Recorded on an Olympus LS-10 digital recorder.

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**[Jean Rodeck Interview\_Clip 1\_Introduction]**

Eileen Devinney (**ED**): Alright, so I’ll let it run a little…

Jean Rodeck (**JR**): (unintelligible)

**ED:**  Alright, so it is the 15th of September 2015 – already! This is Eileen Devinney with the Park Service office in Anchorage and I’m talking to Jean Swearingen Rodeck at her home near – where are we?

**JR:** Woodland Park

**ED:**  Woodland Park, Colorado. And we’re going to do an interview today about her career for the Alaska women in National Park Service history project. And so first I thought I would go over the interview release form. So this just is to remind you that this is voluntary, that anything in this interview might be used as a whole or in part for interpretive or other uses which could include web use, print, the whole range, as you may well know. It may not be used at all and you are giving us copyright and use rights. Is that ok?

**JR:** I am. That is perfectly alright.

**ED:**  You’re totally good. So we’ll sign the form later – we don’t have it today on hand.

**ED:**  OK. So I guess we should start with your name and maybe a little bit about you and where you were born and when, just to give us a starting point here.

**JR:** My name is Jean Helen Rodeck, um - Swearingen, for a while. I was born in Boulder, Colorado in 1934 and - to a family of – a professional family. My dad was in the museum business at the University of Colorado Museum and had been all of his life and I grew up in that museum and I learned very young that if I was good and quiet and did what dad told me and could sit quietly he would take me with him when he went to places like the Denver Museum of Natural History and the Colorado Historical Society Museum and Rocky Mountain National Park. So when I was very young I fell in love with my first ten rangers in the Nat – Dad made sure that we knew when we went to a place like a museum or a national park – we went to a lot of them – that we knew what they were about before we went. We had to know why that place was there and so he told me about the National Park Service and I even as a youngster I thought that was just a wonderful idea – the mission of the Park Service. So my mom told me when I was about eight that I said I was going to work for museums in the National Park Service. And that was it!

**ED:**  When you were eight?

**JR:** I did, when I was about eight. She said I told her that. So I just grew up in that kind of an atmosphere going to National Parks, going to museums, being curious about everything. Mostly natural history. I didn’t get into history until I started doing exhibits and I found out I should have taken more history courses. But I learned a lot.

Boulder was one of those very safe places where kids could run all over the countryside. We lived right at the – near the base of the Flatirons up near Chautauqua – it was a huge outdoor park and we just lived up there and we had a cabin and we just ran wild around this cabin and it was those times when you weren’t afraid of strangers. Nobody molested you. We didn’t get lost. We had skinned knees and sunburned noses but it was just a very safe, free childhood.

**ED:**  And you said you did that with your sister and your cousins – just you guys loose?

**JR:** Yeah, and friends from Boulder. Yeah, we just went everywhere.

**ED:**  So what was your career path to the Park Service?

**JR:** Well, as with everybody else, you ask somebody how, what they did to get into the Park Service and you’re not going to ever find two people that went in the same way. But I was very driven so when I got into high school – I was a precocious artist as a youngster. As I grew up I found out I wasn’t all that hot. But I wanted to do exhibits and so I did want to take art in school but I’d wanted to wait til I was in college where you got a more sophisticated art education than high school. So I took science courses in high school – biology and physics and chemistry. I damn near flunked them cause I was a very slow learner but I got a smattering of biology and geology in high school. In those basic high school classes. I had one history course my entire life and I really should have had more but I made up for it.

Then I took art and anthropology in college. I took art at Mills College in Oakland, California, and then I took every anthro course that I could take at the University of Arizona. By the time I got there I had learned how to learn. The light went on over my head. The little dim bulb lit up and so I did really well at the University of Arizona and I took every anthro course that I could take and I ended up with a double major with art and anthropology. So, when I graduated, my dad said “Well, what are you going to do now?” and said “Well, I’m going to go work at a museum. Going to work at a park – work at a museum.”

Well, one of the things that I was really lucky about my whole life is that people that believed that I could do what I said I wanted to do. And two of them were my parents who said that I could do whatever I decided to do – I just had to work at it. So, anyway, Dad said he’d seen an advertisement at the Florida State Museum in Gainesville for an Assistant Museum Preparator, I think the title was. And so I wrote and said I’d like to apply for it and send me a form and so they sent me a letter saying what they wanted to know and so I wrote and told them – here I was right out of college – and I wrote and told them all these things they asked. And they hired me! It was, oh, Interim Assistant Preparator, it was called.

So I got to Gainesville and I showed up for work and said, you know, “Well, here I am!” and so they showed me around the museum of science. No, it was the Florida State Museum. They showed me around the museum, showed me the shop where the exhibits were made and all this stuff. I was to make exhibits for the state parks. I was actually paid by the state park service. And so I said “Can I meet who I’m going to be working for?” and they kind of looked at me funny and they said “Well, you’re not going to be working for anybody. You’re, you’re it.” I went – talk about getting kicked into the pool – the deep end! And I swam! Oh, I just couldn’t believe it. I was just over awed for about the first week because the carpenters and the painters and everything – they were working for me! A little snot nosed kid right out of college. It worked out really well. I did a good job and I learned a lot and the people I worked with were a total delight. They were so supportive of this dumb broad coming in there. Oh, my gosh. It was really a learning experience and while I was the – it was just an interim job – just a contract for nine months. And as it was, I stayed almost twelve months. But I said, “Well you know the contract is over. I’m leaving.” And they said “Oh, no no, we want you to stay.” And I was making like, I don’t know, four thousand dollars a year and they upped the ante to about seven thousand dollars for just you know, for just barely a year’s experience. And I said, “No, it’s not the job.” I said “I cannot stand living in this atmosphere of prejudice and maltreatment of other human beings.” I just, I couldn’t, I just couldn’t bear it.

**ED:**  So what year was that?

**JR:** This was 1958. 1956. Sorry, I graduated ’56 and went right to Florida. And I had worked for two seasons at Rocky Mountain as a seasonal – I forgot about that. I got – that was a story unto itself. I got to work at Rocky Mountain as a seasonal at Alpine Visitor Center – as Information Receptionist. I wasn’t even in uniform. But I just ran the whole visitor center which was just a room about this size with five exhibits and a counter and I worked – I had maybe ten books from the cooperating association and a cigar box that had the lid taped on – scotch taped on – that was my cash box. And the biggest moment of the whole summer was when the district ranger brought me a new cigar box that I could lock with a pin stuck in the side. Anywa…

**ED:**  Very sophisticated!

**JR:** Huh?

**ED:**  Very sophisticated.

**JR:** Oh yeah! We had a top-notch classy outfit up there. So, anyway, when I went to Florida I was just appalled. I had lived a very sheltered life but a very worldly life with my Dad who was involved with ICOM – the International Council of Museums and AAM ***[****American Association of Museums]* and we had company at the house all the time from all over the world – every color, every language, every country. That’s the way I grew up. And there was just no difference between these people. Their commonality was working in museums and it didn’t matter who they were. And I went to Florida and I was just appalled. I just – it was a terrible, terrible experience that just – I couldn’t stand to live there any longer. I just couldn’t bear it and I was chicken and I just ran! And then I got the job at the western museum laboratory in San Francisco through the Chief Park Naturalist at Rocky Mountain who heard that they were hiring artists at the Western Museum Lab to do exhibits for the parks west of the Mississippi. The Eastern Museum Lab, which at the time was on the grounds of the capital – in temporary buildings – was to do the exhibits for the National Parks in the eastern part of the country. And the Western Museum Lab was just being started anew and they were hiring and so I applied for that job and I got it. And, also again, the luck of being recommended by the Chief of Interpretation at Rocky Mountain National Park. So I went to San Francisco and worked there for three years doing exhibits all over the country. That’s when I learned – that’s when I learned that I was really good at fabricating exhibits and carpentry and all these things that I had learned – carpentry from my Dad when I was little. And I found out that I was really good at that and really quick at fixing photographs and making them look like they were wrapped around the Masonite and all that stuff but I was really a lousy artist. I was just a mediocre artist. I’m told that I shouldn’t say that I was lousy but I was definitely mediocre and I think that’s putting it nicely! As opposed to people like Bill Barry and some of the other artists that we had.

So anyway in order to save my job when they were experiencing a RIF –a reduction in force – the director of the Museum Lab, which was in the basement of the old mint building in San Francisco, said – he said, “Well, our curator position is empty “ because the guy had moved up to Alaska and I said “I’ll take it!” I didn’t want – I was in the park service as a permanent and I didn’t want to lose that. I was starting where I really wanted to be. So - and that is where - the first week I realized that I had been working with the curator all the time doing exhibits and fabricating them and making mounts and stuff like that. And so I knew exactly what to do when I walked in – especially having been raised in a museum – and just hit the ground running and I went “Oh, my gosh, this is it!” and then that’s what I did from then on – collection management. That was my forte.

**ED:**  I’m going to shut it off just for a sec here *[referring to the recorder]*

—break—

**ED:**  OK. So we were talking about your position in San Francisco.

**JR:** Well, from then on I realized that I was not cut out to be an artist and - which turned out to be just fine with me because I found that I just absolutely loved collection care. I loved the collections. My dad started me out loving collections by saying that there would be no museums if they didn’t have collections. If you don’t have collections, you’re not a museum. And a museum’s job is to collect and document and preserve specimens for future generations and that’s the same thing with the park service – to keep these things. And it just really made an impression on me as a youngster. Well, I just had a ball doing that at the Western Museum Lab. We worked in the vaults down – the old vaults of the mint – were our studios and collection storage and it was just a wonderful bunch of people to work with. It was just absolutely great. I got to travel all over the country installing the exhibits – Bryce and Zion and just – western parks. Dinosaur National Monument where I had spent many, many summers with the Mantles down in the park and I got to go and built the exhibits and went and installed them and it was an absolute joy. I loved it.

So, then, I fell in love with a ranger and got married and was wafted off to Yellowstone after three years at the lab. I spent a little while at Yellowstone – back into Thoroughfare. He was the subdistrict ranger and I got to wander all over Yellowstone on a horse and it was fabulous – in spite of my husband, not because of him.

**ED:**  Did you work for Yellowstone at the time or were you just living there?

**JR:** No. At the time you couldn’t work for the park. I could have worked for the concessioner but the spouses couldn’t work for the park service.

**ED:**  Oh, I wasn’t aware of that. Interesting.

**JR:** Yeah, it was a little while before they got these dual career things. And I was not included in that. But we moved every, every few months because we were married and then we went to Thoroughfare, and then we went to Lake, and then we went back to Mammoth and then we ended up going to Omaha to the regional office where he was in the personnel office and I got a job – my first job that I could find was with the Internal Revenue Service. I worked for them for three months and then – but mainly I worked at the Joslyn Art Museum doing wonderfully fun things. That was a, that was a whole job unto itself. It was one of those lucky things. I went in to apply for a job - at a museum of course, where else would I go first – and the curator was a high school friend from Boulder. And so I got to do odds and ends of jobs there and work with the Karl Bodmer collection when it came in to the Joslyn Art Museum which was – Oh! I got to handle every one of those paintings! Oh my god that was a joy.

So then we left and moved to Dutch John, Utah, and then my husband left the park service and I left him. And by then I had the squiggly little, cutest best baby in the world and went to – got a job in Yellowstone thanks to Newell Joyner who came to see my dad – he was a friend of my dad’s - and he said “Well, have you called John Good to tell him you need a job – you need back into the park service?” and I said “Well, no, I hadn’t thought of that.” Pretty soon he brought me a paper and pencil and said “Write to him now!” So I did and I got a job at Yellowstone as a - I flunked the test for GS-4 Clerk Dictating Machine Transcriber. That was the only job they had vacant. But I got a very high score for a 3. So I went from a 7 at the Western Museum Lab to a 3 at Yellowstone and a little bit later I got a 4. I was there for the years doing whatever they needed to do in the division of interpretation which involved cleaning the exhibits in all the museums through the park and Big Hole. Thea Nordling and I did exhibits for Big Hole National Battlefield and took them up there and installed them and I cleaned all of the exhibits and opened them up for the season.

I’d go out in the park – drive out in the park before it was even open and, oh, it was just so neat and I got to some bear research for these two guys doing black bear studies from CSU *[Colorado State University]*. I’d go out in the winter on skis – way out in the park – and check bear dens to see if the bears had come out of the dens and how far they had gone and, oh god, I just got to do the neatest things. Marked bison. They loaned me to the ranger division to go and keep records – I was the curator, you know - keep records on how many bison had been inoculated and or had been tested for brucellosis. Things like that. It was great! I just got to do stuff for anybody and everybody.

**ED:**  Was that true of many people that it was a small staff so if you’re capable or interested they would – how did you get involved with those other projects?

**JR:** Oh, just because I was kind of the general dogsbody for interpretation. I was, um, I transcribed tapes for the historian which was fascinating. That was just story time. Oh, my gosh, it was wonderful. And the curator, the actual curator there was off getting her PhD and so I did curatorial work and then they knew – John knew what I had done at the Western Museum Lab so one of my jobs was to work on the museums and get the exhibits fixed up and scratches repaired and lettering replaced and pictures replaced and stuff like that because that’s what I had done at the Western Museum Lab. And then the rangers needed somebody and somebody said “Oh, Jean will do it!” and my boss said “Oh sure, go ahead and do it.” That was in the winter so there wasn’t all that much action but I also did typing and stuff for the three district rang- district interpreters and for the assistant chief of interpretation, and for the chief of interpretation, for the curator, the historian, the geologist and the photographer. So I just did whatever it was they needed at the time.

**ED:**  Sometimes those are the funnest jobs.

**JR:** Oh, it was a fabulous job and it was so safe and secure up there raising a kid by myself and some dear old friends were taking care of her so I was just – I just did anything and everything anybody wanted me to do.

**ED:**  So what lead you from there to your next job? Were you looking for opportunities?

**[Jean Rodeck Interview\_Clip 2\_Southwest Region]**

**Regional Curator**

**JR:** Well, actually, actually no. I was on a trip with my mom and we had stopped in to see some friends that I’d worked with at the Western Museum Lab. We stopped to see them in Santa Fe. He was Chief of Interpretation at Santa Fe and so, he said, “How would you like to be a curator again?” This was Bob Burrell. And, again, it was because of somebody that I knew and knew what I did and knew how well I did it. And, so, I had to apply for it but I did. I went from a GS-3 in Yellowstone Clerk Dictating Machine Transcriber to the Regional Curator GS-9 in Santa Fe because I was reinstatable within three years of leaving the job in San Francisco – you could - I could be reinstated to a 7 or a 9. And so, he hired me as a 9. And I got my 11 there in Santa Fe.

So I was in Santa Fe for seven years as Regional Curator of the Southwest Region which was Southern Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas – and then when Nixon decided that all of the regions – all the government agencies were going to have the same boundaries – the Park Service jumped on it. Hardly anyone else did but the Park Service jumped on it and while I was gone on a trip the regional boundaries had been changed. And Frank Kowski was the Regional Director and I saw him in the hall and he said “Hey Jean,” he said “what do you know about Civil War sites and revolutionary war sites?” And I said “Absolutely nothing. Why do you ask?” And he said, “Well, we’ve just added Arkansas and Louisiana and you’re now curator of these war sites.” And I went “Oh, crickets!”

**ED:**  That’s a weird boundary.

**JR:** It was weird. And we lost Arizona to the Western Region and the Regional Archeologist and I were given the task of splitting the library. It was an old library because Southwest was an old region and there were just invaluable books in that library that we had to send to the Western Region and later we found out that they had just let anybody have them that wanted them.

**ED:**  Heartbreaking.

**JR:** They never did have a library. That was heartbreaking. But, so I worked there for seven years and my main job was just catalog records. Checking catalog records and doing training on how to catalog and keep your things in order. But also one of my main jobs was just spot dotting and scratch patching – of just cleaning the exhibits that I’d helped construct and paint and everything. And just fixing up those exhibits and cleaning them up and making them look presentable because they were grubby. You know, fingerprints and the lettering was missing and been worn off – this was all hand lettering at the time. And so I’d just go from park to park and just wash and patch and paint and put new pictures up and do all the things that I could already do. And that was great. I had a huge tool box that was about four feet long – about like this - weighed a ton. And I’d load that up in a station wagon and take off and just – I drove all over the southwest. Everywhere. It was just wonderful. I just got to do anything I wanted to do – anything that I thought should be done.

**ED:**  So I would imagine there weren’t many park based curators then.

**JR:** No, there weren’t. There were not very many and they were just like when I was in Alaska, they were – as Regional Curator in Alaska – they were assigned as ancillary duties.

**ED:**  Yeah.

**JR:** Which was very unsatisfactory but that’s the way it was. And, so, as Regional Curator – it was neat being Regional Curator because I got to do all those things. Good hands on stuff. And work with these people with ancillary duties where I got to meet just all kinds of different kinds of people and work with them in the parks. Always the Chief of Interpretation because that’s what Curatorial was under. And, so the whole interpretive staff and then these people with ancillary duties – which even at that time I maintained should be resource managers rather than interpreters but that didn’t, that didn’t go over. I didn’t push it at the time because it just seemed to be an idea. But in Alaska we did – we tried to do that. And so I just did that for seven years and it was just an ideal job. Beautiful. Beautiful country and everything. And I did learn a lot about the Civil War.

**ED:**  Begrudgingly?

**JR:** Just became fascinated with the Civil War. And when I was an interpretive planner I used all of that.

**[Jean Rodeck Interview\_Clip 3\_Denver Service Center]**

**Interpretive Planner**

**JR:** But then, then I was asked to be an interpretive planner at the Denver Service Center. It just – circumstances…it just seemed like a good time to do something else. And they wanted, as an interpretive planner, they wanted somebody with a curatorial background. Nan Rickey was head of interpretive planning and she wanted to have somebody on the interpretive planning team – I think there were like maybe eight or nine – I don’t even remember how many of us there were but she had a biologist and a geologist and a couple historians and an interpreter – just flat out interpreter - Don Follows and Cliff – oh, I forgot Cliff’s name. He was the historian. Really good. Jim Massey and Charlie Clapper who was - he was a landscape architect but he had worked doing things with interpreters. So he was there. Bonnie Campbell was a sociologist which was just a really good resource for us to have. Then I was the curator. The curator because we needed to work with objects and we needed to – parks had to know in their interpretive plans what a curator did and what they were going to have to do – what they needed to do and how they could use – how the park could use collections.

**ED:**  For interpretation?

**JR:** Yeah. And preservation and for the research in the parks. So, I did that for…six years? Yeah, from 1973 to 1979 and really it was absolutely fabulous because I got thrown into situations that I didn’t know beans when the bag was open about how to do it and, again, kicked into the pool and thanks to wonderful people at Harpers Ferry and Nan Rickey and just being – they just gave you so much freedom to do what you needed to do and so much help on how to do it but not telling you how to do it, you know. You had to use your own imagination.

And, so, the first job I ever did was Cowpens National Historic Site and I didn’t know anything about that part of American history at all.

**ED:**  Where is that located?

**JR:** I wish you hadn’t asked!

**ED:**  (laughs) Generally.

**JR:** Back east *[Gaffney, South Carolina].*

**ED:**  Oh, ok.

**JR:** Oh, Isn’t that awful? I went to the visitor center even. No. I can’t think of it at the time. I think that may be a problem of the years and too many things my mind, in my head from the intervening years. Cause I know exactly where it is. Anyway, I would make up teams to go on these interpretive planning trips which were people from Harpers Ferry wayside exhibits and exhibit construction and interpretation and writers and whatever you thought you were going to need – audiovisual. Films are absolutely the best way to tell a historic story, particularly. But almost anything – it’s just easier for visitors to see that and hear that right in front of them and so we always had somebody, some film maker with us. Just some fantastic people at Harpers Ferry. They were just awesome. And we had the total support of Mark Sagan who was running it at the time – and running the design center.

And so, I just got Cowpens and Andersonville – oh my god, that job just tore the heart right out of my chest. And - just talk about Civil War, man did I get into it. Oh, I can’t even remember the places that I worked on. It was wonderful whatever it was.

**[Jean Rodeck Interview\_Clip 4\_Redwood NP]**

**Interpretive Planner**

**JR:** And, then, Redwood National Park which was a pretty new park and while I was doing interpretive planning there and a little work with the master planners Bob Barbee was Superintendent there and he asked me if I would come and implement the interpretive plan that we’d been working on and so I did with my daughter’s blessing. She was between her junior and senior year in high school and she just wanted to move. And we – oh it was great. So I spent five years at Redwood. Half of my job was being South Area Interpreter and the other half of my job was being a liaison with the communities that had been affected by the establishment of the park – particularly the lower part of Redwood National Park – the addition called “worm” where there had been clear cutting right down to the river and all that erosion was coming down destroying the river, destroying the fishery, and they had a huge rehab project. So, I was kind of the liaison between the rehab project and the communities where I would take the scientific things and tell the communities about what was going on. Bob wanted to be totally transparent about what we were doing in the park because we were not well liked.

**ED:**  That was going to be my question – how did people feel about that?

**JR:** Oh, they just, they just hated the park. They just hated it and they – and I got plopped down right in the middle of that.

**ED:**  Did that change? I mean, over the years I would hope that changed, but maybe-?

**JR:** Yes, it did. Very much so. It changed during the rehab project because they hired displaced woods workers to work the heavy machinery – to put back the roads that those guys had dug for the logging and had done so much damage in the Redwood Creek watershed. And I like to think that I helped because I just – we just told the communities everything, everything we were doing. And Bob just wanted them to know absolutely every single move we made about anything. So I went to chamber of commerce meetings and, oh, all sorts of things. Gave presentations and just did, oh my god, I got to do so much stuff.

**ED:**  Did you find that – and maybe this is getting ahead – did you find that part of your job applied to your work in Alaska as well because most of the parks were very new there?

**JR:** Absolutely. Absolutely –

**ED:** -and not well…

**JR:** It prepared me for being hated. It did not – a couple times it didn’t cool my temper but, yeah, it did. It was, uh, it did help a lot. You know, it’s just kind of unfortunate because - Bob Barbee put it really well with Redwood National Park which made it easier for me in my job as liaison with him and the communities, particularly the southern communities – uh, he said to the people, to the people he said “you know,” he said, we – when our airplane landed – I wish I could remember how he said it but I can’t. I’ll just have to paraphrase it – that we’ve just landed but we’re not getting back on that plane. We’re here to stay. And, um, and that did make it easier because the chamber of commerce down in Orick – the guy was a misplaced – displaced woods worker. I mean, he had just flat out lost his job and he was the president of the chamber of commerce and he was a wonderful man. He and his wife were just absolutely marvelous. He was a very smart man and he could read the handwriting on the wall and he said “OK, Orick, there’s no use fighting it.” There’s no use wasting our time and effort and such. He said “Let’s work with them – and let’s see. They’re here to stay. Let’s figure out how to use this.” And so, he was really easy to work with. And, uh, it was really very hard to begin with. I had a big fight with the deputy sheriff that I lost my temper.

**ED:**  Hm, I’m trying to imagine that.

**JR:** Well, I think, it’s one of the very few times. I think I can probably count them on one hand. But I did lose my temper because he was spitting on me and calling me vile names and I grabbed him by the neck tie and said “You can’t do that! That’s uncivilized!” I don’t know what else I said but I just let go of his tie and he kind of staggered back. He was a huge man. As soon as we were through with that meeting I just packed up my slides and I went running across the road to the visitor center and it was about 10 or 10:30 and I called Bob Barbee at the office and I said “Bob, I just said some things to the local-,” he was the deputy sheriff of Orick, I mean of that part of the county. He was the deputy sheriff and I just had read him the riot act. I said, “you’re gonna get some calls, I’m sure.” And he just laughed. Nobody ever called him. The next time I had a meeting, came in around the big stove at the grange, was this sheriff with about three other guys. And I just put my stuff up and was I gonna go across the road until some more people came and he said “Wait a minute Jean! Jean, come here. I want you to meet somebody.” He came and put his arm around me and I thought “I’m finished.” He introduced me to these guys and he said “Jean, Jean Swearingen is with Redwood National Park.” “Oh, yeah, yeah -” And he put his hands like that and he said “Back off, she’s ok.”

**ED:**  I think sometimes – I’ve had experiences like that and when you –when, when people are kind of brought to a situation when they realize you’re a person –

**JR:** Yeah.

**ED:**  - you’re not the agency – you are not the government –

**JR:** Yes.

**ED:**  But, um, if they just kind of get a step back and they can appreciate that you’re here to try to come to some common ground –

**JR:** Exactly.

**ED:**  or work together and you’re doing all that you can do within this framework.

**JR:** Absolutely. That’s what happened with this sheriff. And then he just was ever so nice from then on. I don’t think he – Bob said he just didn’t want me to chew him out again in public. But that was the, that was the only really bad thing at Redwood. The other ones were just people not wanting to talk to you. And businesses down in Arcata where we lived – in the south part of the park – outside the south park – would say “Oh, you’re with Redwood, hm, we don’t really, we don’t really like the park.” I said, “Well, will you still cash my check anyway?” “Well, oh, ok.” The bank was wonderful but it was, it was a hard job.

It was - and it was sad because I could identify with those people, you know, losing their jobs and their livelihoods. They had families, homes and kids. And it was hard. But it sure was worth it because of the rehab. When we would make people go and look at what was being done – these people who were crabby with us – and they went “Oh, boy, that’s a nice job. Man, that guy really knew how to use a bulldozer. That guy’s, ya know - ” And we’d say, “Well, displaced woods workers.”

**ED:**  And they know their stuff.

**JR:** You know, we got the ones – we got the people from you who knew the most about what we needed to do – and that was you guys. And they went “Hm, well, well that’s kind of good.” So we did – we put a lot of economy back in there. And those people were so wonderful to work with. They really were. They’re just salt of the earth.

And so, as the south area interpreter, I had an assistant who ran the visitor center and then – I was there about five years – and then about two years – oh, I don’t know, I don’t know how long it was – we had lost our Management Assistant. He had retired. And, so Bob called me up and said “Well, how would you like to be Management Assistant?” And I went “Oh, cool!”

**Redwood National Park, Management Assistant**

**JR:** So I became the Management Assistant and did all the, all the PR and news releases and things like that and gave talks and – oh, and in the meantime, I got to teach interpretation at Humboldt State University! I got to know the staff up there because we had hired several of his students and he called me up and he said, he said I’m, I’m going to do a job or write a book or whatever it was he was going to do and he said “Could you come and teach my course?” And so I called Bob and said “Can I do that?” and he said “sure” so I got to teach a wonderful bunch of students in interpretation and I took them up into the park and we did all sorts of stuff. It was great. And then I got in with the handicap – what was it called? Oh, I got it downstairs. Anyway, this handicap group in making Redwood accessible. So I got in with this group because I said I would really like to have an access guide for Redwood and then get an assessment of what we need to do to make this park accessible to, you know, blind, deaf, um –

**ED:**  Mobility issues?

**JR:** Any kind - mobility issues. Everything. And so I got this coterie of these wonderful people. And it was – what was it? I can’t think of the name because – Oh, it was HAP. Handicapped Association…what did the P stand for? Anyway. Program, I guess. And, um, it was just called HAP. H-A-P.

And, so, I would get the park service van and we would load somebody in a wheelchair and blind people. We had about six people that represented just about every handicap you could, you could gather up and that were, that were, you know, mobile enough to get in and out and go climbing around and hiking up trails and stuff. Oh, we had a ball. And so I wrote up a handicap guide to Redwood that we gave out to people. And oh, that was, that was so much fun. I’ve got a neat picture downstairs of me with these people. I’ve got some pictures downstairs come to think of it – in the den there. That was a wonderful experience. They asked me to take a bunch of them to go get their – to go give blood and I said oh good, cause I’m going anyways. I may have misappropriated the park service van but no one, nobody cared and we went to – and it turns out that I, who was the only able bodied person, completely, of the group – I was anemic and I couldn’t give blood and, oh my gosh, that bunch of people never let me forget that. They teased me about that forever. They were great to work with. That was the kind of thing I got to do. I got to work with groups of people that were – something that I’d never done before. And, so, just so much of the stuff I did at Redwood was things I’d never done before.

**ED:**  Was that project something that was kind of going on park wide – trying to make parks more accessible - or was that something -

**JR:** No, no

**ED:**  - you saw a need for?

**JR:** No. Well, I saw a need for it but that was at that time where people were wanting access and I had come from interpretive planning where part of the planning was, was multiple access.

**ED:**  Right.

**JR:** All - total access. And, for kids, pregnant women, disabilities. Anything. And I just really believed in that when I was doing interpretive planning so, so I was just interested in doing it and I knew that so many of the places at Redwood were not accessible and I just had never thought that was right. So, so I did that for a while and then, well, and then I got, well, let’s see.

The Western Regional Curator position got open and we had gotten a new – Bob Barbee he had left Redwood – and we got a new superintendent and I wanted to leave. And, uh, so I applied for the Regional Curator of the Western Region and I didn’t even want it because I had worked either in interpretive planning or, you know, whatever. I had worked in every single California park and I knew them all. I knew them all too well and I just really did not want that job. I didn’t want to live in San Francisco again. Been there, done that. And, fortunately – oh thank – I was so lucky. The gods were watching over me. They knew I didn’t want that job and they knew who was the right person for that job – which was Diane Nicholson. She was the perfect person for that job and she got it and, oh, she was scared that I would be mad that I didn’t get the job and I called her. I said “Diane, I am so grateful to you for getting that job! I didn’t want it. I do want out of the park.”

**[Jean Rodeck Interview\_Clip 5\_Golden Gate and Alaska]**

**Golden Gate NRA Exhibits**

**JR:** But just a short while later then, Glennie Wall called me – she was cultural resources, I think, for Golden Gate National Recreation Area and she wanted me to come down and design and build and install the first exhibits in a changing gallery at the Maritime Museum. We had just gotten it. And, so my - the Assistant Superintendent who was acting Superintendent said “sure!” Said if they’ll pay for you they can have you. Same thing with all the stuff I did in Alaska.

But - so I went down for four months and did the exhibit for the changing gallery and then while I was there I found out – Oh, I was in Alaska for some reason or another. Why was I in Alaska? Um, from Redwood… Oh! I was hired – I was asked by Steve Peterson to be the – be on a team of architects and planners who were going to bid on doing those historic interpretive kiosks in downtown Anchorage – historic Anchorage.

**ED:**  Oh.

**JR:** And so I just took leave and went up to Anchorage and did that um, and did that job for Anchorage and this company got the – got the job. And so those exhibits up there were from my interpretive plan.

**ED:**  Those are - like the ones along 4th Avenue?

**JR:** Yeah, those blue, blue triangles. I don’t know if they’re still there.

**ED:**  Well, there are interpretive panels around.

**JR:** Yeah. Big, tall, three sided, blue –

**ED:**  Yeah

**JR:** Things with a lot of photographs.

**ED:**  I think they are still there.

**JR:** And so –

**ED:**  And that’s when Steve Peterson was with Bureau of Land Management?

**JR:** No, he was working for a private architectural firm. That was before he came into the Park Service.

**ED:**  So how did they know to find you for that?

**JR:** Oh, because, because I had – because I knew Pederson.

**ED:**  Oh, I thought you only knew him from Alaskan work after that. That’s interesting. I didn’t know how long you had been –

**BLM Alaska, Interpretive Planning**

**JR:** No, because they – because I had been borrowed to do the thing for BLM. Let’s see – had I been an interpretive planner? Yeah. When I was an interpretive planner is where I met Steve at Eagle when I was doing a job for BLM because of, because of the Alaska archeologist who was, uh, Gary – oh! God, these are some of my best friends! Don’t let this come out! Gary and Stephan- Matlock! Gary Matlock was the archeologist and he was working with those guys in Eagle and he said “Well, you need to get an interpretive plan up here. You need to do some planning so that you can – you know, it’s a way to ask for money and do all this stuff and this lady does this interpretive planning that tells you how to tell the story of what you’re doing so that you can get money to get exhibits and stuff.” So that’s where I met Steve Peterson who was working for BLM at the time. And then, later, when he was working for this architectural firm that was bidding for this job in Anchorage.

So that’s how come I was in Alaska and I went to see a friend that I’d worked with in the Denver Service Center – Leslie Hart – who was then Chief of Cult – Regional Chief of Cultural Resources. I just went to say hello to her since I was in Alaska and I hadn’t seen her for ages. I did interpretive planning. When I was an interpretive planner I was chosen – when they broke up into regions – I was chosen to do the Pacific Northwest and - which included Hawaii but I never went to Hawaii. Kept giving the jobs away cause I got to go to Alaska. So that’s how that, that rolled into that.

**Alaska Region NPS, Regional Curator**

**JR:** And so I went to see Leslie and she looked up and said “Oh hi Jean.” I thought she’d be glad to see me because we were pretty good friends. And she said “Well, it doesn’t surprise me at all that you’re here.” And I said “Well, why not?” She said “Because the announcement for Regional Curator just came out.”

**ED:**  Ah, that’s bizarre.

**JR:** And so I just left her office and went down to personnel and got it – and applied for it. Then finished my job up there and then was down doing the temporary exhibit for Golden Gate when they called me – and Leslie called me and she said “You still want that job?” “Yes!” So, that’s how I got to be Regional Curator up there in Alaska.

And, so the minute I was through with that job and we had the opening of the exhibit and everything I drove home and two weeks later I was sitting at my desk in Anchorage. I packed up my house and my dog and oh, my gosh, that was, that was a quick trip. And I flew up there and had my car and my stuff shipped up. And I flew up and two weeks later I was sitting looking out at my desk in Anchorage and here behind me I could hear this clunking of change – was the Alaska Regional Historian – was Bill Brown who, when I was in Southwest Region, he was the Regional Historian. And his desk was behind mine and I could hear him walking around - he paced and he clinked the change in his pockets. It was just déjà vu. So then I was up there for eleven years. Longest I ever lived anywhere or worked anywhere.

**ED:**  And you were the first Regional Curator?

JR: I was the first Regional Curator. Wonderful Frank Deckert – had been – he, he just brought me down a couple of boxes of chronologically filed things this way. And, he had, he had done the reports that they needed to do on the collections, you know, how many and this kind of thing – but just, just barely. He came in and he was so relieved. He just thanked me so much and he got rid of all that stuff. And, um, so in the eleven years that I was there – one of the questions in contributions -for those parks, we got storage equipment for them, we got, um - and everything was the beginning. Everything was the first. We got Collection Management Plans – never been done before. We got fire prev- or fire and security plans and we got Scope of Collection Statements and we got all of the things that all of the parks in the Lower 48 had only we got them done within a matter of years. It was fabulous.

**ED:**  I seem to recall you would, like, create a SWAT team –

**JR:** Yes

**ED:**  - and have people come up and go to multiple parks to make the most efficient –

**JR:** Yeah. For the interpretive planning – I mean, for the Scope of Collection Statements – we got – oh, I can’t remember now. Some of the regional curators. One team would do southeast Alaska and another team would do the thirt- twelve I guess – eleven or twelve upper parks. Then we got the chief of security at Williamsburg. I don’t know how he got hooked up with Park Service but somehow we got him and he just became the fire and security person for the National Park Service – still working for Williamsburg. And so he came – he and his wife came and we chartered a plane and we did all the upper fire and security things and then we got another guy – John Hunter – who was a regional curator with the Park Service - did Skagway and Sitka and Glacier Bay.

**ED:**  So, in – what year was it when you came?

**JR:** I came to Alaska in 1984.

**ED:**  So the region was maybe four years old?

**JR:** Yeah. Yeah. It was. And I had been asked if I wanted to come up as part of the Task Force – the original Task Force -

**ED:**  The Alaska Task Force?

**JR:** But I didn’t, I didn’t want to because what I was doing at the time - I really, I really wanted to finish. I wanted to do it a little longer. And, so, when I came up - by the time I came up it was all set up. Everything was all operating. Everybody had staffs and Frank Deckert had gotten ancillary duties assigned for curatorial and everything so, so I just kind of walked into a really neat set up and a clean slate and that was – I can’t think of any other regional curator that ever got to do that.

**ED:**  Yeah, it’s very interesting to be in that position.

**JR:** Except the really early, early ones.

**ED:**  Denali and Sitka had kind of established collections.

**JR:** Yes.

**ED:**  Maybe Katmai?

**JR:** No.

**ED:**  Not really? So just Denali and Sitka really had a sort of curatorial function?

**JR:** And Sitka they were doing very well, but, uh, with all the Russian stuff but – Denali, yeah they had a place for collections and things and were kind of under control but it wasn’t really, it wasn’t really safe.

**ED:**  That seems like – I know we were going to ask you about challenges. I was thinking about challenges in curation in Alaska and it is, it is pretty challenging because of the remoteness and the limited access to the resources.

**JR:** And the fact that superintendents – and I will say this even now. Many superintendents, not just some but many superintendents, do not understand that the collections are a primary resource. They are not, not some off thing – oh, here’s this, well, we’ll stick it in the drawer. These are bits and pieces of the park and the results of studies and research that are primary, primary resources for them as much as Half Dome or as much as the bears or as much as the Crown Jewels. And, in Alaska, they weren’t much to look at but they were the results of people finding – all of the sudden finding that there’s an archeological site in a place where they never even thought to look before. And, uh, native species that they didn’t know they had. Sometimes those were found in collections. Somebody would collect them and really didn’t know what they were but they stashed them away, thank goodness, and they found out -

**ED:**  - there was a voucher specimen. Yeah.

**JR:** Yeah. Yeah. That, um, it was –

**ED:**  And administrative records, too, I think are often overlooked, it seems -

**JR:** Yes. Oh, absolutely

**ED:**  - as an important component of the –

JR: One of the things when we finally established the collections storage downstairs at the first regional office (or second, I guess, or third) – anyway, where I was *[2525 Gambell Street].*

**ED:**  Fireweed.

**JR:** And where you were.

**ED:**  On Gambell.

**JR:** Fireweed, yes. I kept trying to get the archeologists to give me their records.

**ED:**  Yup. Their field books.

**JR:** Yeah. Field books and records and all – just all of the stuff when they were through with a project.

**ED:**  There was a lot of hoarding of data – by researchers of all kinds.

**JR:** Yeah, and I understand that because I was in the same position. I had been through all of that. And – but, what I was offering them was immortality - that those records and their work would be there forever and accessible to anybody that was interested and they would say oh, wow, look what such and so did with their research in Alaska. Oh, it was like pulling teeth.

**ED:**  Well, I can tell you it’s gotten better.

**JR:** Oh, I’m so glad to hear that because I just talked to everybody. But, as I say, superintendents just had a hard time thinking of these – they just didn’t look like much of anything. There’d be a broken cup handle, you know, from a miner’s cabin or something.

**ED:**  They weren’t a Smithsonian display.

**JR:** Yeah. And, and they were not spectacular stuff except the Russian stuff. But it was just hard for them to understand that they had to protect them as much as they had to protect wildlife and a historic building and a tree and a plant and a boat and, you know, just whatever- that couldn’t be left outside anymore.

**ED:**  I think over the years that has improved a bit. I know there have been some researchers doing work on ground cover studies and realizing that there were collections of aerial photos that had been annotated that they were looking for because they connected with records of tree cores and other things –

**JR:** Right yeah – oh, yeah.

**ED:**  They could finally see – they knew where to go to look and they were so happy to be able to find that most of that material was together.

**JR:** Oh, I wanted those cores and stuff and they said “Well, what do you want that for?”

**ED:**  I know. They were just under people’s desks and don’t look very important.

**JR:** Yeah. It’s just – it’s research. It’s documentation of the life of this park. I just really, really, really believe in collections.

**ED:**  I think the more people use archives themselves too the – they find things that they need for their own work, the more they appreciate –

**JR:** Yeah

**ED:**  And, as we’ve moved buildings in the Alaska Region there was a concerted effort to make sure that people were aware of the archives as people were retiring and as we were moving buildings. That they really think about what kind of records they had and consider moving them to the regional archive.

JR: Yeah

**ED:**  Where they would be still indexed and accessible.

**JR:** It helped – it did help when we got an actual place instead of – well, I don’t know what we had before at the regional office. We didn’t have anything but my office until we got that, that –

**ED:**  Yeah, you had a curatorial room by the time – a dedicated storage area by the time I arrived.

**JR:** And when we got that space downstairs it wasn’t as big as I wanted but it was where I wanted it. It was totally insulated by all the offices around and it was a space that people shouldn’t be working in because there were no windows and I think it’s impossible to work without windows. And, so that worked out really well and I think when, when a few, a very few of the people realized that we had a formal place that they could go - they could go and use those things – only they could use them better cause we had them in order.

**ED:**  Yes.

**JR:** And, so they were even more useful to them than when they were under their desks and stuff. Boy, that was hard. But that’s one of the fun things about working in Alaska was that I spent a lot of time talking people into letting me, you know, make them immortal and letting me help them preserve the research that had been done in the parks in the past, some of them way in the past. It was a fun - it was just a fabulous job.

**ED:**  And so much critical baseline research where you don’t – you may not have that everywhere.

**ANILCA Section 1318 Assistance**

**JR:** Absolutely. And then the other thing was, you know, in ANILCA *[Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act]* there’s this section that says that if a Native Village or a Native group requests help with their cultural resources the National Park Service must give it to them.

**ED:**  Right. Section 1318.

**JR:** Yeah I can’t remember those numbers.

**ED:**  That’s what it is.

**JR:** I could spit those off like nothing! But, um, it was me! And, so, I’d get a call from, you know, Aniakchak – uh, no, I didn’t mean that – I meant. What’s the -

**ED:**  or Anaktuvuk or it could be – it could be

**JR:** Anaktuvuk!

**ED:**  could be places not connected to a park at all.

**JR:** No. Absolutely. Not connected with a park just anybody.

**ED:**  Although they were connected.

**JR:** And, and so hop in a plane and go up there and help them.

**ED:**  Yeah.

**JR:** Or somebody would call the Regional Director and say “well, we’ve got such and so” and the Regional Director would call me “Jean, you’re going to -

**ED:**  Technical assistance.

**JR:** - such and so tomorrow.” And that’s how we got involved with the – you and Kay and Dave and I got - your picture is downstairs.

**ED:**  Downstairs. The Kotzebue City Museum?

**JR:** Yes. So we got to do that job with them and then I got to help with the, with the uh, with the museum, you know, down below the offices. I can’t think of what the name of that is either and we were just talking about that.

**ED:**  The NANA Museum *[Kotzebue]*?

**JR:** Yeah. And, so, uh. And those jobs were just – they were just wonderful. That’s how we got involved when we – when we all went up to Bethel.

**ED:**  Yeah Bethel was one of my favorite experiences - helping with the Yupiit Piciryarait Museum.

**JR:** Yeah, yeah. That was wonderful working with Mary –

**ED:**  Stachelrodt.

**JR:** What was it?

**ED:**  Mary Stachelrodt. Mary Charles.

**JR:** Yes. Yes. Yes. She was wonderful. She gave me the kuspuk that I’ve got in my closet.

**ED:**  That was really – I went maybe three times and it was – it was really – I think Section 1318 is a wonderful thing because it –

**JR:** Oh it was.

**ED:**  So many communities really need some technical assistance for cultural resource –

**JR:** Absolutely.

**ED:**  - management and it was such a nice thing to be able to do.

**JR:** Yeah.

**ED:**  It was, like, very mutually beneficial.

**JR:** It was. It was. And it was just fascinating to go to these places.

**ED:**  Yeah, they had opportunities that we wouldn’t necessarily have dealt with in the Park Service proper but –

**JR:** Yeah.

**ED:**  You know, we had skills to lend.

**President of Museums Alaska**

**JR:** And then while I was up there I got to be president of Museums Alaska for six years and it was absolutely wonderful. I wasn’t sure that I could do that - and I did a very good job. And it was, it was just absolutely fabulous because Ted Birkedal *[Alaska Region Chief of Cultural Resources]* just gave me my head and *[sneezes]*

**ED:**  Bless you!

**JR:** Pardon me. And, um, I got to just do whatever was necessary to do that. It was marvelous. It really was. I got to go all over the state – other places and other museums. And it was a very active, active organization and it was just – it was wonderful. And I got to know so many more people in other museums and we got help from them and we gave them help and, oh my gosh, it was a marvelous organization. And it’s still going strong I understand.

**ED:**  It is, yeah. They’re meeting very soon – in October.

**JR:** We did a lot of training in Alaska, too. Lots and lots of training. And got people from the, from the Lower 48 who had been cataloging longer that we had up there, they had. And when we got the new system – the new computer system – was when I was up there and we had them come up instead of me trying to teach, which would have been a disaster. We got the experts from Harpers Ferry and from other regions and, uh – this one young woman, Ann Elder, who came up and taught the natural history cataloging. And, uh, it - that just worked wonderfully. We’d get – and I got money thanks to Ann Hitchcock who was our Chief Curator in Washington – got us money for endangered resources which were the collections. She got this incredible program going that got us all you – all the seasonals and everything so I could pay you as GS-7s instead of 5s like in the Lower 48 and just –

**ED:**  And we were focused on backlog cataloging - that was the -

**JR:** Yeah.

**ED:**  – just trying to catch up.

**JR:** That was the money that she got. She got millions of dollars for us doing that which enabled us to do a lot of work. And we got to do these other things besides instead of just sitting there at a computer all the time - or you guys sitting at the computer! I, I’d –

**ED:**  It was a good combination of -

**JR:** I was at the original - at the initial - where they had all the regional curators learning this system

**ED:**  The Automated National Catalog System.

**JR:** Oh, Yes.

**ED:**  But there were even – I remember that the Eagle Historical Society used that system. I think they –

**JR:** Yes, yeah.

**ED:**  I think Bethel we ended up developing something separate but –

**JR:** Yeah.

**ED:**  I believe Eagle used it.

**Eagle Historical Society**

**JR:** Oh, that wonderful woman at Eagle.

**ED:**  Elvi Scott?

**JR:** Elva Scott!

**ED:**  Elva.

**JR:** Oh, yeah. She just, she was very antagonistic when I first met her – when I was doing the work for the BLM ten years before I was acting superintendent there and, uh and oh boy did we win her over when we were helping with this, that and the other thing. And when I was superintendent, I was in uniform, of course –

**ED:** In Eagle?

**JR:** In Eagle. And Elva called, called me and she said, she said three of our guides are gone from here, she said, “will you give a tour of Eagle?” and I just about fell over. She said “I’ll bring you a t-shirt!” She said, “You can just wear it with your uniform pants.” And I just – it just blew me away because then I knew I was OK with everybody. So, I said “Heck yes, I can do that!” Cause I’d taken it several times myself and had gone into the history of Eagle when I was working for – when I was doing that job for the BLM. Oh, it was a blast! So, she’d just call me at the drop of a hat. And I called Bob Peterson who was essentially my supervisor and I said “Is it OK if I do that on government time?” He said “Absolutely!” Oh, that was fun. That was just – in all those years with the Park Service I got to do so many fun, different things that I never would have dreamed of doing. I never would have given a thought to doing some of the things I did. And I thought “well, I can’t do that, don’t want to do that.” Then I did it and it was so fun.

**ED:** Do you think that because the Alaska Park Service was relatively new that that even gave you more opportunities? Or-

**JR:** Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. Oh, gosh, yes.

**ED:** Just the limited staff that was available.

**JR:** Oh gosh, yeah.

**ED:** -and the needs that were present.

**JR:** Absolutely. Absolutely. And the opportunity to work with these incredible people. You know, the first superintendents of the, of the new parks. And the first interpreters and the first resource managers. And, oh, and then the people in the villages and the people with the museums and just – oh, my god, it was incredible.

**ED:** Just kind of forging the way. I think it -

**JR:** Yeah. It was – and it was just like everything was new because, you know, it had never - in most of the places, except the old ones *[National Parks]* it had just never been done there before. Everybody was just – everybody seemed to do everything with gusto which is a nice, nice atmosphere to work in. Especially if you’re doing something that you don’t really know what you’re doing! - when you first start – but you learn fast.

**ED:** And did the work of the Alaska Task Force really set people up pretty well to move from, you know, the GMPs *[General Management Plans]*? Did those really help guide things or do you - ?

**Museum Collections Overseen by Resource Managers**

**JR:** Well, I don’t – I shouldn’t say because when I was in Alaska, um, all those things were going on and I did have a little input on some, you know, some parts of it and did some – reading some things – but I didn’t have direction or anything in there – with that. And since I didn’t work in any of the parks, except with the collections - and I was very, very focused. I didn’t have time or money to do anything but be focused on the collections. And, uh, and most of those collections were connected with resource management rather than interpretation. And, so, um, I got – I really, I really pushed for the Resource Managers to be in charge of the collections and even some of the Resource Managers said that that was ok with them because they were, they were the ones working with the collections anyway. They were the ones making the collections.

**ED:** I was going to say – They were the ones producing them.

**JR:** And they were the ones that knew the value of the collections more than interpreters. So, I think by the end there weren’t very many interpreters in charge of curatorial but I don’t remember.

**ED:** I can’t think of many in the early 90s.

**JR:** I don’t remember.  
  
**ED:** I think most of them were maybe – either there was an established curator or registrar, like Sitka, or it was under resource management.

**JR:** Yeah.

**ED:** I think that is true.

**JR:** I just really, really, really liked that. And most of them really were natural resource management rather than cultural.

**ED:** Well, most parks had a natural resource person well before they had a cultural person.

**JR:** Yeah, they all – every single park has cultural resources.

**ED:** Right.

**JR:** Every single park has natural resources. But, the – depending on who was doing the most work – like Karl –

**ED:** Gurke?

**JR:** - whatever his name was. Yeah, Gurke. At Klondike. Um, he did a really good job, I think. But then they got Debbie, um –

**ED:** Sanders.

**JR:** Sanders. And she just is – I just didn’t pay any attention to them after they got her. And Sue *[Thorsen]* at Sitka. Jon Paynter was at Denali and he was resource manager. Paynter?

**ED:** I think that might be right.

**JR:** So, anyway.

**ED:** Yeah, some parks still have shared positions for curators but there are more parks now that have someone I would say more dedicated than just an ancillary duty.

**JR:** Yeah

**ED:** So it has come quite a ways.

**JR:** Yeah, I just tried –

**ED:** - in some regards.

**JR:** - hard to get those positions. And we were lucky to get the ones we did. I thought that was - I wish I could have gotten more in the eleven years that I was there! But, we did so much. We got so much done in eleven years – you guys. I shouldn’t – I say “we” –

**ED:** As a team –

**JR:** I shouldn’t even include myself. The curators – you guys that I got up there were just awesome. And it was, it was just everything that you guys did. I, you know, I just got the money and doled it out and di the reports and you guys did the real work on that backlog. I’m sure there’s still backlog but it’s just colossal.

**ED:** I think there is a lot to be said, too, though for making – helping management better understand the significance and the value of collections.

**JR:** Yeah, that seemed like a big part of my job. And I finally got in with superintendent’s conferences. Finally got to give a little resource management part of collections – for collections – at the superintendent’s conferences.

**ED:** Was that – so what were some of the big challenges that you faced, just say, in your Alaska career? Would you say – I mean –

**JR:** Getting – I think what we were just talking about. Getting people at the parks who knew how to do - take care of the collections. Who knew how to catalog, who could do these - cause we tried to make it as simple as we could, you know. You write it down in this one book. You write one line down here in India Ink and you’ve got control of whatever came in – or, you’ve got control of it, you know. And, and that’s, that’s fine. You put the accession number on this thing and you put them away and then we’ll try and find somebody to come finish it but you’ve got it all packaged up there. And it’s so easy! One line in a book!

**ED:** Well, you trained them well cause we would show up and they would have a box of things to deal with and it was all kind of ready to go –

**JR:** Yeah. Yeah, I just –

**ED:** It was beyond their abilities but they were ready to -

**JR:** It was – it was convincing the superintendents that they needed to spend staff time on their collections because they were primary resources. Oh, I just pounded that –

**ED:** Was getting it out from under interp, in people’s minds, was that a struggle or did you just kind of decree -

**JR:** Uh, no, it was just a little by little thing. It was just kind of an incremental thing. Um –

**ED:** And maybe because you were starting from nothing –

**JR:** Yeah. And some of them didn’t have interpreters or some of them just had seasonal interpreters and I wanted to stress that it was better to have somebody permanent on the collections cause collections - collections were not seasonal!

**ED:** Yeah.

**JR:** They are primary resources and you must care for them all the time. Um, and I, I think that was the main thing – of getting somebody in the park to take care of them because – but, when I was given money, it – I said, “Ok now you have a problem with curatorial, I send you somebody the next day.” And so they all kind of got used to that and they would - Cary Brown *[YUCH]* would call and say we found this kind of pile of whatever – someone up at Denali would call – or, you know, whatever it was and, and so we could send one or a team out just instantly and say “go do this” cause you guys would know how to do it, whatever it was. Didn’t matter what it was.

**ED:** How was your funding for that program? Since you were coming in as a new curator did they carve out a budget for you or did you have to kind of fight for –

**JR:** No, because it was shortly after I went there that Ann got this backlog initiative – this endangered – I’m sorry I don’t remember any of the names of these!

**ED:** Well they change!

**JR:** As I said, my records are all up in Fort Collins so I can’t even refer to them. But she got this initiative that was the first initiative and it got funded by Congress – millions of dollars – for the whole - parkwide. So we just, we just got, you know, we just got what we got which was really sufficient to hire all you guys which is what we needed. We needed bodies to actually touch these things and catalog them and store them. And touch the next thing and catalog and store it and have this retrieval system because without retrieval collections are just – they’re dead.

But, um, but we set up the retrieval system with the catalog system and we got equipment through that initiative – the backlog initiative – and we got, we got people. We got money for supplies. We got money for travel. We got equipment. We got all these things. We got our computers – we got, what, four or five computers in one swell foop! And, so, it wasn’t – anytime I asked for money to do a job before the initiative I, I think I would just figure out what needed to be done and I’d go to Leslie and she’d give me money to do it.

**ED:** I just think of, even today, sometimes the cost of getting to the headquarters area of some of these parks can be pretty staggering.

**JR:** Yes, yes it is.

**ED:** There’s not really any efficient way to do it. It’s just – it is what it is and -

**JR:** Yeah.

**ED:** Especially coming up initially and just trying to get the lay of the land and see what storage facilities were like in each of the parks and –

**JR:** Yeah. Well, I got - when I first got there Leslie said “Get out to the parks because –

**ED:** You need to know!

**JR:** - your work isn’t here. It’s out in the parks!” And this was something that, that was – Leslie, who had done curatorial work at Yosemite when she was first starting, knew the value of collections. That’s why she got that curator position established because she knew they needed it. And that had been my recommendation ten years before when I was up there – now, why was I up there?

**ED:** Didn’t – you helped with the Iditarod Trail?

**JR:** Oh, yeah, I did the Iditarod thing – and interpretive plan for the Iditarod Trail for BLM but, but I was in a position to write a report to Alaska and I don’t remember why that was. But, anyway, I sent a report to him and I said the one thing that they needed badly – this is when I was an interpretive planner – Oh! I did interpretive planning up there! That’s when I first went to Alaska – in ’74. Was to do – from Denver – to do interpretive planning.

**ED:** Oh, ok.

**JR:** Oh, I forgot about that! I did, uh, Sitka and Glacier Bay. And that was my first trip up there. And then, um, then I went up there for some other reasons. I don’t think I did interpretive plans for anybody up in the interior. But, anyway, I had to write this report and my – I guess it was Leslie that said – no, I guess it was before Leslie – anyway, to say what my recommendations for the collections were. And, I said, my first recommendation was that they get a Regional Curator, preferably me (laughs). I said – you know, this is the sign, this is the sign for volunteer – I went like this.

**ED:** Pulling on your own shoulder there.

**JR:** Yes! And, so, that was my recommendation that I sent to the, to the Regional Director. Was they needed a curator. They did not have staff to just get curators out in all the parks and I could, and I could recognize that and understand that totally. I said “but if you have a Regional Curator that knows everything there is to know about what needs to be done you’re over a huge hump.”

**ED:** Yeah.

**JR:** Because, bless Frank Deckert – I keep repeating about him but he did a wonderful job of keeping things, keeping their noses above water and, um, but it was just – that was just the one thing they needed so badly and it took them ten years. Ten years to the date.

**ED:** Yeah. I was just thinking that.

**JR:** Right to the date when I came up there. Oh, I’d wanted that job so badly and if I’d taken the Western job – if I’d gotten it I couldn’t have gone to Alaska. It was only months later. “Oh, no, I’ve changed my mind now…”

**ED:** Fate!

**Pre Park Museum Collections in Alaska**

**JR:** Yeah. The – and the challenges were mostly just getting the work done and convincing, convincing the superintendents that they needed somebody trained and responsible on their permanent staff to work on collections. And, granted, some of the collections were small like Yukon-Charley and, well, you know, Aniakchak, never mind. And – but that you needed somebody that was looking out for them and was looking for them because they were out there. In research and records, records that had been carried off. And all of the stuff at the University of Alaska AND all the stuff in Denmark *[Danish National Museum]* that had been taken from the parks – I mean, legally – uh, that had been removed from the parks in research and then, because they weren’t parks then, they were taken to the institution that did it like the -

**ED:** They were BLM lands, typically, at the time.

**JR:** - collections at Denmark. Yeah.

**ED:** We’re, we’re still working through that process. But, yes.

**JR:** Yeah. And I wanted to, I wanted to identify – I wanted to get these collections that were from the parks – I wanted that information to be in the parks. Of every collection at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks and that’s why we sent Sean *[Cahill]* up there and they really fought it to begin with. That was a challenge, too. And I said “No, no, we’re not taking the collections. We have nowhere to put them. We simply want a record of the resources that came from this land that is now a park. We have got to have that for the parks.” And I said “We’re not going to take them away from you.” They, they are - I said “Do remember that, that anything taken off of government land never belongs to you.” (laughs) And, I said, but we’re definitely – you know, that’s, that’s just a given that you will always keep them unless you can’t take care of them anymore.

**ED:** Right.

**JR:** And then there’s only one place that they can go and that’s to the, to the region. And, finally, they got a new director at Fairbanks – Aldona –

**ED:** Jonaitis.

**JR:** Jonaitis. I love that name, Aldona Jonaitis. And she said absolutely. That was – she understood that completely. So we – Sean cataloged, in lumps, you know, a hundred thousand things.

**ED:** Those pre ANILCA collections contains some of the more showy or significant archeological -

**JR:** Yeah

**ED:** -collections.

**JR:** Primary – primary resources.

**ED:** We’re still working on documenting those for the record.

**JR:** Yeah, well and besides, they’re all over.

**ED:** They are.

**JR:** Leslie told me when I went to Portugal for Ann Hitchcock to give a talk on consolidated storage in the National Park Service – she said “Well, go to Copenhagen. See the collections from Bering Land Bridge.” So I called them and made a date to go to Copenhagen to see the collections and I got there and they had a big reception for me and all the staff came to meet me and, oh, it was so much fun for them to meet someone from Alaska. And, um then I finally said well I’m only going to be here a couple of days and I’d really love to see the collection and the curator said “I’m sorry, you can’t see them.” And I looked at her and I said “What?” and she said, oh, she said “We’re remodeling the wing that the collections – that the exhibits were in and they’re all in storage.”

**ED:** So you never got to see them while you were there?

**JR:** I never got to see them and I said “Did you know that when you talked to me?” And she said “Yes.”

**ED:** (laughs)

**JR:** And I said “Oh my gosh, I’m here under false pretenses.” And she said “Well, we were afraid you wouldn’t come if you knew you couldn’t see the collections.” – and I wouldn’t have! She said “Well, see!” (laughs)

**ED:** Yeah, that is a bit of a challenge tracking –

**JR:** But I did - I got copies of all their records that I took and then we sent them copies of all the records that we had, of things, so that they’ve got a more complete view of –

**ED:** of Trail Creek Caves, this is?

**JR:** Yeah. And we’ve got, at least got the records in the, you know, in the uh, in the catalog records – I hope they’re still there!

**ED:** I think, yeah, I think there’s still work to be done on that and there are – there were a lot of permitted research projects before those parks were established. And, yeah, that is a bit of a challenge.

**JR:** Yeah, it is a challenge but, but I think it’s workable when we have an agreement that they will keep collections until such time as they can’t.

**ED:** And that, that’s what the current curator is working towards. Is just doing modern inventories and having an understanding of –

**JR:** Yeah.

**ED:** And –

**JR:** Just an inventory and just copies of their records. An accession number and copies of their records and just anything that they’re willing to – you know, any research that – copies of research that resulted from the collection.

**ED:** Yeah. Well, we’re certainly grateful that they’ve taken care of these –

**JR:** Yeah

**ED:** - massive collections for all this time.

**JR:** Oh, they’re wonderful. They took me through all kinds of collections up there *[UAF]*. Paleo collections and everything. It was fabulous.

**ED:** A lot of the plant collections.

**JR:** Yeah. Oh, yeah, the herbarium is incredible. Yeah, that’s a – that was, that was really a fun part of the job but it was hard. That was a challenging thing but – not ‘challenges.’ I don’t know –

**ED:** Well, just - I would think that tracking down what was out there when you first came up must have been kind of an interesting task just –

**JR:** It was.

**ED:** - what, what existed out there –

**JR:** Right

**ED:** - that was taken from lands that now were park lands.

**JR:** Yeah, yeah. And then just discussing it with the people and saying, you know, we don’t –

**ED:** “We’re not here to take it back”

**JR:** “We’re not going to take it back cause we have nowhere to keep them.”

**ED:** It’s a partnership.

**JR:** “And you’re keeping them beautifully.” I said, you know, we would like to see – I would like to see some of them but they’re – like, the University of Alaska – their storage was just wonderful.

**ED:** Yeah.

**JR:** Retrieval is wonderful. The curators are incredibly knowledgeable. So, why, you know – why would we want to take them away from you? We know where they are. We know we can use them. And it’s just that the park needs to know.

**[Jean Rodeck Interview\_Clip 6\_Women in NPS Alaska]**

**ED:** So some of the other things we had thought to ask about – and you and I talked about this yesterday –so maybe it won’t go in the direction we were thinking but were there many other women working for the park service in Alaska at the time you got there?  
  
**JR:** Oh, well, yeah.

**ED:** Obviously Leslie *[Starr Hart].*

**JR:** Yeah Oh yes, there were quite a few women. I, I’m sorry but the way I’ve lived my life – being a woman is not anything -

**ED:** It’s an ancillary -

**JR:** - isn’t particularly remarkable. It’s just – that’s the person – whatever their sex – that are working on the job. No, there were a lot of women. A lot of resource managers and, uh, there were a lot of women. I mean Thea *[Nordling]* was the Chief of Interpretation at Denali – not when I got there but, later. But, there were a lot of them. Denali – speaking of Denali – the Assistant Superintendent was a woman and I just – I didn’t think of it. I wouldn’t be able to recall if I went to a park how many women were working there.

**ED:** Or what types of jobs.

**JR:** Yeah.

**ED:** It sounds like, in your experience, anybody was anything, in any combination you could –

**JR:** Yeah, it just, you know, that was the 80s and, and I think by then, uh, by then it was – I simply can’t remember because I did not remark “Oh my! Oh look, there’s another woman” or “Oh my! There’s five women.” I just, I never did that. I never – even when I was little.

**ED:** Yeah.

**JR:** It never dawned on me that I wanted to do something that women hadn’t done.

**ED:** And there weren’t certain jobs that seemed particularly dominated by men or women? Jus – people did what they did.

**JR:** Yeah, they did what they did. I’m sure that there were more men in Alaska. I think that the first superintendents were all men. I think!

**ED:** I, I wouldn’t be surprised. I think the first female superintendent was Ellen Hope Hayes as we were talking about earlier.

**JR:** Yes. Yes. At Sitka.

**ED:** And she was there in the 70s, I believe.

**JR:** Uh, yeah. Yeah, I believe so. Yeah, and she – oh, she was wonderful. She really - she was a remarkable person. She was a Tlingit and that’s why she got the job. She was a competent administrator and a Tlingit in Sitka and that was right at the time when they were, when they were taking some of the Russian emphasis off of Sitka and realizing that there were people there doing things before the Russians were there.

**ED:** Was it under her administration there that they developed that cultural center? Or was that there prior? Do you remember?

**JR:** Trying to think of the first time I went to Sitka. I think it was there -

**ED:** But it seems like something she would have really helped promote.

**JR:** Yes, I’m sure.

**ED:** I would think that if it was in its infancy -

**JR:** In fact, she may have been the – she may have – I don’t know. I don’t know at all.

**ED:** I only vaguely remember her. I don’t -

**JR:** Yeah, oh, she was a handsome woman – just beautiful. And competent and just full of good humor and smart and knowledgeable and well educated and, uh, a wonderful representative of the Tlingit. She just was a – was remarkable. Oh, she was one of them they put in that, in that beige uniform *[early NPS women’s uniform]*.

**ED:** Oh, the first female uniform?

**JR:** Oh, she, she looked regal. Oh, my gosh. She looked so nice in it because she was just so beautiful. Oh, and she was kind of – she wasn’t very tall but she was statuesque.

**ED:** She was a –

**JR:** She was great.

**ED:** Yeah, she did have a sort of presence that way.

**JR:** Presence. That’s exactly it – and a wonderful regal bearing.

**[Jean Rodeck Interview\_Clip 7\_Mentors]**

**ED:** Yeah. So did – just thinking about people like her – did you have any sort of mentors that really influenced you in the course of your career or was it just a series - ?

**JR:** Oh, yeah. Oh, gosh, yes.

**ED:** Are there any you would like to - mention?

**JR:** Yeah. You know, first, my dad and the staff at the University of Colorado Museum cause when I was a little kid I went to elementary school across the street and after school, if I was good, I got to go over to the museum until dad went home at 5. And his preparator and the, uh, his entomologist, his botanist – they all just – I just wanted to know and said “what are you doing? What is this? how do you do that? Why do you do it that way?” And these guys were so patient with me and I just soaked in - by the time I graduated from high school I had a museum degree. And it was – these guys, they just taught me everything and they let me do everything. I was pinning butterflies and doing study skins and sweeping sawdust and cleaning snake cages and – anything they asked me to do, I’d do. Cause that’s when the preparator – the preparator finally said “Hugo, can we put her to work?” (laughs)

**ED:** (laughs)

**JR:** “She asks these questions and it’d be easier to just have her do it.” You know, and I just did anything in that museum. And, so, those guys were all my mentors and my dad. And then, um, every time I got a job like when I was a seasonal at, at Rocky. Actually, that was one of those things where they said “Ok, run that place” and go up and do it. There wasn’t anybody around. But I kind of knew what to do anyway because I had been to so many National Parks by then. But the Chief of Interpretation at Rocky, Norm Herkenham, was really wonderful with me. And Ed Alberts had been, before that, at Rocky. And every place I’d go there was – Bill Berry was a wonderful mentor when we were doing exhibits at the Western Museum Lab in San Francisco because he taught me a lot of art – he was kind of like an art teacher. And, um, I still didn’t amount to much (laughs).

**ED:** (laughs)

**JR:** In spite of Bill’s efforts! And, um, and then when I was in Yellowstone, the interpreters – the district interpreters and the historian they were just really wonderful in teaching me how to do things and encouraging me to do what, what it was obvious I wanted to do. And letting me – most of these people just let me do something that they thought I could do and whether I’d done it before or not they’d say “Well, go ahead and try it.” And, they all – Bob Barbee was a wonderful mentor at Redwood because he just had me doing things that I never gave a thought to doing like news releases. Finally I got so good that they were just printing them just as I sent them. I mean it was just – first time I saw that I went “Oh, my gosh!” (laughs)

And then when I went to Alaska – When I went to Alaska as Regional Curator I’d already been regional curator in Santa Fe but this was a whole different – whole different task set than what I had done in the southwest. Completely different. And the, the regional curators who had been doing this for a while, um, under this new set of tasks and under this initiative – backlog initiative – were, were my mentors. Because, whenever I had a problem I’d call Kent *[Bush]* or I’d call Diane *[Nicholson]* or I’d call Pam *[West]* or whoever I knew who knew this best and I’d call them up and so - they were just – they were my library.

**ED:** That network seems pretty invaluable.

**JR:** Network. That was it. And, uh, and we were very close. We had ten of us at the time and we were, we were a very close knit group. We were a very close knit group. And it just was – it was - it took the hard – the challenge – well, ‘challenge’ – I really don’t like that word. To me, challenge is almost a negative word.

**ED:** Hm.

**JR:** Because I always liked doing a job - going in to a job that I had never done before, in a place I’d never been. And, I didn’t ever think of anything as a challenge – you know – “I’ve gotta fight my way in” or “I’ve gotta – “, you know -

**ED:** It’s interesting. I think of a challenge as something – a personal challenge – like –

**JR:** To see if I can do this.

**ED:** - learning something new. Yeah.

**JR:** Yeah. Well –

**ED:** I guess that - it’s interesting – I just didn’t think of the context of that word.

**JR:** I always thought of it as just learning something new and doing a new job and getting to do new things and broaden my horizon. You know, just – ‘Challenge’ always seems to me a little negative.

**ED:** A negative, maybe.

**JR:** Yeah. Because, when it says, you know, “What were the challenges?” *[referring to the list of interview questions]* well, there – it was just -

**ED:** Maybe they were more like opportunities.

**JR:** Yeah, yeah. I think of – I guess I think of it more as that. It was just –

**ED:** What sorts of unique opportunities did you have?

**JR:** - getting to do something new. Yeah, and I enjoyed every single, every single bit of it. Even the bad parts. Even the bad parts, like, you know, budgeting when I was up here as Superintendent [at Florissant Fossil Beds]. Oh, god.

**ED:** That wasn’t one of your favorite aspects of work?

**JR:** Oh, no. And, uh, but in Alaska – I don’t know – everything – As I say, everybody just was - everybody was just so charged up in Alaska and most everybody was just really cooperative and interested – and interested. You know, we’d go to resource managers and go “Well, what are you doing?” and “Oh, well, nice that you’d ask!” And I just learned so much. Just constantly learning through 42 years of Park Service. I just learned and learned and learned. And then, coming down here was –

**[Jean Rodeck Interview\_Clip 8\_Florissant and Reminiscences]**

**Florissant Fossil Beds, Superintendent**

**ED:** So, your last position was Superintendent of Florissant?

**JR:** Superintendent of Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. When I was in Alaska I’d said – I had gotten really involved in paleo in Alaska – in getting the records of the paleo – existing paleo specimens in all parks and there’s paleo in all the parks but Klondike and I know there’s paleo up there.

**ED:** There’s paleo –

**JR:** I KNOW it! Uh, because there’s just got to be paleo in every bit of the earth. And so I was mentioning this to a friend in Seattle and I said “you know, I wish I’d -“The only - he had asked me “Do you have anything you wanted to do?” and I said “Gosh, you know, I always wanted to be a paleontologist.” I got to do archeology just enough to know that I didn’t want to spend my life doing it. And, with paleo, I just, you know – it was too far from what I wanted to do. And he said, “Well, why don’t you be Superintendent of a paleo area?” I went “Oh, hell of a good idea!” So I made a chart and here were the nine parks that were established just for paleo and then I put all of my criteria across there and the only one that didn’t have checks was Florissant. And so, when Dale Ditmanson left – he wrote to me and said “I’m leaving!” and so I decided to apply for it and I got the job thanks to people knowing what I did and that I was good at what I did but I said “well, I’m not necessarily going to be good at being the superintendent because I never did it before except being acting for a few months.” And, uh, so they took a chance on me and, oh, I was so glad I got to do that. I am so glad I got to do that HERE because the park is just a gem! And the paleontologist there has put Florissant on the world map of paleo. And, he just is, um, he is just an absolute genius at getting – he wrote a book with Smithsonian, for heaven sakes.

**ED:** Who is the paleontologist?

**JR:** Oh, Herb Meyer. Dr. Herbert Meyer. Wonderful, wonderful paleontologist. Wonderful person. Just, oh, I tell you. I am so glad I got to work those years with him and he’s still there. He came in 1994. He’s still there. He just is – they’ve got, they’ve got a catalog system where it, where you can look at a paleo object from any –

**ED:** Oh, you can rotate the image?

**JR:** Yeah.

**ED:** Nice!

**JR:** Oh, my god! I tell you, what they’ve done up there is miraculous. They did that all after I was there!

**ED:** Well, you must have helped facilitate!

**JR:** Yes! Oh, yes, I pushed him and anything he wanted he got. I just, I tell you, I had to tell the staff that I really – I said “You’re really not supposed to have favorites but paleo is my favorite part here and, and you probably have already seen that there is some favoritism to Herb” because if he wanted to do something that furthered our paleo knowledge or our exposure, he got it. And, um, and so I guess the way I put it as ok because they all had to agree that we were a paleo park.

**ED:** Well, if that was in the enabling legislation then –

**JR:** Yeah. But in some instances that – some parks didn’t go by that necessarily.

**ED:** No, it doesn’t always work that way for certain, yeah.

**JR:** So I just used everything that I had ever learned anywhere in being a superintendent there. It was, it was wonderful. And my mentor, Randy Jones, was the Superintendent of Rocky Mountain and they were assigning - within the region – they were assigning mentors for new superintendents –

**ED:** Oh.

**JR:** So, when I had a problem I’d just call Randy and say, you know, “What, what did you do?” and he’d say “Well, I did this” or he’d say “Well, Colorado National Monument did this.” And, “Why don’t you call such and so and talk to them” about whatever it was – some land problems. And that was really wonderful. That really was. John Cook was the Regional Director when I came and then he left and Lorraine Mincemeyer came, I think, or something like that – or John was gone – no, he was here. He hired me.

And so, but I didn’t – I just depended on Randy and the other superintendents and people that I knew for, for problems. Not so much the region…hm, that’s interesting now that I think of it. But it was, it was great. I’m so glad I got to do that and I’m so glad that I had the staff that I had. They were just, just exceptional.

Maggie Johnston was my Chief Ranger and then Tom Ulrich. Those two were absolutely princess and princes among Chief Rangers and I had the best Administrative Officer, Cheryl…I can’t think of her name!

**ED:** So, did your NPS career give you a lot of personal satisfaction too?

**JR:** Oh!

**ED:** I mean, sounds like it did!

**JR:** Every day, in every way. Morning, noon and night! In my dreams. On weekends. Yes!

**ED:** Could you be more clear?

**JR:** (laughs) I had, I had so much personal satisfaction out of this job that there is, there is just absolutely nothing that I would change. Ah, I’d make fewer mistakes if I had to do it over again. Oh, I didn’t make too many – or too big. But, oh, the satisfaction with this job was just daily. Even now. I am – I just derive so much pleasure from having done what I got to do. What all those people made it possible for me to do…Oh! I’m tearing up a little there! It really was. It was just fantastic. Well, as you can tell, you just look around my house and all you can see –

**ED:** I know, your house is a bit of a shrine to the Park Service. (laughs)

**JR:** (laughs) Especially my mantle places. Oh, gosh. And all of the places that I got to work and all of the jobs that I got to do in the parks – and interpretive planning. Oh, I tell you. Every single, every single day in every single way. Personal satisfaction could not be any greater.

**ED:** That’s great!

**JR:** Had I been better – you know – I was what I was.

**ED:** And for your Alaska experience are there any particular things you’re most proud of your time spent there? Things that you might have helped achieve with - ?

**JR:** Well, getting all of those documents before all of the other regions had them all for every single one of their parks.

**ED:** Oh, the Alaska Region beat everyone to it?

**JR:** Uh, I did.

**ED:** Ah, I didn’t realize that.

**JR:** I did. I got –

**ED:** Your CMPs, your SOCs.

**JR:** I just did them and some of them were – we had – oh, the interpretive plans were done by – no, the Collection Management Plans were done by, um, uh, a woman that had done some work at Golden Gate – that I had met there. And she and her husband came up and just whipped through interpretive plans – I mean, uh, Collection Management Plans so that the park just had them – just instant. Oh, it was, that was fabulous.

**ED:** Were other regions doing consolidated efforts like that or were you really - ?

**JR:** No, they were just – they were doing one at a time. They were, they were a little more thorough than ours. We decided on a formula and – in order to get them done.

**ED:** To get a base.

**JR:** So that we had them to meet the criteria we were supposed to meet in order to get such and so and such and so. We had to have certain documents.

**ED:** And then you’d tweak them over the years?

**JR:** Yeah, well, and then it was, then it was up to the park to, to use them and then know what to add or subtract. I don’t even know if they ever used them.

**ED:** They have and they’ve been revised.

**JR:** And, yeah. Anything like that – both the Collection, the Collection Management Plan and the Security and Fire Plans just needed to be tweaked constantly, and, uh, but they also needed to be tweaked in a beneficial way after they had been proven that they needed tweaking.

**ED:** Right.

**JR:** And, so, I was very proud of doing that. Of getting all of those plans done that we needed to get done. And, um, I - the other thing was that – all the curators that I got. You guys were absolutely the best of the best, with a few exceptions, but, um – we got so much work done. And you guys did it so willingly and so well and went traveling so well. You know, say, “Oh, you guys need to go to such and such.” “Oh, darn!” (laughs)

**ED:** I remember we had a given budget so, so the thing was you could, you could get full per diem – this was our own idea.

**JR:** Yes.

**ED:** You get full per diem and go to three places or take reduced per diem and go to six. Something like that.

**JR:** Yeah, well that’s what I had been doing. And I – I had been doing that all along. And so that that made more travel for you guys.

**ED:** Right. And so we –

**JR:** So then –

**ED:** We took that on.

**JR:** So, I said, “Well, this is what I’m doing.” And, you know, so this is – so you guys said yeah, you’d to it, which was really neat. And when I first did it, personnel told me I couldn’t do that –

**ED:** You can’t make someone do it but they could volunteer to do it.

**JR:** I said “Yes, I can do it. I most certainly can do it.” And then I went and told them and I said “The, the curators have all said that they want to do it too because we want to go farther – we want to do more and go farther.”

**ED:** Yeah.

**JR:** And we did. I think we did twice as much work as, as we would have on full per diem. Especially up there.

**ED:** I think, between the three of us *[Eileen Devinney, David Wolfe and Kay Hein]* we got to every park every year. It was –

**JR:** Yeah.

**ED:** For not just a two day visit. We would go and work through their box of items to be cataloged –

**JR:** Yeah, it was worth – I tell you, the government and the American people so got their money’s worth with the curatorial program in Alaska because I did not waste a penny up there and my budget was always justified to the penny because I kept really good records. And, the, the public got their money’s worth – doubly for us up there in Alaska.

**ED:** We, we got a lot done internally and with technical assistance. It was a nice balance and I never felt like, uh, we were pressured too much. We, we just figured it out.

**JR:** Yeah. Well, I think that was the neat thing about you all that came up to do this work. That you knew how to figure it out too.

**ED:** I think, for me, anyway, there’s something about – especially Alaska – and maybe it’s just in my mind and not a reality – that, at that time, anyway, there was a lot left – certainly you had to have experience but also there was a lot to be said for a willingness to be flexible and open minded and –

**JR:** Absolutely.

**ED:** and, um, to be open to learning new things and trying different things.

**JR:** And jumping into a little plane!

**ED:** and jumping, like yeah, and uh -

**JR:** And going off into the Wilderness.

**ED:** - taking your supposedly portable computer on the back of a snow machine

**JR:** Yeah, oh, those things weighed a ton

**ED:** They looked like little vacuum cleaners

**JR:** Oh, my gosh, when I think of those now –

**ED:** Those Compaq computers. They weren’t so compact.

**JR:** Just think how wonderful it would have been to have these little –

**ED:** This little teeny device.

**JR:** Oh, my gosh.

**ED:** It was fun. It was a lot of fun.

**JR:** Oh, it was.

**ED:** and it gave me a lot of exposure to a lot of areas of the state and a lot of different specialties because we did work with biologists and archeologists and historians.

**JR:** Well, now – see, one of my accomplishments, of which I am very proud, is that I got this curator from Yosemite –

**ED:** (laughs)

**JR:** - who said she was going to stay a year and, and twenty-five years later here you are.

**ED:** Look what happened? I’m not sure what happened there.

**JR:** It’s just absolutely – and what I – so that contribution to resources in Alaska is, is priceless.

**ED:** Well, and I – people still ask me about where things are in the collections room or –

**JR:** Yeah!

**ED:** what I meant when I put something in the accession ledger which is –

**JR:** (laughs)

**ED:** a little scary!

**JR:** Oh, shoot. You guys did a fantastic job. You guys made me look really, really productive up there.

**ED:** Well, we – I, I probably can speak for the others too that it was great to have so many opportunities to –

**JR:** yeah

**ED:** like you were given. “I know you know what you’re doing – go do it.”

**JR:** Yeah

**ED:** It was great, great fun.

**JR:** It was a great way to work but I’m glad I didn’t have to move from one office to another.

**ED:** Yeah, in 2002 we had to move. We moved offices and collections – we also moved collections after you had left - from Nome and Kotzebue which was quite the thing.

**JR:** Yeah. But, now, to have, with Stephanie Stephens – having that huge collection storage place. I, when I, when I walked in there – I almost cried when I walked into that storage.

**ED:** It’s really nice. And it’s very –

**JR:** It’s so beautiful.

**ED:** and it’s very helpful – I know we had that facility in the old building – but it’s nice to be able to show management and resource folks – everyone – what happens to the materials. What happens to the administrative records and how accessible they are. And how useful they are –

**JR:** And how safe they are.

**ED:** Yes. It’s great.

**JR:** How safe they are. That, that was one of the things, you know, between not just intrusion safety or fire protection but, uh, the way they’re stored and the, the environmental controls and that kind of thing. I mean, that to me, it’s just fantastic.

--break—

**JR:** Well, the whole thing was just a real, really wonderful sense of accomplishment in Alaska. I felt that I did a lot of good stuff.

**ED:** And the fact that it continued after you left is something, too, because sometimes - for various reasons – regional offices lose positions or – sort of lose the value of programs but –

**JR:** Yeah, that was neat about Betty Knight being so available instantly that they could just nab her and then getting Stephanie, uh, that was just, you know – that progression was nice and rapid and nice and smooth.

**ED:** There was good continuity through there.

**JR:** Yeah. Yeah. I was afraid that – I was afraid that it would – that the position would lag. And I was so glad when I heard that Betty was – her parents were really good friends from Yellowstone.

**ED:** See, it’s a small community!

**JR:** So I knew her as a little kid. Oh, shoot, so much fun.

And I’d worked, I’d worked with the Aleutian – with the, uh – with Adak on their collection and they were wanting to have a museum and I had worked with one of the officer’s wives who was volunteering to do this and oh, we sent them stuff and we had talks over the telephone and all this stuff and then, as soon as I leave, and Betty came, she was down there at Adak. (laughs)

**ED:** (laughs)

**JR:** She just. Oh, my gosh, the first time I got - she wrote me this postcard from Adak and she said “I just - I’m almost scared to send this to you because I know you never got here.”

**ED:** you had to go on your own.

**JR:** Oh, gosh, well, I never made it to Adak. Lynnie and I went to Dutch Harbor but, they – Adak was closed at the time and we couldn’t go down there.

**[Jean Rodeck Interview\_Clip 9\_Retirement and Final Thoughts]**

**JR:** ….(cut into sentence) Superintendent. A lot of the things that – I’m sure – we only had a staff of eight people, including me. And I really made that staff do a lot of the things that I should have done but I didn’t have time to do them. I just – as I said, we had like eighty-five or eighty-two reports in one year and there’s only – you know, that’s one a week! And so I just made everyone work like the dickens and they did a lot of the work that I’m sure I was supposed to be doing but I’d run out of time. I’d be working on one report and another one would come in so I’d shove that off on the Chief Ranger and anything that had to do with computer work I had to give to somebody else. NAGPRA –

**ED:** Sure

**JR:** - I mean, uh, oh, no GPRA. I had to have Tom deal with that. I gathered and put everything in order and stuff but I had to have him enter it because I would still be doing the first one (laughs).

**ED:** But, as we were saying the other day, I think in a bigger park you would – it would be expected to give –

**JR:** Yeah, yeah.

**ED:** - those things. It’s very hard when you have a small staff

**JR:** Yeah, it really was.

**ED:** share the burden equally.

**JR:** I made them work like crazy and I did too. And I just got so tired of working ten hour days. I really did. And I tried – I tried to do everything and I found out that I couldn’t.

**ED:** Hm.

**JR:** And it just-that really did bug me. I kind of felt a little bit badly about that once in a while. I just – they were just unavoidable. I needed help. And they you have to here and you had to go there and to superintendents conference and then you had to go to region for your evaluation and blah, blah, blah. It just was phew.

**ED:** There’s not enough time in a year.

**JR:** Just not enough time.

**ED:** To do all of it.

**JR:** And I don’t think even in big park that there is.

**ED:** No?

**JR:** I think there’s things that get left undone or things that are done not, not entirely to –

**ED:** The way that you want them.

**JR:** perfectly. Yeah.

**ED:** And I think that’s true beyond the park service. I think many a job is like that where there’s – just the need is overwhelming.

**JR:** Yeah, yeah. Well, I retired with twenty – with forty-two years of service. You know, consolidated. Including my three months with the Internal Revenue (laughs) and I really, I really wanted to work until I was seventy. I, I like round numbers.

**ED:** (laughs)

**JR:** I wanted to work til I was seventy or forty-five years and I didn’t make either one. I was just so tired and, uh, physically my back was killing me. I couldn’t, I couldn’t walk very far. I couldn’t stand up very long and I was just a wreck and I was just incredibly tired. I would spend nights, all night long, fretting about what I had to do the next day or fretting over something that we hadn’t done perfectly or fretting over the fact that, you know, we had something happen and, and some nights I wouldn’t sleep at all.

And I just finally – we got a memo from Fran Maniella, the director at the time, it was to all parks. So in the morning I would go through my email and get those out of the way and then get down to business and, and it was – I looked at the title and it said “reorganization of the Washington office.” And so I was taking my little cursor down to open it and I went right back up and I hit delete.

**ED:** (laughs)

**JR:** And I reached over and I picked up the telephone and called my – Mike Snyder was my supervisor-and told him that – He said “Oh, Jean, hi! What can I do for you?” I said “Well, I just wanted you to know” –this was in June – “that, that I’m retiring the end of December.” And he laughed, and he laughed and he said “Hey Jean, what is it I can do for you?” I said, “Well, Mike, I’m just telling you that I’m retiring the end –“ I had to do it three times before he said “Are you serious?” I said “Yeah, I’m serious.” I said, “I’m just exhausted. I can’t do what I’m supposed to do anymore and I just, I’ve gotta quit.”

**ED:** And you’re not going through another reorganization!

**JR:** Right. No, no and that was the main thing. And I said I’m NOT going through – I’d been through three – I don’t know. The regional office in Santa Fe reorganized a couple times and everytime a new director came in we reorganized and everytime a regional director, blah, blah, blah. And it just – I said “I’m just not going through this another time.” And Mike said “This is just the Washington office, it doesn’t affect the parks.” And I made a comment to him and, and I said “If you knew anything about how a park runs” – he’d never worked in park. And um, he wasn’t too bad a supervisor. He pretty much kept up with what we were doing – I was kind of surprised. But I said “If you really knew what it took to run a park you wouldn’t even say that to a, you know, a superintendent of a little park. Of course it affects us. It has always affected the parks.”

Oh, and that’s one thing I was accused of in Alaska. This is, this was one disagreeable thing that happened in Alaska. One of my employees – wasn’t you, wasn’t any of the good ones – complained to – no, it wasn’t, it wasn’t and employee. No, no. It was somebody on the Cultural Resources staff that went to Leslie and wanted to complain about me. Oh, remember who it was now. I forgot. And, and said – he said “I can’t work with Jean.” And Leslie kind of looked at him – she’d known me for ages and I’d never had any problem working with anybody. And he said – she said “Well, what is the matter?” and he said “She’s too park oriented!”

**ED:** (laughs)

**JR:** And that’s, that’s all he said. And Leslie said she almost fell out of her chair and she had to keep from laughing because she looked at him and she said “Well, what do you think the regional office is?” (laughs)

**ED:** (laughs)

**JR:** And she just said “Go away. This is what she’s supposed to be. It’s her job. I don’t want to hear any more about it. Don’t complain to anybody else. Get out!” (laughs)

**ED:** A classic struggle of regional and park perspective I guess.

**JR:** I, I was always in – working in two – southwest was a huge region – and I was always park oriented and that was one of the things that Bob Burrell like about me was that I remained park oriented no matter what happened.

**ED:** Um hm.

**JR:** Well, of course I was park oriented. That was the p – and she said, oh she said – what was his name? Uh, she said he paid you a wonderful compliment. And I said, “Well I thought you just said he was complaining about me.” And she said “Yeah he said you were – the problem with you is you were too park oriented.” And I went “oh, cool!” (laughs) That was – as far as I know that was the only complaint.

**ED:** Do you think it really does help, for people working out of regional offices, to have had experience working at a park?

**JR:** I believe so. I believe so very strongly. I just – without a doubt.

**ED:** I do too.

JR: And I had – the only people that I’ve really had any, any slowness with – I don’t know how – it’s not problem, you know, not bad really, but were people that had never been, never been at a park and were trying to, to tell me what was good for the park and I went “Wait a minute.” Now, if twenty superintendents tell me that, okay, but, uh, no –that just doesn’t wash. Because I think that, um, I think that people in region who – I think some people in region, even some who have worked at the parks, begin to think of the region as an entity unto itself and that it governs and, you know – at my - regional offices were originally established – the way I understand it – as support for the parks because the parks – every park couldn’t have every single one of these, these positions and at the region you have an expert on every one of those positions. And they’re doing all the, all the consolidation and they’re doing all the back and forth and, and managing the big bucks and doling them out as it’s supposed to and, and not as they want to but as the congress –

**ED:** As the need

**JR:** - has established in the budgets and stuff. That they forget that they’re not the directors. That they, they are not running the parks. That, ultimately, anything that happens in the park is the superintendent’s sole responsibility. And if region really takes over then it’s going to be region that is the sole responsibility and everyone will say “Oh, well, you go to see region. They run this place.” And, um, that just isn’t so. The superintendent is the sole responsible person. And the region is simply there to, to act like an abutment (laughs). To help them out and get them what they need and the expertise and the money and the, and the, uh, support. You know, the lawyer and the water resources person. That kind of thing. And that’s where their job is. Their job is not to run the parks.

And directors, regional directors that have never worked in a park don’t know what they’re doing. Like Fran Maniella. She thought that running the National Park Service was like – was gonna be like running the Florida State Parks. I worked for the Florida State Parks. I know how they’re run. They’re not run anything like the park service (laughs) and it was just two completely different things. And she never got it. She never got it. She loved the parks. She wanted to go to all of them. She wanted to go to every one of them but she, she didn’t get it.

A couple of the people we got from the outside got it. Ron Walker got it, finally. Roger Kennedy loved the parks too. Fair thee well. But he was a historian and wrote big books. He wore his uniform very sloppily and he just, he really didn’t get it either but, oh, he loved being director. And Mott did too. He was, oh, he was – it was a dream of his to be director of the park service and then, all of the sudden, he was. But he wanted things like getting babysitting, for – at Yellowstone so that the people could leave their kids – be babysat and they go out in the park (laughs). Whoa, wait a minute!

**ED:** That was a priority?

**JR:** Yeah, dear heart – you’re missing something there. But, with, uh, as far as regional offices go they need to know how a park is run and what their problems are – mainly what their parks’ problems are.

**ED:** Yeah, I, after working in a couple of parks I realized that I was even more sympathetic to them because, from a regional office perspective you have all of the specialists able to focus on their specialty but in a park they’re so – they’ve got such limited staff and you, if you’re the cultural resource manager, you’re dealing with every aspect of cultural resources –

**JR:** Yeah, with everything. Yeah.

**ED:** And, um, you have to know kind of a little bit, at least, about all of those things. You may not be the expert taking care of it but you’ve got to at least know enough to say “we need help.”

**JR:** Yeah.

**ED:** And, um, it is a big responsibility.

JR: Yeah, and what kind of help they need.

**ED:** And the time that gets devoted to just trying to figure out what your priorities needs are and how to get help to deal with those priorities.

**JR:** Yeah. Yeah.

**ED:** It’s um, if you’re sort of in your myopic little world it probably doesn’t seem overwhelming much at all.

**JR:** Yeah.

**ED:** But when you’re down at the park level and you’re it-

**JR:** Yeah, yeah.

**ED:** It can be pretty overwhelming.

**JR:** And, you know, having done that and been there and worked in another region I understood that, I understood that ‘it person’ very well. I knew exactly what they were having to do – just having to pull themselves this way and this way and this way and then back over here. And I understood it totally and that’s why I pushed for the – pushed for us getting more curators – and, uh, at a higher grade. I would have made you all 9s if I could have.

**ED:** Well, there are a few more positions, in the region, for curatorial services and there are – there is a registrar dedicated to – I think there was one for a little while, then it vanished. But that’s back and I think there’s more dedicated staff dealing with collections which is nice.

**JR:** Yeah. It’s so great. Well, I just feel good about – I feel good about everything I did. I did the best I could and I helped as many parks or as many people or as many whatevers as I possibly could and, um, to the best of my ability and then, you know, go on to the next thing too fast. “Wait a minute, wait a minute, I don’t have that quite done yet! But, oh, never mind. Okay. Off to the next thing.”

**ED:** Well, it’s never done!

**JR:** It’s never done. It’s never done and I realized – every once in a while, still – I’ll be lying in bed – I don’t know why it is, when I go to sleep sometime I think of these things that I didn’t get done.

**ED:** (laughs)

**JR:** You know, like forty years ago things I didn’t get done. I’ll just go “God, you know, if I had just – uh! I left that undone and I just” – when I left Florissant I had six months to, to, you know, get things finished and stuff. I neglected to do the annual report and poor Jeff Mow called and he said “I can’t find your annual, annual report for 2002 and here it was into 2003 and I said “Oh, yeah, there’s a notebook there that says, that says FLFO annual report” and he says “Oh, I’ve got it right here and there’s nothing –“

**ED:** It’s blank?

**JR:** And I went “Oh, my god.” I said “listen, there’s a, there’s a tray over here, over on your right – that was over on your right – that said “To Do” and I said “You might look in there for a folder.” And so he said, “Well, let’s see. I put that over here –“ Cause he, he kept things as they were so that he could get to them and go through them, not just – “Oh, here it is. It’s a blue folder” “Yeah,” I said “it’s a big fat blue folder with everybody’s individual report for their division.” And he said “Oh, yeah, it’s right here. Oh great!” And I said “And I didn’t do the annual report?” “No, you didn’t.” Oh, my god, I still feel bad about that! I can’t believe I did that! Talk about incomplete. My lord! Oh! Awful!

**ED:** It’s hard to wrap it all up.

**JR:** And I do, I do worry about things that I did in Santa Fe that I didn’t do, that I wanted to do, or that I said I’d do.

**ED:** Well, people now ask me about collections issues and I say gosh, I’m sorry I kind of left that in a state of disrepair or –

**JR:** (laughs)

**ED:** Somethings not clear, you know, but it’s been twenty years now so I don’t – I can’t tell you. Yeah, there’s always going to be –

**JR:** I’ve gotten calls about interpretive plans and that was back in the seventies and, or, I got a call from Santa Fe asking if I knew where something was after, um, after, you know, when I was in Alaska. I’d go “Oh, no. I don’t have any idea. I don’t even know where it was when I was there! I can’t remember that!”

Ah, but I loved every minute of it. I loved every – even some of the bad people that I worked with I – they were just wonderful. Wonderful experiences and it was a great way, great way to live.

**ED:** Well, thanks for sharing. I learned a lot. I thought I knew pretty much about your career but I didn’t know a lot, I guess.

**JR:** Oh, and I – there were just so many things – too many things, too many things to remember and too many things that I got to do.

**ED:** And you mentioned that there is a little bio of you or some sort of history of your career in a book, is that right?

**JR:** Oh, just, when I was Regional Curator in Alaska Polly Kaufman, K-A-U-F-M-A-N, uh, wrote a book – I’ll go dig that out. I want you to take a look at a picture – some of these pictures –

**ED:** Oh, okay.

**JR:** I’ll dig that book out. Uh, she just – it was just a – I don’t know. I think they were just about our job – the job we were doing at the time. I don’t remember.

**ED:** Well, we’ll have to dig up the book and put the reference with the interview.

**JR:** Yeah, yeah. And – cause there were a lot of women in that park – they were all park service women.

**ED:** I, I vaguely recognize her name so I’ve come across that book.

**JR:** it was, it was a neat compilation except that I offered to go last when she was in Alaska and everyone else had had an hour, hour and a half, and I had twenty minutes cause the – because I offered to be last (laughs). Oh, I was always mad about that because I really, I really wanted to tell her more. More, more, more because they were wonderful jobs. I got every job, but one that I didn’t even want. I got every job that I wanted.

**ED:** Hm.

**JR:** Which was just dumb luck!

**ED:** I think that’s the way it works for a lot of people. You just – it’s serendipity.

**JR:** Yeah, yeah. And so many people helped me along the way. So many people. There are things that I’d just never gotten to do without these people. Bob Burrell and Bob Barbee. John Jenkins at the Western Museum Lab. He was, he was great. He was bound and determined to keep me from the RIF and he did and I found my niche!

**ED:** Well, and we’re all grateful!

**JR:** (laughs)

**ED:** (laughs) I am cause it got me my foot in the door.

**JR:** Well, yeah. Given them twenty-five years of your life.

**ED:** There you go! Well, thanks so much Jean. It’s been a lot of fun.

**JR:** You’re so welcome! I loved doing it.