

Interviewee: Robert “Bob” Cornelius (BC)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Working as a River Ranger at Dinosaur National Monument in the mid-70’s

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TM: Today is November 9, 2017. This is Part 11 of a Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Robert “Bob” Cornelius. This is a telephone interview. My name is Tom Martin. Bob, would you mind if we recorded this telephone interview?

BC: No, not at all.

TM: Thank you. A couple days ago we had talked a little bit about your transitioning from Grand Canyon National Park to Dinosaur National Monument. The connecting link between these two National Park Service units is the Colorado River. Which if you start on the river in Grand Canyon and you go upstream enough, you’ll go up the Green River arm to Dinosaur National Monument. We had talked about a number of different things and particularly your job as a river ranger. You’d mentioned there were 23 boats that the Monument had. We had just come up to talk about river accidents and river permits. How do you want to pick that up?

BC: As far as the number of boats, we had this huge pile of them in the maintenance building near Dinosaur, Colorado. Most of them were old what they called bridge pontoons. The actual number of boats that we utilized at any one time was about 4 or 5. And in fact, at one point we bought 2...I think they’d been used one season... They were Green River Boats, I think they were called. They were sort of like 10-man, they were probably 12-foot long/14-foot long. We got them from Western River, Jack Curry’s outfit. I remember it was interesting, the Chief Ranger called me and said, “We’ve got year-end money.” It’s the way the government works. “We got enough money to get two new boats. I’ve got this contact with Jack Curry, you can give him a call.” The problem is they’re in northwest Colorado. We’d had this huge ice storm and it had knocked down all the phone lines. We had no phone service to headquarters for about two weeks. So I had to drive over to Jenson, Utah and get on a payphone and call the Western River and tell him, “Okay, the deal’s on. We’re going to buy the boats. Here’s the number of the purchase order and [chuckle] if you get them on the way we’ll gladly use them.” So that was just kind of a weird thing that happened. Right there you can see there’s maybe a little bit of difference between Grand Canyon and Dinosaur.

It was a pretty rural area. It was almost like the wild west. I remember going there and talking to Glade Ross. He was up at Lodore at the northern end of the park. Every year they had a big gathering up there at the Lodore schoolhouse. It was like a community center at that time and people from all over Brown’s Park would come in there. Probably some of Butch Cassidy’s relatives. The funny thing that Glade said was, “Well we haven’t had a gun fight up there for 7 years.” Of course, he might have been joking but it was a pretty tough area up there. You weren’t always welcome either. You’d go into a store or something. Several times I had customers that said some pretty raunchy things to me because they didn’t like the...

TM: Because they saw your uniform?

BC: They didn't like the National Monument. It took away their hunting, for example. The Monument had a provision where they were doing away with grazing in the Park. So people were losing grazing rights as time went on, as the permit changed hands. As the original permittee died, the permit passed to the family/the blood relatives but not beyond that. So slowly the grazing was being phased out so people were upset about that. The same things go on today over the Bear's Ears and all these different things. The Grand Staircase, the reduction in the sizes of monuments. There's still local issues going on. With parks there always are. I was just thinking...

TM: Did anyone say anything about the dam, Echo Park Dam or Split Mountain Dam? Or had that been put to bed?

BC: That had pretty much been put to bed. Maybe occasionally somebody might say something about it, but I don't recall.

TM: So grazing was the real issue there?

BC: Well, grazing was an issue. The fact that you couldn't hunt up in the Park was an issue. There was also an issue with wild horse round-ups on several of the... There was a large horse herd over on... I think it was Diamond Mountain. People weren't allowed to do that. That brings up the point that Parks tie up resources. My dad and I used to have a conversation every once in a while. He'd get upset about something and say, "Well you can't eat the scenery." [chuckle] Because he was in construction and stuff. Because it ties up enormous resources.

TM: How did you respond to that?

BC: Huh? [chuckle] With my dad, we had a friendly banter about it. It wasn't like it was a conversation with great depth or anything [chuckle] with him. One of the things I remember Don Hatch talking about was how influential Hatch River Expeditions was in preventing the development of Echo Park Dam. They did that by taking people down the river, by increasing the visitation in the area, because one of the arguments has always been, well, it's a place that nobody goes. "The place that no one knew" that's what they called Glen Canyon. The way you develop interest in an area and eventually a political base is to let people see, "Hey, we're going to flood this spectacular canyon. What do you think about that?" It doesn't affect some people that are interested in water storage, but it does affect the majority of people that think, "Gee, I don't want to see that underwater."

TM: Can you tell me more about Don talking about that? Because I've gone through the Echo Park/Split Mountain Park Service records from 1949 to 1956-57, and I just don't see any letters from the Hatch people saying don't do this. I do see them picking up... They get their concession in 1952 or 1953 and they start taking Sierra Club through, but its way late in the game and the people that are really carrying the water seem to be the Izaak Walton League and the National Parks Association, who would become the National Parks Conservation Association. I keep hearing these rumors, though, from Hatch that they played a key role, but I can't find it in the record.

BC: Maybe they didn't write a lot of correspondence and stuff like that but I think they had influence according to Don both locally... I imagine they had opposition locally, but they were a business and the

fact that they were taking... The only way the Izaak Walton League and the Sierra Club and everybody else was going to get down there to see the area was basically go with somebody that knew how to run the river and that was Hatch.

TM: Right. I should clarify, it was doctors and lawyers and garden clubs and people all across the country that didn't see the place by boat, but thought about the National Monuments as they thought about National Parks and said, "We should preserve these places and not put dams in them." That seemed to be what really carried the day. It was really fascinating to look at the record.

BC: I remember the Sierra Club, I think it was the Sierra Club, put a book out about Dinosaur.

TM: *This is Dinosaur*, yeah.

BC: Things like that do influence people and it was... It was the early infancy of the environmental movement was taking place at Dinosaur and then a little later at Glen Canyon. Glen Canyon, in part, was a trade-off for saving Dinosaur. I mean, that's...

TM: You know, it's really fascinating. I'm going to jump in here and mention that as well because what I see in the record is the Upper Basin Water Storage Act had all these dams listed in it, all these projects, and they basically just removed out Echo and Split because Flaming was in there. Flaming Gorge and Navajo Dam and Glen Canyon Dam. It wasn't like we're going to leave this one in and take that one out. It was like, "No, we don't want these dams in the Monument. Period. There was no other Park Service lands anywhere else that were going to be impacted by a dam. So that idea that came up later, I think, about this trade-off, there really was no trade-off.

BC: That's very possible. You know, the Park Service had been stung at Hetch Hetchy years and years ago in the early infancy of the Park Service. I guess the American public doesn't like...when you can all the controversy today in Utah...they don't like it when National Park Service lands are used for something other than their intended purpose. Particularly if you flood them.

TM: To really give credit where credit is due, the National Park Service themselves were under great restrictions by Department of the Interior, but the Park Service really went to bat for Park Service lands within the agency. It was really wonderful to see. We can't forget to give credit there as well. Anyway, so the theme here is just the local's perception of the Monument and didn't like the fact that you couldn't hunt, didn't like the grazing and the slow retirement of the grazing permits, and a little bit about the dam. Did you see that then a little or a lot, sort of this hesitancy or reluctance or downright dislike of the Monument?

BC: Well, there have been some movements over the years to re-designate Dinosaur as a National Park and the local people just don't want it up there. They're afraid that there's going to be more restrictions if its a National Park, which isn't the case. The National Monument has as much protection as a National Park, as far as legislatively ordinarily. Unless there's something in the legislation that would make it different. Like for example, a place like Curecanti, you can hunt. You can hunt under state law. Dinosaur itself, in order to get it to be a National Monument, they had to allow grazing. I forget what the percentage of the Park was grazed, but it was way over 50%. Cattle certainly have an influence on the environment. In some cases is positive, most cases its negative. Then there's also sheep, too. You don't want to leave them out. Grazing in general involved both cattle and sheep up there at Dinosaur. The Mantle Ranch, I think even to this day, is still a...I guess you could say a thorn in the side of the Park

Service. Tim Mantle and his ranch down there. We had issues with them basically all the time. Overgrazing their grazing allotments, the number of cattle they could run on the allotments. He didn't allow access. They did at one point. They allowed boaters to go in there. This guy Ray Harrington, who was my mentor, I guess, maintenance man that taught me how to run the rivers the first summer, his son Mike went down there...I think it was LaRue, the wife of Tim, got a gun out and shot his raft... because they'd left the gate open or something. We had a couple of cases where they shot at river runners going by because they disturbed their peacocks in one case. Like I say, it was the wild west. I had to call the sheriff a couple of times and at least report this. I don't know if anything was ever done about some of it. The river runners themselves didn't want to do anything because they were afraid things would get worse if anything. There were a lot of issues with that family down there. The Park wanted it for a put-on place and also a camping area for the river runners. Because you got a nice flat area there. You also got the Mantle Cave which is an archeological place there that's in the Park, but that was always seemed to be in dispute. There always a dispute as to where the boundary was. When they did the original...as I recall...did the original description, it looked like the surveyor made a mistake and the Mantle's ended up with a bunch of rocks on the north side of the river rather than the bottom lands that they wanted.

TM: On the south side. Oops.

BC: There was always a dispute as to where the Mantle cabin was. It was partly within the Park they thought, or within the Monument. My dad used to always say, "If you want to start an argument, hire a surveyor." [TM laughter] That's what happens. But there were a lot of issues. I had one one time where the... Ted Hatch went up into...he talked about going up into Mather Hole, which is upstream from Castle Park. That was where our campground was and every time you'd go there to camp there were cow flops everywhere. The whole campground would be covered in them, because the Mantle's would run their cattle up there in the winter. That was their winter bull pasture, was Mather Hole. In one case, I guess a cow came down in there and Ted Hatch, I was told, hit it in the head with a 2x4 or something and killed this cow. [chuckle] Later on there was a calf that a few weeks later these guys from Partners river group came in there and they took this calf and they put it on their raft and took it all the way to Split Mountain. How they did I have no idea. I called Tim Mantle and I told him what had happened and, oh, he was enraged. "What are they doing taking my cow?" I said, "Look Tim," I said, "they're just a bunch of stupid kids. They thought the calf was in distress. They're just helping you out. The cow's over in Jenson, Utah, if you want to go pick it up." [chuckle] I don't know if Ted actually killed the cow or just chased it away, but anyway rumors over the years can get kind of inflated.

TM: Yeah, yeah. Who were the Partners? Was that just the name of the trip leader or was that a commercial group?

BC: Partners is an organization that takes kids that are referred by courts or maybe don't have parents, and they mentor these kids. They take a partner, an adult partner, and they match them up with a kid. It's just a way of having a responsible adult with a kid that's having troubles basically. I'm trying to remember. We had two groups. Tour West, I think they were out of Orem, Utah, and Partners and they had a lot of user days. But they were considered to be private groups. At the beginning of the season when you'd have your lottery, they would flood the office with all kinds of permits because they had these... They had all these user days because they had been operating at that level when the restrictions were put in place. It was huge, but the concessioners didn't like them because they were really running commercial trips and eventually it caught up to them. What they would do is they would run paying passengers down and then they would take the money from those paying passengers and part of it

would go for a couple of trips for the youth. We didn't realize that was going on for a long time. I think it was after I left that they finally realized that Partners was really running kind of a hybrid commercial operation, I guess you'd say. The same way with Tour West. Tour West had a really weird deal where they had paddlers... They had a hybrid boat where they had the paddlers and they had one guy with oars. They were really running a commercial outfit although everybody was a family member when they'd go down the river. There were quite a few things like that that were going on. It was a lot of times it was hard to prove without getting into financial records and everything else.

TM: So Bob let me make sure I understand this right, because the concessioners, Hatch and Western, had their user days and then there was user days for the general public. It sounds like Partners and Tour West had lots of user days that they were pulling out of the public pile. Is that right?

BC: That's correct. Uh huh. That's correct there for a while. I know until at least after I left. You have to realize, too, that the river operation as far as having a river ranger was only a few years old at that point. So we were just kind of getting our toes wet as far as management of the river. Although they'd been doing it for years, letting people go down, they hadn't tried to control it. I'm trying to think there were... You had Hatch, you had Western. Those were the two big commercial operations. Then there was another one. A guy named Keith Counts, Adventure Bound, and they were out of Craig, Colorado. I think those were the three big ones that we had. Then we had a few others. I remember we had other commercial outfits trying to operate in the Park. What's the guy...Dvorak up there on the Arkansas River. I remember he wanted to start running commercially. And it was just too late in the game at that point. There weren't enough user days. I don't remember what the split was at Dinosaur. I think it was a lot fairer at Dinosaur than it was at Grand Canyon. You had a much higher percentage of private users at Dinosaur than you did at the Grand Canyon.

TM: You know, it's funny because Dino had concessions, but then you couldn't get a permit unless you brought a guide for a while in the 50s into the 60s and then you had the whole partner TW deal where the do-it-yourself pile was being gobbled up by these quasi-commercial kind of groups. So on paper it might have looked good, but in actuality it wasn't.

BC: Well, yeah I guess looking at it that way, that's true. I guess, I don't know. It's been so many years, that was a long time ago. [laughter]

TM: The details of it all. Sure, yeah. Were there any accidents on the river at all? Did things go okay there?

BC: There weren't a lot. I remember Hatch River wrapped a boat around Despain Rock down in the Split Mountain Gorge one time. They rescued themselves. They went down, took some other rafts down and threw ropes to the guys, but I think the passengers ended up having to jump in the river and then get pulled out. I remember Don Hatch telling me, you wouldn't believe all the stuff that people claimed that they had on board the boats after the accident because of insurance, you know. They have a place up at Triplet Falls called Schirra Rock. Wally Schirra, who was an astronaut, his boat tipped over there at Triplet and they lost... They were doing a documentary and they lost thousands and thousands of dollars in camera equipment. That happened before I got there. We had one incident I recall where a Hatch boat went into a cliff below Disaster Falls, they got too far to the right. A passenger had his leg over the tube and he broke his leg and got it all lacerated up. I remember that incident because I went over to Vernal one time. Hatch, where their house was, you went down some stairs into the basement, and that's where the office was, downstairs. The whole basement was a big office. I walked down there

because I did an interview just like we're doing, with Don Hatch while I was at Dinosaur and we talked about a whole bunch of things. The morning I did that, I went down to look for him. I went into the basement and there was this great big guy. I mean, I'm 6'3"; he was like 7-foot tall and about 4-foot wide. This guy was huge. [chuckling] When Don finally came upstairs, I said, "Who was that guy down there?" He said, "He was a U.S. Marshall. He was serving us with papers about..." I think it was this incident where the guy broke his leg. You know, the court papers, where they had to go to court and prove that they weren't at fault in this particular accident.

We had a drowning. I got there in I believe it was May of '73 and just a couple weeks prior there had been a drowning at Schoolboy Rapid which is in Split Mountain Gorge. In Schoolboy there's a whole bunch of rollers and they go down and end in this cliff. The whole river kind of piles up on this cliff and then roars around to the right around this cliff. It's fairly easy to run. It's fun, there's all these big rollers and then you get off to the right. Somehow the boat got up onto where the river piled up and flipped and a woman got trapped underneath an overhanging cliff below the main rapid there and got hung up with her life jacket.

Another kind of interesting thing when I first got to Dinosaur. They still had some of these old blue Navy lifejackets. The Park Service would get all kinds of surplus junk. I remember we had this maintenance man there and he said that they had gone down the river and through Lodore. The first rapid was one we called "Little Stinker". It's just a big rock in the middle of the river. They'd wrapped this 28-foot pontoon boat or whatever around this rock and he said he got up on...

TM: This was an NPS trip?

BC: This was an NPS trip. They used to have like family trips. They would take everyone from the Park and they'd get on a raft and they'd go down the river. They would use that as a way of letting the families know what are their husbands doing and wives doing. Why does it take them so long? And why do they come back so dirty, and etc., etc. So they would do this. This was one of those trips. He said he got up on this rock and he jumped off into the river and he said he went right to the bottom with this old Navy lifejacket. It was just a piece of junk. They did these family trips until one day they were coming out of Split Mountain Gorge apparently. Now, this is just what I've heard, I wasn't there at the time. We could not take families or any friends on the river. There's a big, kind of a ledge that's undercut about, oh, I don't know, maybe a quarter or half-mile upriver from Split Mountain Gorge. It's not hard to avoid, but somehow they got underneath that thing and got a couple of people hurt. So after that they stopped doing any kind of family/non-employee type trips. You couldn't take anybody. So that era was over and the same thing happened in a lot of other Parks, too, at some point. Liability got to the point where they no longer wanted to let family members. Because I took my mom and dad on Lake Powell. Took them up to Rainbow Bridge. I did the same at Curecanti. Then at some point in the in 80's or something like that, there was a dictate that came down that we couldn't do that anymore. Bummer.

TM: Yeah. No kidding. So that fatality in Schoolboy, the woman who drowned, was that on a Hatch trip?

BC: I don't remember. I don't remember because I wasn't there at the time, but I'm pretty sure it was a commercial trip. Then it seemed like there was another drowning at Dinosaur after I left, but I don't remember any details.

TM: I was going to ask you about Jack, Jack Curry. Did you get a chance to interview him or do you have any stories about Jack?

BC: No. With him, well, I talked to him on the phone a number of times, just business-type stuff. Change in campsites and this and that. I remember meeting him at Grand Canyon at Phantom a couple of times in passing, basically.

TM: You mentioned that Ted Hatch was sort of larger than life. Was Jack that way as well?

BC: I think so. I think he was. But, you know, just an impression I have. I don't remember that much about him. I met Georgie White, too. She would come in there to Phantom on her... She had this triple rig or something that she [chuckle] ran and her skin was just like a paper bag. It was just unbelievable. [laughter] She had this tan that just glowed. It looked pretty crinkly. I guess it was always rumored that she was somebody else. She wasn't Georgie White, really wasn't Georgie White, but she was Bessy Hyde. I don't know if there's any truth to that or not but it makes for an interesting story. [laughter]

TM: It does. It does. So that's sort of accidents and you were saying...I interrupted...you were saying it sounded like there weren't a lot of accidents up there.

BC: Well, there's a lot of self-rescue. You don't have the ability and you've got one boat on the river and if you're below the accident scene you might be able to help pull people out. We did that. I did that a bunch of times. In fact, we got half our oars from going along the river and picking up oars and repainting them. Warm Springs Rapid ate a lot of boats. I mean, it's amazing. I was there one time on a...we took a...it was kind of a river symposium. We had people from the Bureau of Reclamation, Canyonlands National Park, Grand Canyon. They all got together and they had a big symposium we called it. Actually were two of them I remember. One of them, Glade got the title of being the "Wild Man of Dinosaur" because he didn't like all of the new regulations. What Glade liked to do was get on his boat... He had this little boat called "Stubby" and he'd take Stubby down and he'd fish. He loved to trout fish and stuff. Just take a week and leisurely go down the river. Well, he couldn't get permits and stuff for that anymore or he was battling to get permits. Things were just a little bit too organized for him. He got a little bit drunk at Harding Hole, I remember, and told all of the big shots what he thought of them. [chuckle] So he was the "Wild Man at Dinosaur" after that.

We had this other trip that Hatch River Expeditions put on for us. Well, they didn't put it on for us, they were contracted to go down. We had a big pontoon boat and we had a little hypalon raft. I forget how many people were on the trip, probably a dozen or so different regional directors and all these things. We got down to Warm Springs Rapid and I had been in both boats off and on. I got in this little hypalon with this kid the first day when we were going from Deer Lodge downstream and I could tell that he didn't have a lot of experience. He was doing a pretty good job running the river but he'd never run Warm Springs by himself, I got that out of him. So I was a little concerned. When we got to Warm Springs Rapid, I was in the big boat by this time and the boat pilot said, "Would all of you mind walking around the rapid because this is a big boat and I want to be able to run it without all the weight of the passengers in there." The river was really in flood. We were going downriver and there were dead cows and huge logs going down. So it was really a lot of water going through Warm Springs. So I got out. I thought, "Yeah, might as well. I don't want to tip over." There had been a Hatch boatman killed. The first guy that went through Warm Springs after it developed in the 60's drowned. He was a Hatch boatman. So it obviously had a bad reputation. But this little hypalon raft, they decided that they could run it through with this kid and a couple of Park Service guys decided they wanted to go along with him. I remember one of the guys said, "Here, would you take my camera and take some pictures of us." He had a little Kodak, kind of box camera. I said sure. So I'm looking through the lens as they're coming

down. There's a little point right above the big hole and I was standing on that point. Here comes this raft down the river and I thought, "This kids in the wrong place." When you run Warm Springs, you're supposed to stay to the right and kind of hug the shore. If you get out in those big rollers, they're so powerful that you can't get out of them to get away from this big hole that we used to call the "The Maytag." I'm watching this kid, so I thought, "Boy, they're going to eat it." So I put down this guy's camera and I got my 35 mm camera and I started taking pictures of this boat as it goes into this hole. It just flips right over and all these guys are in the river now. I had pictures of boxes coming up and going down. A head would pop up. It was ugly. We had a couple guys got hit on the head with boxes and we had to do some first aid and stuff. Of course, we had to chase all the gear down and everything. That happened a lot at Warm Springs if someone chose not to portage and run the rapid. Cause it was pretty serious stuff. I think I mentioned taking the power boat up there couple of times.

TM: Yeah, all the way up to the foot of Warm Springs.

BC: And that was why I did it... One reason I did it was to just to watch people come through the rapids and see how they did. I saw several portage and I didn't see anybody tip over at all. So that was a good thing.

TM: Good yeah. Then you mentioned permits. We were talking a little bit before we turned on the machine on here about increased visitation happening at Grand Canyon and the Park Service needing to put in a lottery to distribute permits when they cut back the number of people that could camp at the Phantom Ranch campground, Bright Angel Campground. You'd mentioned some in the last interview about spending a lot of time on the phone just sorting out permits for Dinosaur. Could you talk a little bit about the permits and how that system worked or didn't work at times?

BC: Well, of course with Grand Canyon they had these huge numbers of people showed up down at Phantom Ranch. Originally, they would issue the permits up at the South Rim District Ranger Office. That was one of my duties. It was really crazy during the spring, during what we called Easter period. You would spend the entire day standing at the desk, basically, issuing permits. You'd have a line going out the door of the ranger station there. We had one kid I remember [chuckle]... Myself and another guy were working midnight to 8:00 shift being dispatcher, so we were just dying to get another seasonal to help with the workload. This one guy got hired, he came out and the District Ranger was there and the kid came into the lobby and he says, "Hi, I'm your new seasonal ranger." The District Ranger said, "Go sit over there in that chair over there and I'll get to you in just a couple of minutes." The kid sat in the lobby, I guess, and watched this influx of people coming in and getting permits just one right after another after another. The person that was manning the desk and giving out the permits noticed that this guy stood up and walked out the door, walked over into the old Babbitt's parking lot and that's the last he saw him. He never said goodbye or anything. He just refused to stay there. I think the District Ranger got a postcard from him from San Diego about a week later. It was kind of intimidating to have this many people come in. I remember Harvey Butchart coming in there and getting a permit. I'm asking him all these questions... The first time I met him asking him all these questions about his experience and everything. One of the permanent rangers stepped out of the back room and said, "Give him the permit. [both laughing] Let him do whatever he wants to do."

TM: So this wasn't river permits, this was back country hiking permits.

BC: These were hiking permits. River permits, I had nothing to do with them. They were issued by... I'm not absolutely sure how they issued them. I guess over at the visitor center where they had the

administration building, they handled them over there at that time. But later on, within probably a few years, the influx of people wanting back country hiking permits and camping permits really skyrocketed and they ended up building and having a back country office where that's all they did was... That's all they do today is issue permits. One right after another after another. So it's almost insane to think of, from my perspective, that it's gotten that crazy that people are so excited to get a permit that they can just hardly contain themselves.

TM: Yeah, well they're getting very competitive to get. So thinking about Dinosaur, it sounds like at Grand Canyon you were helping in the distribution of permits for back country backpacking but at Dinosaur you were in the office working on river permits.

BC: River permits. We didn't have hardly any back country use at Dinosaur. Hardly any at all. The way people saw the back country at Dinosaur is they... Well, there were a couple of back country roads that they drove but very little camping in the backcountry except on the river. That's how they saw the backcountry at Dinosaur at that time was on the river. I know one thing I did... I used to work on my river boats during the winter. I'd go over and I'd paint them and I'd build new frames for the boats if I wanted to do that or build boxes or all kinds of stuff. There was always something to do over there. Then in the summer you'd want to go on the river. Well, the way the permits were set up, they were issuing the permits in the spring and of course that's when everyone wants to go. So it was really chaotic where you're issuing permits right before someone is ready to go. So I told the Chief Ranger, I said, "Let's take and issue the permits in the winter, because that's when I have all my time. I'm working on river boats. If I'm doing it in the spring and summer I can't go on the river and I can't be part of the river operation." He said, "Okay." So I think we set a date of January 15 and that's when we were going to start accepting permits for the next season. We advertised in all the local and regional newspapers and that sort of thing as best we could to let people know that we were no longer starting to issue permits like the first of May or first April, but we were now doing it in January. That initially created some problems because people that had been doing it for years weren't reading the newspaper. I mentioned the Uinta County Sheriff, former Governor Vanderhoof, and I'm sure there were a lot of other people that had gotten permits in the past, routinely got them, and they were very upset. So we had those growing pains, but we made a waiting list. People would call us and they'd say, "Well, I've only got 6 people instead of 10 people on my trip," so that frees up user days. Or someone would cancel a trip or change the dates of a trip so that frees up a campsite.

TM: So this was 1972 or 3?

BC: Yes, this was '73-'74, that period of time. I moved to Dinosaur in May of '73 and I left in August of '75. I left reluctantly, too. I was a Park Technician I was called. That was my title. I got an opportunity to become a full-fledged park ranger by going through intake program at Glen Canyon and that's really why I left Dinosaur. I remember, I had a conversation with the Superintendent. I was up mowing my lawn or something and he drove up into the residential area. He said, "Would you like to go to Glen Canyon?" I said, "Well, what do you mean?" so he explained it. I said, "Well, I'll stay here if you give me a higher graded job." He just laughed. The guy that replaced me was pretty black and white as I understand and really wasn't a real people person. [chuckle] They had issues.

TM: Well, they missed the boat when they let you go.

BC: They did. I think so. [laughter]

TM: You mentioned a story that I was like “wait a minute.” It sounded like as you guys implemented this permit change from the spring to the winter, to January 15, that as you mentioned, there were some people that got kind of left out. Do you got any stories about that and what happened?

BC: Well, the one with the Uinta County Sheriff, we mentioned earlier. Excuse me, Moffat County Sheriff. They had been doing their annual trip and they couldn’t do it. This was the County Sheriff we’re dealing with who has authority for search and rescue and law enforcement and everything in the Park. So you really can’t tell that person that they can’t go down. So they did end up going down the river. We did have issues with him though. We got a bunch of complaints about their behavior, the drunkenness and having guns and all kinds of stuff in the campsites, so I called the Sheriff and I talked to him. He said that won’t happen anymore. The next year they got a permit and everybody went with their wives so they kind of toned down the bad behaviors that they’d had.

In the Park we had very little as we talked about... I talked about arresting this group of guys that didn’t have a river permit at Dinosaur. I was trying to make the point that I was in a conversation with Don Hatch about them not having lifejackets and he was feeling very picked on. This was an opportunity for me to say, “Look we’re actually be pretty fair because we arrested these guys [chuckle] that didn’t have permits.” The problem that we had a Dinosaur and the same thing at Glen Canyon, is you have a state line that runs through the middle of the Park. So you have Colorado Law, Utah Law and federal law. The jurisdiction is what’s called concurrent jurisdiction or proprietary jurisdiction, in some cases, where you don’t have full authority as a federal law enforcement officer. You share the law enforcement authority with the state and county people. So in all the Parks I worked in, I was deputized in the counties. I was a deputy in Coconino County and in Gunnison County and Montrose County and Moffat County and Uinta County [chuckle], so all these different jurisdictions that you had. The reason we did that in part was, particularly in Utah, the judicial system was, I guess you’d say was broken. They didn’t have any... In Utah in particular there was one federal judge, his name was Wallace Ritter and he was in Salt Lake City. He had one other magistrate and that was it for the entire state of Utah for federal law. If you wanted to have someone appear before a federal judge, they would have to go to Utah. Judge Ritter was extraordinarily unpredictable. I only had one case that I sent to him and that was when I was at Glen Canyon. What happened there... The point is, we handled everything with state law. At Dinosaur we did the same thing. They had state laws that you had to have a boating permit and that you had to have lifejackets and these things. We would use the Justice of the Peace at Dinosaur or one over in Vernal, and we didn’t use the federal judges at all. All the other regulations were just done by verbal warnings and written warnings, and those types of things. It was all kind of show.

The one case I had with Judge Ritter, I was at Rainbow Bridge and I was working the marina. These two guys were a little bit drunk and they got into the patrol boat and they started using the PA system and yelling all kinds of things, obscenities and everything else, around the [chuckle] bay where the Rainbow Marina was. It was back up in Forbidding Canyon there. So I got these guys out of the boat and I took them in my office and I wrote them two federal citations for basically tampering with government equipment. They were on a houseboat and I remember the guy who was sort of the leader of the group with the houseboat, he came down to my office after this had all occurred and he absolutely begged me to not send this ticket through on these guys. He said, “Do you know that they’ll have to appear before Judge Ritter in Salt Lake City?” I said, “I know, that’s not my problem.” I said, “They shouldn’t have gotten in that boat.”

So what we had to do with that citation is you had to send it down to your District Ranger, then the District Ranger took it to the Chief Ranger, then the Chief Ranger got in consultation with the U.S.

Attorney in Salt Lake. Then the U.S. Attorney would decide whether or not to go forward with the case. In this case, the U.S. Attorney called me when I was down at Wahweap. He really talked to me a long time about the case. He was concerned because [chuckle] of the unpredictability of Judge Ritter. He said, "You know, last week some guys came in and they had stolen some Christmas trees out of the Ashley National Forest." He said they had a pick-up truck and they had a bunch of Christmas trees in them. They were caught by a forest ranger and were given a citation. They went before Judge Ritter. He said he gave them 20 years! [chuckle] Yeah, that's what the U.S. Attorney said. He said, "We had to go and talk to Judge Ritter." Then a day or two later he came back and reversed himself and gave them like time served or something like that. So he was very unpredictable. They went ahead with this case of mine and I never really tried to find out what happened to these guys. But the fact is they did show up in court and they did have to go before this federal judge, and if nothing else, they were absolutely scared to death [chuckle]. But we had to handle everything through state court there at Glen Canyon when I was there. It didn't work very well. Later on...finally, on the Arizona side, we started using federal court down in Phoenix and had pretty good success with that.

But Dinosaur...we had a guy at Dinosaur named Benny Martin and he held court at Dinosaur, Colorado. He was a real old guy, he was like 90 years old but he was still very sharp. We would call down and we'd say, "Judge Martin, we've got this guy here and he wasn't wearing a lifejacket at Echo Park. Could you see the case?" "Sure, come on down." We'd go down to his house or he had a little courtroom down in Dinosaur. He couldn't see very good. We had this one book of fish and game statutes and he would always say, "Bring the big book." So we'd take this book down that had big letters in it. We figured out pretty quickly, myself and a couple other rangers, that Judge Martin really liked park rangers and if you brought somebody down there to his court, they were guilty [chuckle]. It did not matter the circumstances. So we had to be really careful. We had to be absolutely sure that this person deserved some kind of penalty, and of course, usually it was a fine. One of the reasons that we took anybody into custody at all or tried to, I mean it was almost a joke. Like I said the other day, the guys without the permit over at Split Mountain had to follow us to the courtroom in their own car. They weren't really arrested, we didn't put any handcuffs on them or anything, we just had to hope that they would show up.

TM: If they had driven away, would you have given chase?

BC: We didn't have marked vehicles really. [TM laughter] I mean, it was crazy. Absolutely insane. And that's how... The Park Service really was in it's infancy as far as law enforcement, providing the law enforcement tools and the skills and the training. We didn't have any equipment to... You couldn't put the guys in the bed of the pickup truck and drive them down there, you know. We had another one down there on the Colorado side where some guys poached a deer up on Blue Mountain there. We caught them. We took the deer, we threw it in our pickup truck and said follow us down to Judge Martin's office. We went down there. Judge Martin fined them, I forget, a couple hundred dollars or something. They didn't have any money so we took them back over to the park headquarters. I got in consultation with the chief ranger and the superintendent and everything. They're all pulling their hair out, "What are we going to do with these guys? They don't have any money. We don't have a way to transport them to the Moffat County jail. We're going to have call the Sheriff to come get them." Finally I came up with this idea. I said, "Let's take their car." They had like a 1970-something Mustang. I said, "Let's take their car as collateral." Then, if they agreed, they'd have some friends come pick them up. Then in a week they'd come back with the money to pay the fine and then we'd let them have their car back. [chuckle]. It worked. You had to be a little creative at times.

I grew up in the Park Service sort of in a transitional period as far as law enforcement goes. I started in 1969 and then in 1970 they had the Yosemite riots and that basically changed everything as far as management realizing, "Hey, we have a problem. We have a lot of law enforcement issues occurring in the parks, but we don't have people that are professionally trained to deal with these and even then they don't have the equipment to deal with it either." So that happened and then in 1972 or -3, Ken Patrick was shot and killed at Point Reyes National Seashore. As a guy who originally wanted to be an interpreter in the parks and then found out rangers had all the fun and started doing that, these were kind of scary...became scary times. Because at that time, he was the first park ranger ever killed. As they started going back in the records, they realized almost a half dozen rangers had been shot and killed in the line of duty.

In Ken Patrick's case, even at that point in '73 I think it was, part of the reason they think that he was shot was that he couldn't get to his firearm. That was because of the coat he was wearing. We all wore these coats. I had one. Just a big parka, like a North Face parka and there was no zipper or way...unless you pulled the coat way up and put it over the top of your pistol, you couldn't get to your pistol. That was part of the reason that that occurred. I worked with his wife Tomie at Glen Canyon. She went on to be a park ranger. I think she was like the Chief Ranger at Glen Canyon. She even went on to the superintendency up at one of the parks in Alaska and stuff. She was a very competent person. I never talked to her about the incident. I know it was a terrible situation for her but she was a very good ranger. But we had the Ken Patrick thing. About that same time, I remember, there was an incident at Mesa Verde where the guy reported it said somebody stepped out from behind a tree and blasted a shotgun at his car. That was always kind of questionable. But the fact was it sort of added to this fervor that, wow, this was getting to be kind of a serious job. Even Canyon de Chelly. You think of Canyon de Chelly as being a little out of the way the Park. That was one of the challenges the Park Service faced was how do you provide law enforcement at all these little monuments in Arizona and other places that are way out in the bojack? Your Natural Bridges and Hovenweep and all these places. Canyon de Chelly, what, two weeks ago they had a shooting there where a ranger shot a Navajo man that apparently had a knife, but there's not a lot of information on that. There was an earlier incident at Canyon de Chelly. This occurred in the '80s as I recall. It was really crazy. Canyon de Chelly is an odd place in that you have a paved road that goes along the rim and right adjacent to that paved rim is the Navajo Indian Reservation. You have sort of two worlds there. You got a lot of poor people, very poor people, out on the reservation and you've got all these rich tourists that drive in in their cars. So you have a lot of people breaking into cars and stealing things, bothering the tourists so to speak and things like that. They had this one incident where this guy...they caught him breaking into a car out on one of the viewpoints. The chief ranger went out there, I don't know if he had any help or not, and he had a shotgun. At that time, the Park Service they wanted to do law enforcement, they wanted to be law enforcement officers, but they didn't always want to *really* do the job. You know what I mean? So we had to use #4 buckshot in our shotguns.

So they wanted to kind of make somebody angry by shooting them but not put them down. This guy... As I recall, the Chief Ranger during the confrontation shot him with the shotgun. It sort of just made the guy mad. Then the gun jammed, the shotgun jammed, and they got into a physical altercation at the viewpoint and they both fell over the cliff. The ranger landed on a ledge and the Navajo man bounced and went right down to the bottom of the canyon and was killed. Had the shotgun had better ammunition in it and not jammed... I heard later on by someone who knew a little bit more, that maybe they had a shotgun there that was supposed to be repaired and wasn't, but who knows? That's frightening when you're in law enforcement and you think here's this little podunk park out there in the middle of Northern Arizona and people are getting in armed confrontations with rangers. It really is kind

of insane. My idea growing up was you went to the parks and you had a wonderful time. You went on nature walks and you sat around the campfire and you just had a wonderful time. There was never any thought of criminal activity, it's like it was an island in the middle of the country. But that's not a realistic view of the national parks and certainly isn't today. But the jurisdictional issues at some of these parks were really a problem because you had to kind of massage the state laws so you could apply them toward the management of the park so to speak. The lifejackets and the permits and those types of things.

TM: Right. And of course, state law and federal law... Yeah.

BC: Makes for really interesting things.

TM: Yeah, yeah. What other comparisons or contrasts did you see between the much larger visited Grand Canyon National Park and the much smaller visited Dinosaur National Monument? It was still a large park with a lot of acreage, not as big as Grand Canyon, but still fairly big.

BC: Yes, well, one of the things at that time is the number of foreign tourists. Grand Canyon was just overwhelmed with Japanese, German, other Europeans, lots of foreign tourists. I think that probably extended to some of the other parks and the local areas. Zion and...

TM: The Grand Circle Parks. Sure.

BC: Yeah, maybe the Grand Circle Parks. Dinosaur didn't quite attract that many people as far as foreign tourists. So that was one thing that was different up there. We didn't have the parking problems that they have at Grand Canyon because our visitation was so much smaller than there. We didn't have a concession in the park as far as a grocery store, we didn't have a post office, we didn't have a town in the park. Towns, in the case of Dinosaur, were adjacent to the park. Vernal, Utah, Dinosaur, Colorado, Craig, Colorado, Maybell. So a lot different. So you're not dealing with concession employees. When it gets to the law enforcement aspect, a lot of the problems/the majority of the problems were not from tourists that came in from out of the park, they came from the concession employees and park employees that lived in the park. Because you've got a permanent residents at Grand Canyon. I think Grand Canyon Village in the summer was 1500 to 2000 people, permanent residents.

And you've got all of the problems that we have in any town. You've got everyone from the town drunk to somebody burglarizing their neighbor. I mean, it was all there. We dealt with these concessions all the time and we didn't have the... In the early '70s, you didn't have the ability to do a quick background check on somebody, check their criminal record. What we had to do is we had to fingerprint people, send the fingerprints to the FBI, the FBI would then send back a criminal report. That's one thing that Lloyd Horner dealt with a lot. We would fingerprint everybody that got a job at Grand Canyon. What they would do they would go to the Fred Harvey general offices, which were across the street from the superintendent's house and the El Tovar Hotel. They might walk or drive down to the ranger station. They'd give them a card and say, "Go get this card filled out and bring it back," get it signed. We'd keep the fingerprints, but Fred Harvey had its own internal system there of how they knew that they'd come down to the South Rim District Ranger Office. There were a number of them that never went back to the Fred Harvey offices because they knew that they were going to get found out, that there was some kind of criminal behavior in their background.

TM: So Dinosaur would you... It was very different because clearly it's not a town there, but when you had to try to identify someone, how did you do that? I mean, would you get their fingerprints and then send that off to the FBI? You can't just like wait.

BC: No, we didn't have a local population other than our park employees. There were no concession employees in the park other than those that came through the park with the river trips and stuff like that. We didn't do any background checks on those people at all. That was up to the company to do that. It would certainly be something good to do because you want to have good quality people that are going with tourists down the river but we didn't, at that time, have any way to do that.

And really Grand Canyon didn't... We would get reports back from the FBI weeks or months after and there were some bad people up there. I mean, there really were some really bad people. We didn't have this NCIC system or anything where you could check license plates or anything. It was just a whole pretty much internal. We could call down to the sheriff's office in Williams or Flagstaff and get local records, but you couldn't do much else other than that. What's kind of crazy, too... One of the crazy things I always felt is that here you've got a park ranger and he's a law enforcement person, but the Park Service was so worried about its image, they really didn't want rangers carrying guns. That was not something they wanted them to do and yet you had campers with 2-foot long Bowie knives on their hips. Some of the people that I dealt with at Phantom were just a little bit crazy. That's all there was to it. [TM laughter] And you kind of worried. I remember reading the book *Helter Skelter* years later, the Vincent Leosi book about the Manson family. I thought, "Man, I think some of those people were down at Phantom Ranch." [chuckle]

One of the good things that came out of the permit system is that not only did we have permits but we reduced the number of days you could stay at any one campground. I might have mentioned this before. It had been 14 days. So I would go into Flagstaff to get groceries and I'm driving back on Route 66, which was there at the time, and I'd see this person on the side of the road thumbing a ride. When I got back down to Phantom Ranch a couple days later after my days off, he's sitting in the Bright Angel campground. Then people would stay down there for long periods of time. They would stay down there for 14 days and you'd couldn't really track it very well. So you'd end up with these huge messes particularly when they finally left and took off.

TM: Was that happening... At Split Mountain at the campground up by the quarry where the river trips took out at the ramp there, there's a campground just downstream of there, I think. Were people sort of overstaying, if you will, at Dinosaur, or was that much less...?

BC: The only place I think that that took place was down at Echo Park. There was a period of time when there was a group that was staying down there for a long time. In fact, the ranger that was down there, we accused him of being part of the problem. We had one interesting case, actually, that involved Judge Ritter in Salt Lake City. His granddaughter went down and was staying with this one group in the Echo Park area, the Echo Park campground. He called the Uinta County sheriff and said my granddaughter is down there and I want her back here at Salt Lake. The family was upset about it. The Uinta County sheriff called the Moffat County sheriff and the two of them went down to Echo Park. They never told the Park Service. They grabbed this girl, she was 17, and took her back to Salt Lake City because she was still a juvenile. Of course, she probably came back two or three weeks later when she turned 18. That was nothing that we tracked, but that was kind of crazy to have something like that. The other campgrounds, Lodore, Deer Lodge, Split Mountain, were pretty much just normal Park Service campgrounds. I don't remember any issues with long-term camping and that sort of thing. And none to

speak of in the backcountry that I remember. There was a really bizarre incident, more than bizarre, that occurred. I don't know if we talked about this before about Joe Alston?

TM: No.

BC: Okay. He'd have to fill you in on all the real details but the story that I heard... There was a group of people, a large group during spring break that showed up out at a place called Haystack Rock. Haystack Rock is a big promontory along the Yampa River on the south side where the Yampa road comes across and then it's a spur road that goes out. It's a high point and from there you can look down on the Yampa River. A pretty place. So Steve Petersburg, who was Resource Management Specialist, and the district ranger at the time, the Yampa District Ranger George Billingsley, they went out to Haystack Rock and they ran into this real crazy group. Naked people running around and all kinds of problems going on out there. Illegal camping being one of them. They had a really bad time with these folks. I don't think they wrote any tickets or anything, I think they were glad to just get out of there with their lives. Apparently they were some really bad people. So later on, I think it was that winter, Joe Alston is driving across doing a patrol. He was involved in the Peregrine Falcon study there at Dinosaur. That was one of the things he was doing with the Division of Wildlife. He ended up at Haystack Rock. He saw what he thought was a fire and he went out to Haystack Rock. There was a guy out there like at the viewpoint or near the viewpoint, and he was throwing burning tires off of the viewpoint and trying to get a fire to start down below. Well, what had happened is he had murdered this woman. I don't know if it had just occurred, but I believe it had occurred previously and then he had gone back out there with these tires trying to ignite this fire.

TM: Yeah. You did tell this story! I remember now.

BC: Okay. The woman had been thrown over the cliff and had landed down below. The intention was to get her into the river and she hadn't made it to the river. So he threw these tires over trying to ignite this fire which would hide the evidence which was the body down there. Joe came upon this, he called the Moffat County sheriff. They sent a deputy out and they were able to arrest this guy and, of course, figure out what was going on. Why are you throwing tires over? And arrest the guy. So that was just a really bizarre situation.

TM: Hey Bob? I've got a question. George Billingsley? Now is this the same George Billingsley?

BC: Wait a minute. Let me think. George... Wait I think I've got the wrong name. George Billingsley was down at Grand Canyon.

TM: Yes.

BC: Worked for the Museum of Northern Arizona.

TM: George was a boatman for a while. He also was a National Park Service ranger at Supai.

BC: That's right. He did go down to Supai, I remember that now.

TM: Did Billingsley...did he actually work on the Yampa for a while? Was he at Dinosaur for a while?

BC: No, no. I've got the name wrong. I can't remember the guy's name, but I remember his first name was George. Buckingham! George Buckingham was his name. George Billingsley, I remembered him from working with the Museum of Northern Arizona and then later on he did become a park ranger and did go down to Supai.

TM: Okay. Well once again we've been at this about an hour and a half. How time flies. So maybe this is a good time to wrap up this Part 11 and we will pick it up again with Part 12. What do you think? Sound like a plan?

BC: Sure. That sounds good.

TM: Okay. So we'll wrap this up. This is the end of Part 11. Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Bob Cornelius. Today is November 9, 2017, my name is Tom Martin and that concludes this interview. Bob, thank you so much.

BC: You're welcome.