some of my favorite issues would be ones that Mark Herberger and I worked on. The Power of the Place. It was kind of a philosophical thing. Controversial issues in parks, whether to have religious-based materials in the Grand Canyon, for instance. I touch every single word on *Ranger* magazine, more or less, in a figurative sense. Digitally, on my computer screen. I guess I can't quite remember any favorites. I'm most thinking of the last few that have turned out well. And fun.

Teresa Ford: Unfortunately, though, we don't hear very many comments from our members or our readers. You hope there's a silent majority out there reading things. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) But I get emails, occasionally, with people having good ideas or wanting to submit a story, and we're always open to that. This publication is a journal for and by park rangers and Park Service employees. You send me a great idea or a story maybe you've already done, and I'll probably find a place to use it eventually.

Lu Ann Jones: So, there are certain elements that are consistent across each issue, right? Could you just sort of talk about the mix of articles and features that you like to have in each issue?

Teresa Ford: The inside front cover is supposed to be letters. Those are falling by the wayside because people email, and I ask permission to use it as a letter. Then we have the president's message every time, hopefully relating to the theme. We have a theme every time. It depends how many articles we can get. There could be anywhere from four to ten, probably. We have four regular columnists who provide material most of the time. Administration. Interpretation. Natural resource management. And protection. And then we always have, usually have, something from the International Ranger Federation, of which we're a founding partner. All in The Family would be the little tidbits from people – changing jobs, new baby born, the sadness of deaths in our family, but we want people to know about them. And book reviews. I think those are the main parts of the magazine.

Teresa Ford: Book reviews can sometimes occupy four to six pages. We have voracious readers in our group.

Lu Ann Jones: I enjoy those.

Teresa Ford: I learn new things every time from them.

Lu Ann Jones: Absolutely. I think, I enjoy those. I think Rick Smith, in particular, has a great touch as a reviewer.

Teresa Ford: His things usually need little editing. Maybe a few misspelled words or double check some facts. But he is a very strong writer, and concise, which I love. The concise part. I mean, if you worked for a Gannett newspaper, *USA Today*, we used to joke that it would win a Pulitzer for

the best investigative paragraph. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) They've become a little longer over the years, especially with the website. Longer articles. And if you have the app on your phone, you can read some really long articles. And I'm thinking, what? This can't be Gannett! But I very much admire people who write concisely. And I hope that I do, too, and don't waste words. Don't repeat myself. And Rick is a master at that. He's professorial but really relates to just the average person and why you might like this book. I'm not a big book buyer, but I go to the library and get books and read most of what's talked about in *Ranger*.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, do you think people, I have to say, I was surprised to realize that you were not Park Service. (laughs) Do you think most people, well, I guess most people in the organization know you're not. But by this time, you must sort of feel like you're a park ranger yourself, or part of the Park Service.

Teresa Ford: I do. And guess what? I have an honorary ranger hat.

Lu Ann Jones: Very good.

Teresa Ford: Yes. In '03, in Plymouth, Massachusetts, when we had the Rendezvous, the president at the time gave me an award, and it was a park ranger hat. He purposely got it too small so I could never wear it and could not be an impostor. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) But it's hanging on my wall in my office above my bulletin board, and it's treasured. Another person bought me the leather band with the pinecone. Is that what you call it?

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah. The sequoia. Yeah.

Teresa Ford: People are surprised. Especially the newer members. They'll say, "What park are you at?" Or they'll look at my tag and it will say "ANPR." And they'll try to figure out what that might stand for.

Teresa Ford: I'd say, you know, it's the greatest joy to take people to national parks, our children, especially, to appreciate them. And they've been all over, from Alaska to Puerto Rico, the east coast to Hawaii. All of our family vacations when our kids were living at home were to national parks. Many of them. Long road trips. Then we started flying, obviously, to Puerto Rico.

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. I read a feature that your daughter did, I think, for *Ranger* when you went east to, I guess, went to Washington and then looped back around.

Teresa Ford: Yes. I'm trying to think what year that was. 1997?

Lu Ann Jones: '96 or '97?

Teresa Ford: I think she was going into seventh grade and our son into fifth grade. And we called that our American history tour. The reason we specifically did that was because in sixth grade at the school the kids went to, they took a, the ones that had money took a trip to Washington, DC, as a group, a class group. Not everyone did it. And we decided it was too expensive and all

four of us could go. So, we waited until the school year ended, and Melissa was okay with that. She's a good traveler now, but she was shy. And I think the mean girls, it would have been harder for her. So, for the same amount of money, all four of us could go. We had a van. We drove round trip, 6,000 miles, and we went to every place we could think of. We rented books on tape. And we listened to *Lincoln: The Prairie Years*. Carl Sandburg is the narrator.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow.

Teresa Ford: Do I have that right? Do you know?

Lu Ann Jones: He's the writer. I don't know if he was actually narrating it himself, but I think he wrote that.

Teresa Ford: And we listened to *Around the World in 80 Days*. (laughter) Probably Ryan slept through a lot of it, but Melissa paid attention. And in fact, we weren't intending to go to Springfield, Illinois, but we took a side trip there because we had been listening to Lincoln so long, we wanted to see it. So, we did battlefield, Gettysburg, down the coast, I think, Assateague Island. Down farther to Virginia Beach and Jamestown, Yorktown. I'm not saying them in correct order. (laughter) And then back through Cumberland Gap, Mammoth Cave. It was great for us because we're westerners and our kids have been camping since they were six months old. They've been to Yellowstone and Tetons and all of the great western parks. Yosemite and then up to Alaska. But we hadn't gone east. And we wanted them to know and appreciate our culture and our roots as a country.

Lu Ann Jones: It sounded like a great trip. (laughs) A great trip.

Teresa Ford: We always say our family vacations, that was the best trip ever. I mean really, by the time our kids were in college and then graduating, they still loved to travel with us because Mom and Dad paid. And we went on the Inca Trail in Peru.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow.

Teresa Ford: And said that was the best trip ever. (laughter) That was 2009, when Ryan graduated from college. It was a wonderful trip.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow.

Teresa Ford: But now this past summer, my husband through-hiked the Appalachian Trail. He started in April and he finished in September.

Lu Ann Jones: Oh, man.

Teresa Ford: And each of us together or separately went back to join him for segments of the hike.

Teresa Ford: And I was just talking to him today and he said, "You know, a lot of people don't even know that the Park Service has anything to do with the AT."

Teresa Ford: But I met him in Shenandoah and did 35 miles. And Melissa and I met him in New Hampshire and from Hanover north, and did another 35. Then I flew Ryan and his girlfriend Erica to Maine to do the very ending, Mount Katahdin, which for those two fitness freaks, was a really hard mountain. It was as good as any fourteener in Colorado. So, we've done a few more segments of the National Park Service system.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow. Had he been thinking about doing that for a long time?

Teresa Ford: No. And in fact, I met Tom Banks in '03 in Plymouth. He's a member of ANPR and a huge hiker, and we talked about the AT. I came home and mentioned it to Karl, and he said, "No. I'm not interested."

Teresa Ford: Well, since that time, he's done the 500-mile Colorado Trail. He's a great hiker. But it was always western hiking. He's done the John Muir Trail, Yosemite south to Whitney. He's done parts of the Continental Divide Trail.

Teresa Ford: So, when he retired from BLM in June of 2012, and he's a scientist, and he was used to projects and didn't know what to, well, he maybe wouldn't agree with this, but he didn't quite know what to do with all of his time, all of a sudden it was his idea to go hike the Appalachian Trail. And why not do it straight through, and because he's a scientist, he wanted to do a tick survey, which had not been done before. Got a little bit of funding from the Park Service and the Lyme Disease organization.

Teresa Ford: So, he did all of the planning. He's a super planner. He could have easily done that as a career. Got all the food boxes together. Researched. Did all the trail planning. I was his office manager and sent him all the boxes when they were due. So, I think it takes great motivation, a real mental state to help you complete something like that. And since it was then his idea, it was fantastic. (laughter)

Lu Ann Jones: Well, that sounds great.

Teresa Ford: Not to say that there weren't issues along the way. It's very, very hard. Difficult on your body. And his feet hurt after the first—

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Teresa Ford: —500 miles. And he had 1700 miles to go. So, we gave him mental support at that point. Please don't quit. You'll never forgive yourself. You know you wanted to finish. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) And he did. We're all very proud.

Lu Ann Jones: Yes. That's a real accomplishment.

Teresa Ford: He's giving talks places. Colorado Mountain Club. He's trying to get into REI. He's giving one to a place in Boulder, Colorado. He's got a great map produced by National Geographic, and he pinpointed all the places

and trail towns. It's a great experience. But I'm glad he didn't ask me to do it with him. The whole thing.

Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) Yeah. The 35 miles, right?

Teresa Ford: Seventy.

Lu Ann Jones: Seventy. Oh, yeah. Two different stretches. Yeah. I'm curious about your first Rendezvous as the editor of *Ranger*. And kind of what you thought of Rendezvous when you kind of came into the organization.

Teresa Ford: Well, I was scared to death. And it's 20 years ago. And I knew no one except what I thought Ken Mabery looked like. And Bill Halainen, he was the other one I couldn't think of earlier. Of course, Bill came to interview me. I couldn't, I could barely remember what they looked like. And sitting there in Virginia Beach, 1993, in a big hotel right by the beach. And it was, in those days, Rendezvous were very large. I went across the country on my own, and got there through a shuttle, etcetera. And sitting in the lobby waiting to recognize somebody. (laughter) I only knew two people, and it was pretty scary. It was during the Rick Gale era. He was the mammoth figure in ANPR and in his career. And he was scary then. Yeah.

Lu Ann Jones: In what ways?

Teresa Ford: A loud voice. Very decisive. He was into the incident command system, which I knew nothing about. But he was very welcoming to me. Just gruff. But you would have to get to know him to appreciate him.

Teresa Ford: And I had a martini with him on his very last Rendezvous before he died. That would have been in Santa Fe in 2008, and he died in March of '09. Now he's missed greatly, but we were really good friends and he taught me a lot over the years.

Lu Ann Jones: How did you learn the ropes of one, the organization, and the Park Service, and other mentors, and kind of how that process worked?

Teresa Ford: I think it's just listening well. And learning. And doing research. And just having good intuition or perception about things. I always admired, doesn't everyone, people who worked in the National Park Service. Park rangers. We went to interpretive programs. But a lot of people behind the scenes were talking to me about things, whether it would be politics. I'm good at synthesizing information, I think. I can listen and hear different points of view and then try to decide what the truth is, or the reality. I'm not saying people don't tell the truth, but they all have their own perceptions.

Teresa Ford: I am on the side of caution. I think with ANPR most of the people still employed have to be more careful of what they say. They'll be criticized for that. But you can only be an advocate so intensely before it impairs your prospect for another job. So.

Teresa Ford: The people at the Rendezvous, though, are ones who are social. Some are quiet, but if you give them a chance, if you invite them to a meal. And I'm

quiet, too. I call myself an introvert. But I can stand opening up for a little bit and finding out more about people. Over the years now, because it's been 20 years, there are good friends that you want to see from time to time. And if they say they're not coming, you're sad. But then you meet new people.

Teresa Ford: Bob Krumenaker taught me to keep a list of all the people you meet and where they're from or place them, so you don't forget them the next time. I think that was good advice.

Teresa Ford: And Ken Mabery just showed up for the first time in many years, and it was great seeing him again. So, I think we build friendships through this group and respect for them as professionals, too, because they helped me so much.

Lu Ann Jones: Um, I had a question right on the tip of my tongue and I lost it.

Teresa Ford: Well, let me interject something about, over the various Rendezvous, and because the founders of this organization became very high-powered, they were successful in getting high-level people to come. So, I met Bruce Babbitt when he came to Durango. And he was secretary of the interior. Roger Kennedy.

Lu Ann Jones: I noticed he came, I think, all four years he was director.

Teresa Ford: He did. Yes. And Fran Mainella came once, but not again. Jon Jarvis has come twice. And we miss him, but he always sends a replacement, his deputy or someone else, and we're appreciative of that. It's especially nice for the younger people to see that those who are higher up in the Park Service care enough to come, like [Deputy Director] Peggy O'Dell did today. And to say things that are meaningful, and you just feel like they're from the heart. So, I think those types of exposures that I've had have given me great experience and helped me gain an overall view of what the Park Service is about, even though I'm not Park Service personnel.

Teresa Ford: But I grew up right next to Colorado National Monument. I like to say my dad is buried near there, and he has a view of the monument, I say. We called it "the monument." And then I realized how silly that is because he's buried there. He has no view. But in spirit, hopefully.

Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) Yes. Well how have your duties with the organization changed? I mean, have you always been involved in the annual meetings and kind of organizing that? Or have those, some of those responsibilities changed over time?

Teresa Ford: I've added responsibilities and I'm paid for it, too. So, when I started out, I was *Ranger* magazine editor, and I was paid a certain sum for that. Then they added on the website coordination when we got our website. And I looked back to see when that was. I registered the domain name in 2001. So, we got email first, and then we waited quite a while before we got the website. Someone else designed it and never got it up on the Internet. I

went ahead and registered the domain name and then started doing the website coordination.

Teresa Ford: So, I taught myself html coding. And design. Read a lot of books. Got advice from people, whether it was my brother, and now it can be my son. (laughs) But it's been really fun. I love keeping up on the technology as much as possible.

Teresa Ford: It was in 2006 when I started doing the business operations. That's when I started doing membership coordination, membership renewals, and with that comes all of the business operations. I moved all of the bank accounts to Golden, Colorado, where I live. Got a merchant account so we could take credit cards online. Designed the form so people could renew their memberships online or donate.

Teresa Ford: And one thing leads to another. Then we had a health insurance program. So, someone had to coordinate that, and you can't ask volunteers to do all of these jobs. They have other jobs. Full time. Even a small group like ANPR, which is between a thousand and twelve hundred members still is a legitimate nonprofit 501c3 corporation and has to be managed as such.

Teresa Ford: So, we have a contract accountant who oversees all of the bookkeeping and accounting that I do when I ask her for help. And then she does our taxes. That's where I draw the line. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) You need a true professional to do the taxes. And then the treasurer is the one who pays the bills, writes the checks because that would be an accounting irregularity for me to pay myself.

Teresa Ford: So that's kind of how it's grown from me starting out as *Ranger* editor to doing the business operations.

Teresa Ford: The reason I ended up doing them is because I was on the small committee that was looking for a new business manager. We put out an RFP and we interviewed some firms, and the lowest price was \$50,000 a year for membership. And that's not anything ANPR can afford. The more we thought about it, people came to me and said, "Why don't you submit a bid for part time?" So together with *Ranger* magazine and business, it's pretty much fulltime now.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah, I was going to ask, do you have other accounts that you, other freelance projects that you take on?

Teresa Ford: I occasionally do. I do volunteer work for Colorado Press Women. I'm the treasurer. And I help organize our meetings, annual meetings. Do writing for them. I probably need to update that little bio, because I don't have time anymore to do very many extra contracts. I, for a while there, was doing work for Jefferson County Public Schools about the whole time my kids were K through 12. I did an internal newsletter for the employees group. I did some odd jobs for the Division of Wildlife still. What else did I do? I can't really remember. I don't have time for those anymore.

- Lu Ann Jones: Yeah, I was thinking as these duties have expanded. What's a cycle for you in terms of where the planning from one issue, one issue gets published, where are you in the planning for the next issue by that point? Or do you have several issues that are kind of, certain portions are underway simultaneously?
- Teresa Ford: We always have themes planned about one or two in advance. But I work on one issue at a time. I'm a one-person shop.
- Lu Ann Jones: Right.
- Teresa Ford: So, my life is circular. My year is rotating like this. January, I'll be working on the spring issue. And I'm always good at looking ahead. From the time of deadline for the contributors, it takes me about 80 hours to do the magazine. Get it to the printer, which could take one to two more weeks, although I'll have the digital version ready to send out earlier. And then get it printed. But while I'm working on that one, I will be looking ahead to the next theme, and reminding my advisor to be making contacts with potential contributors. But I think that's all I can handle when you're a one-person staff.
- Lu Ann Jones: Yeah.
- Teresa Ford: It would be wonderful, wouldn't it, to be like some of these magazines with many people.
- Lu Ann Jones: Well, one of the things as I recall that you suggested right off the bat was to actually print the magazine in Colorado versus the Washington, DC, area.
- Teresa Ford: I forgot that.
- Lu Ann Jones: That that would save money.
- Teresa Ford: Yes, it did save a lot of money. And I don't know whether, well, it was probably because DC prices are so high, and we were doing it an old-fashioned way of giving the printer all the copy. I don't know how he gave it, probably a word processing. And then she would typeset it all and try to lay it out. And back and forth, and back and forth. Where if I do everything and present the final pdf, which we didn't even know what they were then, to the printer, who can do it.
- Teresa Ford: I have a small-town printer in Parker who probably works for a lower price than you would get a big publisher to do. And we have a great relationship. We know about how long it will take. He sends me back the proof, and then I proof it and it's gone. So, it works very nicely now.
- Teresa Ford: And I have the Golden post office as the permit holder for our nonprofit permit, and a mailing firm that does the bulk sort and delivers the magazines. That's the part I don't do. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) But I do send five copies to each board member times 13 or 14, which is one heavy, multiple packages delivering to the post office.

- Lu Ann Jones: Well do you participate in board meetings? And you're here for board meetings and you're part of that. Are you voting? No.
- Teresa Ford: I'm not a voting member. But I'm always welcome to come to the board meeting. I have the answers to their questions, and I need to be here.
- Teresa Ford: We used to have a midyear board meeting in the era when there was more money available. I didn't always go to those because maybe they didn't want to pay for it, and they were all coming as volunteers and paying on their own. But I've always been told from the very beginning that I come to the Rendezvous. So, it's my once-a-year trip.
- Teresa Ford: When I first started, my kids were only six and eight years old. Now they're 26 and 28 years old. But they didn't want Mom to go to this business trip. They weren't used to me traveling away from them. I remember the first one, the first couple, my daughter sneaked a little note how she missed me into my luggage that I opened up at the hotel. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) It was so cute.
- Teresa Ford: The exhibitor area was much bigger than it is now. But they always brought little freebies. So, I would be collecting those to give to my kids, and they thought they were great. I don't need to do that anymore. (laughter)
- Lu Ann Jones: Well how have you seen the organization kind of wax and wane? And any thoughts about just kind of, I think lots of organizations go through these cycles. Any thoughts about that?
- Teresa Ford: I think every organization is suffering with membership woes just like we are. There's a great book out, now a couple of years old, but it's called *Bowling Alone*, and it talks about that. How do you keep people, why aren't people joiners? How do you keep people interested and belonging to an organization?
- Teresa Ford: We used to have really good recruitment and we got our numbers up high. But I still think that too many people, even back in the quote "good old days," would drop out year after year, and then you would have to try to go after a new group. So, it's a problem. And it's something every board talks about. I think you have to; you have to do good things that make members want to stay. You have to have an advocacy role with issues that they need, you know, that they're interested in you pursuing on their behalf.
- Teresa Ford: I think *Ranger* magazine, though, is a tool that's interesting for people to keep as a membership benefit. We have to look for new things that they want. We're part of promotive.com, which is the discounted brand name goods that you can get if you belong to our team. And regardless of your National Park Service employment, if you're an ANPR member, you can be a member of our Promotive team. A lot of people are in the market for getting 70 percent off on a nice jacket from wherever. I can't think of any of the brands right now.

- Teresa Ford: We finally were successful at getting a limited benefits health insurance policy, thanks to our board member Fred Koegler, you may have interviewed him from Yosemite. He's a seasonal. A schoolteacher, retired, but a seasonal for years at Yosemite. He's great. He tried and tried, and he was so persistent, and he finally found a broker near him in California who also was very persistent. We found Aetna, who said yes, we will insure your group, and I think that helped us get 200 new members.
- Teresa Ford: That program developed problems with payment – continually trying to get people to send their payments in on time, and it fell on me. I didn't think that was probably good to keep doing it that way, and Aetna wouldn't change. So, I asked our broker if he could find a new company and then we managed to find Transamerica that would set up automatic check debit. So that took a lot of burden off of me trying to get the people to renew their health insurance, to pay on time. We didn't want to lapse them and have them lose their coverage. So those are the types of benefits you need to continue to look for.
- Teresa Ford: Now with the new healthcare reform, we will probably be looking at add-on insurances for additional hospitalization, dental, other little packages that people might want to get that aren't a comprehensive medical coverage. But the limited benefits coverage will probably fall by the wayside because it doesn't meet the standards.
- Lu Ann Jones: I asked Alison Steiner, I said, "So what questions do you think I should ask Teresa?" And she said, "Well, Teresa's really kept us going. (laughs) Has really made sure that there was real continuity there." So, when you think about your contributions to the organization, what do you, what do you think they are?
- Teresa Ford: I never would have perceived it of myself way back when being the glue that held the group together. But I think now that I've been doing it for 20 years and I've seen so many board members pass in and out the door, they're volunteers for a few years and then they're gone, some of them I've never seen again, others continue, that there needs to be someone with institutional memory to help an organization stick together.
- Teresa Ford: I always relied on the institutional memory of people like Rick Gale, who's no longer with us anymore. And with Rick Smith and Bill Wade, who stepped back a bit to let the younger people become involved in an organization that we want to be sustainable, is that the right word?
- Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm.
- Teresa Ford: So, I can't, obviously, do this forever. But the contribution that I can make now is to have a good and accurate history of the organization. And help people understand what's come before, and potentially what could be their future with their hard work and taking initiative to keep an organization going that was so well-loved by the people who founded it.

Lu Ann Jones: So, do you talk to younger members a lot? You talk about having been mentored in the organization, but do you see yourself as a mentor to younger people who are coming? And there's the first time at Rendezvous, or they're joining the organization?

Teresa Ford: I can be a mentor for them in a different way. I can't offer them any career advice because I'm not in the Park Service, nor have I ever been. So, I don't know those ins and outs. But I can offer them a welcoming attitude. Friendship at the very beginning. I've talked via email or phone to every single one of them.

Lu Ann Jones: Right.

Teresa Ford: Because all of the registrations come to me. All of the new memberships come to my computer. And if I have questions, or if they want to call me. I always list my phone number, which is my home phone, and office, and they are welcome to call me. I don't publish it on the website. I suppose there's ways to get it there. I, being a former newspaper reporter, can find things in 30 seconds or less if you have the right motivation to. (laughter) You don't just use Google, you can use other things, resources, to find things. I try to meet and tell each person who comes to the Rendezvous who I am and welcome them. I can't think of anything else profound. (laughter)

Lu Ann Jones: Well, I think that's pretty important. Does the organization keep pretty good records? I mean, *Ranger* is a record. But in terms of records of its decision making or—

Teresa Ford: Well, I probably shouldn't be the one to speak to that. (laughter) Our compendium is woefully out of date, and that should be a secretarial duty. With all volunteers, things get lost.

Lu Ann Jones: Absolutely.

Teresa Ford: And the compendium hasn't been done for many years. A compendium is when you record the actions of a board, whether it's a vote, I think. Am I saying it right?

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Teresa Ford: Or an amendment, and what the vote was. And then you add it to the formal record. But it's been more than 10 years.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, I'm a member of historical organizations. And we're horrible record keepers. (laughs)

Teresa Ford: That's funny.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah, it's like, how did we make that decision? Not all of them but you know, you're right. When it's volunteers, and everybody's time seems very stretched.

Teresa Ford: I don't think we would dispute as many things, though, if we would keep those records. Now, Bill Supernaugh was a really good friend of mine,

too, and probably one of the best board members for internal communications we've ever had. And he also headed the mentoring program. So, when he died, I wanted to keep alive those things that were so near and dear to him, and the mentorship program was one. When his family, his widow and his daughters, decided to set up a scholarship fund and to help bring newcomers to the Rendezvous, because it was one of Bill's favorite things to do every year, I have tried really hard to keep that scholarship money coming in. I write the email and the plea for contributors. And I help sit on the committee that evaluates the applications to bring the new people. I creatively try to bring as many people as possible, not giving anyone a full scholarship, a full way paid. And then you can only send two or three. But offering someone maybe three-quarters of the airfare and all of their room for free, but they pay for food and whatever. And offering another person a partial airfare or gas allowance. We pair the people together in rooms so they don't get private rooms, and we can just bring so many more new people into the organization.

Teresa Ford: So, I would say that mentors who helped me the most, and if they're no longer with us, are the ones whose legacy I want to continue. And that's why I work hard at those particular things. But I would not say that I have a perfect memory to know what all happened at all the board meetings. I was depending on the secretary to type it, and record it, and the minutes approved. But.

Teresa Ford: Membership records I have in a database, spreadsheet. It's not rocket science. And I have discarded a lot of the paper records because we have digital saved. And copies, extra copies. In fact, in a public storage locker at one point – I live in a fire zone in the summer – and so, June through October I lock away every issue of *Ranger* magazine. One issue each. (Lu Ann Jones laughs) And *Live the Adventure, Join the National Park Service* publication that Bill Supernaugh and I worked on and we still sell online. And one of, or a couple of, a lot of things to preserve.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow.

Teresa Ford: A private little archive that will go to someone else eventually.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah. Well, are there other things that you would like to talk about in relationship to your job and ANPR? Issues you've seen evolve over the years?

Teresa Ford: Well, I'd say a volunteer organization always presents special challenges. Because everyone is busy and they want to help, they may find that their job is time-consuming, and they can't. So, I've seen people come and go over the years. And it helps to have strong leadership, a president who can help the people and keep them on task. But those are very special challenges of any organization, and I belong to a few that have the same issues. I think, though, that the last couple of years have shown that we have a lot of young people who truly are interested, intrigued, by this

organization, and they're not only coming here just for health insurance. I know that's correct, because only 40 percent of them who are eligible look into it or buy it. Of course, they're all coming for help with finding a job. But I think they find, when they finally get here with us, that they're finding new friends. They're making new friends that can last for a long time. And that's what I love the most is helping an organization be—

[END OF TRACK 2]

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Teresa Ford: —sustainable, is that the right word? Or is it learn how to sustain itself?

Lu Ann Jones: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Teresa Ford: We've been around now for 36 years.

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah.

Teresa Ford: And I would hate to be the one who wouldn't hold up my end and let an organization die. I think that would be sad.

Lu Ann Jones: I think this is the third time I've been here. And I have been impressed, and particularly last year and this year, at the number of younger folks. And I think giving them responsibilities and making them feel vested in the organization, that that's a good step towards revitalizing things.

Teresa Ford: We need to value what they can offer us. We need to help them, stand with them and help them learn how to do the task. We're welcoming new ideas, but sometimes they don't always work. And you do need to return to the tried and true.

Teresa Ford: I've seen people come back from last year who were now helping with major tasks. And I've gone to dinner with a few brand-new ones who are just so passionate, and it's really heartwarming to see. Those are the people I hope will find that they were not out of place here, that they want to stay in touch and come back and help us keep the organization strong.

Teresa Ford: We ask each of the scholarship recipients what they can do for us in the next year. And I think with our incoming president, Erika Jostad, we will find that she will help mentor them and check in with them, along with Alison Steiner, to say, "How is that project going that you are helping us with?" And keeping connected to people. If you don't talk to them in six months, they're going to think you don't care, and they may not renew their membership. We're not wanting them for their money. We're wanting them for their passion and what they can bring to our organization.

Lu Ann Jones: Well that sounds like a nice place to stop, then.

Teresa Ford: All right. I've talked long enough.

Lu Ann Jones: Thank you so much.

[END OF TRACK 3]

[END OF INTERVIEW]