

Interviewee: Robert “Bob” Cornelius (BC)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Working as a Park Ranger at Curecanti National Recreation Area for 20+ years of his career.

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TM: Today is Thursday, April 18, 2019. This is a Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Robert “Bob” Cornelius. My name is Tom Martin. Good morning, Bob, how are you?

BC: I’m doing well, thank you.

TM: May we have your permission to record this interview over the phone?

BC: Absolutely. Uh-huh.

TM: Thank you very much. We had sort of just arrived at Curecanti and I think you had told us about the 1983 high water and some of those adventures and some of the housing issues. What else was happening there when you first arrived at Curecanti. What else did you do?

BC: When I first got to Curecanti, I actually lived up at Elk Creek. That’s up on Blue Mesa Reservoir. Of course, I was what was called Morrow Point District Ranger, so my area of responsibility was actually to the west of Blue Mesa Lake: the Morrow Point Lake and Crystal Lake and Cimarron area, Highway 92 areas. One of the things I decided that I should do is set some goals. One of them was to learn as much about the geography and what was going on in my district in particular and also up at Blue Mesa. So I did a lot of hiking and kind of exploration. I went in some areas that people probably hadn’t gone into before as far as hiking. What was happening was the Park Service had this Section 8 money from the Bureau of Reclamation for development of the parks. One of the things that they were looking at were hiking trails for people. That was something that in their public meetings and whatever that they’d had, they realized people wanted to have hiking opportunities in and around the recreation area.

A lot of areas were somewhat inaccessible because of private holdings around the park. So I did a lot of...what do I want to say, trespassing? [chuckle] No, I usually called them. I would call a local owner and ask him if I could go across their property to access the park. So I hiked in places, like I hiked down Blue Creek, for example, which comes out at the Curecanti Needle. I hiked down Curecanti Creek. There was no trail there at the time. I hiked down Crystal Creek, which is farther to the west on Crystal Reservoir.

TM: Can you help me understand how big [BEEP] a district we’re talking about here? Are we talking about 10 square miles, or 100 square miles? How many acres? You’re talking about going down these drainages [BEEP] is this like a 1-mile walk or would this be a 10, or an overnight camp?

BC: No, most of the walks there are done in a few hours, down and back. Some would take a whole day. To go down to Crystal Creek, there was several miles, really steep and rugged, about a 2,000-foot elevation change. I did have the advantage of I would hike down and then have one of my seasonals come and pick me up on the lake [chuckle].

TM: Okay, so you would be hiking down a side canyon down to the lake and then somebody could come and pick you up?

BC: Right. I did that a lot and then I also hiked out. One of the trail proposals, for example, was to build a trail down Crystal Creek. Well, I had hiked down there a couple of times actually, and I knew that it would be foolish to build a trail down there. It would be really, really expensive and it'd probably be in the Creek bottom, and if there was a flood, it would wash the trail away. I guess the bottom line on all this was just familiarity with the district and what happened as far as water levels of the reservoirs, water levels of the river, for example, below Morrow Point Dam when they are producing power. All those things have to be taken into account if you're going to develop it.

I think in our last interview I might have mentioned the big footbridge across the Gunnison River was built and they built it at an angle to save money. So the pier on the north side of the river was lower than the one on the south side of the river and when the high water year came, half of the bridge was under water. I took a bunch of photographs. I went over to the Park Service office over there by the Denver Service Center and I ran into one of my old superintendents from Dinosaur, Cecil Lewis. Cecil was working in the regional office there and I said, "Look at these photographs." I mostly took them just because it was such an unusual occurrence, all this flooding and rock slides and everything. I had them all in a binder and I gave them to Cecil. When he saw that bridge under water, he says, "Let me have this," and he took it into the back offices [chuckle]. I'm sure being in the Regional Office you're always arguing with architects and designers over details and things like that. This was a real black-eye for the engineers over there because they'd built this thing and now it's half underwater, unusable, might even wash away. It wasn't too long, about a year later, they come out with a big old crane and they disconnect the bridge on the north side, lift it up, and pour about another 4 feet of concrete over there. So now the bridge is usable under all water conditions except something really extreme.

Then the trail, I remember that particular trail they call the Mesa Creek Trail, I told the people that were building it, I told them you're building it too close to the river. They wanted it right down by the river so fishermen could practically stand on the trail and fish. Well, when the high-water year hit, it washed it all away and washed the footbridge across Mesa Creek away. So there were all kinds of problems there. Then Crystal Creek, of course I mentioned there, I told them that they couldn't build a trail down there. Well, I did manage to keep them from doing that and that was probably wise.

There was another interesting thing that happened, they wanted to build a handicap viewpoint at a place called Pioneer Point. Pioneer Point is about 4 miles on the north side off Highway 92 above Morrow Point Lake. It looks at the Curecanti Needle. They wanted to build it over on the southwest side of where the viewpoints are now. I told them, "That's not a good place to put a viewpoint." They said, "Well, why?" I said, "You could take a rock and you throw it right into the campsite where the boaters camp down below." To prove this point, I had some old crumbly bricks at my house in Montrose, I put them in my car and took them up to work. I had my seasonal come up-lake in the boat and I had him [chuckle] hide behind some rocks. Then I threw bricks off of this proposed viewpoint and they went right into the campsite. I remember seeing them. A couple of them hit rocks and just disintegrated, you saw this big red burst. After doing that, I wrote up a report and sent it up. So they developed the viewpoint

at a different location. I suppose you could still throw a rock off and hit somebody, but at least it wouldn't be somebody sleeping in their sleeping bag.

You wouldn't find them for a few days. So I did a lot of that. I remember also when I first came to Curecanti, the chief ranger's name was Jim Riggs. Jim took me on a 2-day junket. The first day we went up to Gunnison and we went to the Rotary Club. That was quite an experience. I'd never been to a Rotary Club. They were singing all kinds of songs and fining people for not doing things. Seems kind of silly.

TM: Trying to raise money.

BC: Yeah, they made money. So he was introducing me to various locals. One of them he didn't introduce me to, but I remember we're driving down Tomichi Avenue on the way toward Crested Butte, we didn't up to Crested Butte but that was the street we were on, and here's 2 ranchers. They're standing right in the middle of the street talking. I remember Jim saying, "Well, you know you're in a small town when people stop and talk right in the middle of the street." The guy that was talking was a guy named Frank Carpenter. The Carpenters had property adjacent to the park in the Blue Mesa area. The Park Service and them had been battling over road access and things for years. That was one of my first meetings, at least I knew who Frank was. We had some real problems with, not so much Frank, but George. His son George was kind of a mercurial type of person. I know Joe Alston, later on, ended up going up to Denver after a real contentious meeting out in the parking lot near the headquarters and had to get a restraining order against George because he was making all kinds of threats and whatnot.

There were a lot of land issues. It just points out that some pretty heated things go on between Park Service and some of the locals. That was one of my main efforts, was to learn what some of the issues were and then to also meet these people, some of the local people. One of the problems the Park Service had was that they would transfer people a lot. So my staying at Curecanti, some people would say, "Well, he's dead wood, he's been there 20 years." Not necessarily. As long as you're still energetic and interested in the job, being there for a long time can be a benefit because you know people and you know what some of the issues are. And you kind of know how to schmooze the people a little bit, too. I went out one time and bucked bales of hay with George Carpenter out at his place, throwing them to the cattle, thinking I would make friends with him, but that didn't work out so well. He let me help him bust up hay because it meant he didn't have to do as much work, but we still weren't friends [laughter]. We had some real confrontations with George.

TM: There's 2 things I want to ask you. One is what were the confrontations, and you're heading in that direction, but I want to back up for a minute and see if you'd talk just briefly about the concept of dead wood versus institutional memory. Because if a lot of people coming and going, okay, I'm going to climb a ladder and have 2 years in this park, 2 years in that park, you don't get a chance to understand or move forward with the institutional memory because you don't get it.

BC: Right. I think that really does go on a lot. Or did in those days in particular. That was why they wanted to develop this Park Technician series where they would have, and I think I mentioned this in an earlier interview, where they would have someone stay. These are kind of the people that know the locals and know what's going on, and can then take that information and give it to the park managers. The park managers could then digest it and come up with good management policies. That's all well and good, but it just didn't take into account the fact that everybody wants to advance at some point or even be in charge at some point of operations. There's always that going on.

I recall several people that I met early on. One guy was named Benny Vigil and he worked at Cimarron. He had a restaurant there and a gas station. It's kind of a gigantic eyesore, and was back then, but these were really good people. I became, over the years, very good friends with Benny, in fact he just passed away here about 6 months ago. I went to his memorial here in Montrose. But Benny...he and I had many long conversations over cups of coffee, maybe \$600 worth of coffee over the years in his restaurant [chuckle]. That was where I would go to meet people. Everybody would come in there and have a cup of coffee or have lunch. A lot of the local ranchers, the Nicholas's, the Gray's, the Viyo's, all these different ranchers would come in there and I'd learn what their gripes were and so on and so forth. It presented you, I think, as somebody other than just a bureaucrat, you got to know people personally.

TM: Gosh, it seems like its great public relations to hang out with the locals and understand their issues.

BC: Yeah. Benny, one time I went over to him. I had this photograph of the second roundhouse at Cimarron. There were two roundhouses at Cimarron, because they had a history of narrow gauge trains there. It was a helper engine station. Nobody had a picture of the second roundhouse except after it had burned. There were lots of pictures of all this hulking mess of these locomotives that were all burned and big piles of wood and stuff. One day this guy came to Cimarron and he had all these pictures. He let me look through them and here's a picture of this roundhouse. I thought, this is amazing. About a week or two later I come to work one day and there's this package sitting next to the door, just propped up against the office door. I open it up and here he's blown up this picture of this roundhouse. I guess he'd come back through Cimarron. So I took this picture over and I showed it to Benny. Maybe I didn't do that. I went over to Benny and I said, "Benny, I want to get your permission to go up on your property up here on the top of this hill and take a comparison photograph of the old roundhouse." Benny says to me, he said, "Bob, you don't have to ask me permission to go up there." He said, "You're like family, you just go on up there." [chuckle]That's probably the nicest thing any local ever said to me.

TM: Nice.

BC: But I did have some issues. I had one guy named Larry Griffin. He owned what was called the Pleasant Valley Ranch. It was just up the road about 5 miles from Cimarron, on the right-hand side of the road, it's called Stumpy Creek. I used to go up there and have pie and coffee all the time and I thought everything was good. We would talk about different issues and whatnot. Larry was kind of a little paranoid. He always worried that the Park Service was going to come in there and build a campground that would take some of his business away. I'm sure there was some other issues. One day they sent a surveyor in there. Have I told you this story?

TM: No, I don't think so.

BC: Okay, it seems like I might have.

TM: You might have. I could have forgotten, too.

BC: I think maybe I did, but anyway, he kicked some surveyors off of the property that were surveying. I was told by Superintendent Alexander to go down and take care of this situation. It sounded like he had just kicked them off that afternoon. Later I found out it had been a couple months earlier. When I walked in, I started talking to Larry and he turned as red as an Arizona Cardinal's jersey. He kicked me out of his business and he told me never to come back again, and nobody from the Park Service could

ever come in his business again, and et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. I had a little Chevy LUV pick-up and I had backed it in. Rather than drive in forward, I backed into the parking space. So Larry is yelling at me and screaming at me out there in the parking lot. I turned the engine on and he's laying across the hood of the car screaming at me through the window. Finally, I rolled the window down and very calmly said to Larry, I said, "Larry, if you want me to leave, you're going to have to get off the hood of my car. I don't want to run you over." I left and for 7 years I never went back to his business.

Then one day I was driving back from Gunnison, and Larry during the winter worked with the Colorado Division of Highways because it was slow, nobody's coming into his restaurant or anything. He was a flagman on some work there. I'm coming up the grade on Blue Mesa Summit and I saw him up there. He signals all the cars through and when it gets to my car, he puts up the stop sign and I had to stop. He walks up to the window and I thought, oh, boy, this is going to be fun. For 7 years, I had driven by his place and I'd say, "Dear Lord, forgive Larry and you're going to have to handle this because I can't." Larry says to me, "Bob, I'm really sorry for what happened here a few years ago." He said, "Every time you drive by, I get this big knot in my stomach. It's just eating me up." He said, "Could I come down and talk with you down at your office?" I said, "Sure, any time." He said, "Well, I'll be down tomorrow." I said, "Okay." So he came down there and we kind of talked about what had happened. I told him, I said, "Well, you know, it takes a big man to admit that maybe you made a mistake." He said, "Well, any time you want to come up and have a cup of coffee or pie or anything, go ahead." Of course, several of my seasonals...and this gets back to the point of not knowing history...several of my seasonals, unbeknownst to me, were going up to his place and having coffee and everything. We ended up having an end-of-season party there at his restaurant. We would tell our seasonals at orientation, "Don't go to Pleasant Valley Ranch. Don't get gas. Don't get pie, coffee. If you want to do it on your own time, that's fine, but don't do it in uniform."

TM: What do you think happened to him over those 7 years? What changed his perspective and outlook?

BC: I think prayer. I think there was a little bit of divine intervention there. That's the only thing I can think of, because I didn't do anything. I never made any effort to get back in his good graces or anything like that. This whole business about the monument, the survey, is that I thought, well, this is really going to get bad if I go back up there and try to strong arm him into letting the surveyors come back and set the monument, this is going to be bad. So I went down to the Montrose County sheriff's office and I talked to the county sheriff. He sent one of his deputies, Rick Rowan up there. Rick Rowan stood there while they set the monument near his property.

TM: They were setting corners. They were setting park boundary corners...

BC: Right, they were surveying a whole section of area that hadn't been surveyed that was part of the National Recreation Area. They always say if you want to start a fight have a surveyor come out and that's what happened in this case.

TM: You'd think that Larry would have realized that good relationships with the Park Service would help his business. He's got a restaurant.

BC: You'd think so. Yeah, but he just had a short fuse, I guess. I was shocked when he blew up at me because we had had a longstanding relationship and it had always been friendly. It was just one of those things. It just happens. Eventually it got taken care of.

TM: Let's swing back to George Carpenter.

BC: Okay [chuckle].

TM: You were bucking bales of hay with the guy, everything seemed kind of copacetic but...

BC: Well, that was just an attempt on my part. There was never going to be much love, I don't think, between them and the Park Service. What had happened was they had a right-of-way to an isolated section of property that was on top of what's called the Sapinero Needles or the Dillon Pinnacles, which are a big landmark up at Blue Mesa Lake. They basically owned the west end of that pinnacle. George went up there one time, he got a big piece of plastic or something and rolled it down the front of the pinnacles there as a protest.

What they wanted to do was have a right-of-way. There was one day that, again, Glen Alexander sends Carl Newman, who was one of the permanent rangers, and myself up to tear down a gate that George and Frank had built on a road. What happened is the Bureau of Reclamation bought the right-of-way rights from George and Frank Carpenter to this isolated piece of property. Unbeknownst to them the Forest Service granted them a right-of-way across the Forest Service. So you had two Federal agencies that had done opposite things. I don't think everybody knew about this. Carl Newman and I go up to tear down this gate, and we decided...

TM: The gate was a gate that Reclamation had made?

BC: No, this is a gate that George and Frank built on Federal property.

TM: Were they doing that for stock management? Because they had access rights, but they got them from the Forest Service. It didn't mean that they could put in a gate, did it?

BC: No, no, not at all. It didn't mean that at all. They were doing it to spite the Park Service and to control any access, like hunters or anybody else, to this section of property. So, Carl and I go up there. Well, instead of just going up there and tearing the gate down with our four-wheel drive truck or whatever, we decided to stop and tell Frank and George what we were going to do. We went to their house and we told them. I remember Frank yelling, "You better not touch that gate!" So, we start driving up the Soap Creek Road, it's quite a ways to where the gate was. I look in the rearview mirror, I was driving and I look in the rearview mirror and I told Carl, I said, "There's a cloud of dust about the size of California that's coming up behind us." Here comes Frank and George. There was one place on the Soap Creek Road they could pass and we just happened to be there. They went roaring by us. Well, they got up to the gate before we did and they turned around and blocked the road with their truck. We spent the better part of the afternoon out arguing with them. Finally, I got on the radio and I called the superintendent directly. I said basically, not in these words, but it was above my paygrade what was going on here, they were going to have to settle this some other way.

So we went back home basically and we sent Carl Newman over to Salt Lake City. He went through all the records of the Recreation Area and he found this anomaly or whatever. I guess one of the other things that happened is this continued to boil. George for years and Frank for years, had threatened to bulldoze a road from the Middle Bridge at Blue Mesa, which is right in the middle of the Recreation

Area, up and across the Dillon Pinnacles or the Sapinero Needles, as we call them, too, to this piece of property, which would have just desecrated one of the scenic areas in the Recreation Area.

TM: Okay, so hang on a second, Bob. I want to back up a minute and make sure I understand the issue well here. The Carpenters had an in-holding surrounded by Forest Service land.

BC: It was surrounded by Forest Service and Park Service land.

TM: Reclamation actually had the land first and transferred it to the Park Service for a Recreation Area or was it actually Park Service had taken that land for the Recreation Area out of what was Forest Service land before then? Reclamation would've come in and built the dams, and then the Recreation Area managed by the Park Service would've come in after that for all the recreational potential that came in with the dams.

BC: Well, I think what happened is when the reservoir filled, the original right-of-way was now under water. I think that's what happened.

TM: Ah! To their property.

BC: So Reclamation paid them for that right-of-way and then the Forest Service turned around and gave them another right-of-way over to their property, which caused problems because now they're going to be bulldozing roads across the Park Service property that is just outside the high-water mark of the lake there. That's what the issues became, I think.

TM: Right, but wouldn't you be able to argue that Reclamation had bought that earlier access road out from them and they had no right to it anymore?

BC: Sure you could argue that, but you were dealing with fanatics, you know.

TM: Talking to a man on a bulldozer. Okay. Alright.

BC: Right. So we ended up having to really, after George came up to... He came up then to the headquarters and that's when he had a confrontation with Joe Alston and several other Park Service people. He was yelling, "There's going to be blood on the mountain!" and all this stuff. It was really pretty scary time. We put our seasonals down there. We watched that parking lot there at Middle Bridge for practically 24 hours a day. Then one day, George shows up out there and he has some kind of long object with him. I think it was a sighting rod actually. Tim Blank, who was the chief ranger, and Mark Igo, who was the district ranger, they went up to this parking lot at the Middle Bridge. Myself and one other guy, we were over watching Georg hiking along this trail. There's a foot trail there and he's sighting there. Then this visitor comes walking down the trail back to the parking lot and he runs into Tim Blank and Mark Igo. He thinks that George has a firearm. I don't think it was, I don't think the guy got a good view of him. We then had this tremendous, it was during the monsoonal season in the fall, had this tremendous rain. I mean, it just rained and rained and rained and we were watching George hiding in the pick-up truck. I'm sure he just got soaked. He gets back to the parking lot and Tim Blank is waiting there for him. I don't know exactly what they discussed, but George was told you're not going to bulldoze any roads out here. Throughout this whole confrontation with Tim, they were worried about George. Mark Igo... If you go there and look at the terrain, it's just barren on the north side. A barren hillside in back of this parking area and the north end of the bridge there. There's a couple of big rocks

up there that are sticking on the side of the hill. Mark Igo was up there with a rifle with a scope, so if things got really bad and George pulled a firearm, they were going to have to defend themselves. It was a really a scary, scary situation.

So then, Joe Alston had gone over... He went on over to Denver, met with the United States Attorney and got a protection order against George and I guess Frank, too. The U.S. Marshalls came over and they delivered this to George out at the Sun Valley truck stop north of town. They finally located him there, he was gassing his vehicle up. Boy, he was really mad after that. One thing that they would always do is, they would send them certified letters and they would not pick the letters up. The Park Service was trying to... You were asking earlier about the legalities of it, it's hard to deal with somebody when they're not responding to you at all.

It was a bad, really, really bad situation. Eventually Frank died. I don't know if he wrote George out of his... I think he wrote George out of his will, he got mad at him. I think George, while Frank was still alive, he lost a portion of the ranch and stuff like that. He wasn't a real good manager. All that money they'd gotten from the Bureau of Reclamation got lost somewhere and so eventually he lost the ranch. I don't know, I don't think they're dealing with the same issues that we were back then.

Another thing that happened, it's always of interest, when I first got to Curecanti was Ben Gray, the disappearance of Ben Gray. Ben Gray was a rancher in Montrose and his brother Nick Gray just turned a hundred here this year. But the Gray family has had some real tragedies. The older brother, I think, was shot and killed in the 1920s near Cimarron with... There was a sheep herder up there and they were trying to take cattle across a corner of his property and he shot one of the brothers and then disappeared into Utah. They never did find him. Then Ben Gray, they described him here in Montrose as being flamboyant. He lived above the Chipeta Café in downtown Montrose. One time it was said he rode a horse into the café. He had, I guess, possibly some questionable dealings with people. He went up to deal with some kind of cattle sale or purchase and he disappeared, never to be found again. Been missing now since 1978. People do speculate that maybe the Ute Indians, he had some dealings with them, that maybe they killed him and dumped him in the lake or took him someplace else. There was another guy, the guy that supposedly dropped him off that night at the Chipeta Hotel was lawyered up and they were unable to question him, too. So really don't know what happened to him.

The Ute Tribe actually owned quite a bit of property south of Blue Mesa Lake, up on the plateaus and Lake Fork Arm, that area. They may have been involved, maybe not involved. But that first year, that was one of the things we were supposed to be watching for and listening for any rumors or anything about the disappearance of Ben Gray. Eventually its just become a mystery. No one knows anymore about what could have happened.

TM: Curious. What was the park's relationship like with the Ute Nation?

BC: I don't recall ever having any contact with any of the Utes. That first summer, I guess, they had had some just normal contacts with the people. They did have some grazing rights on Federal land, so there was some of that. There's no development up there. There's no houses or anything to speak of. It's just a little outlier of land where the tribe, I guess, makes a little bit of money grazing cattle.

TM: Okay. Then the relationship with the Forest Service. I'm just kind of going through relationships with the different partners.

BC: Yeah, the U.S. Forest Service, Gunnison National Forest, when I first got here, our office headquarters was in the basement of the Forest Service building up in Gunnison. So there was that relationship. Eventually the Forest Service said, "Look, we need the space so you're going to have to move out of our basement." [chuckle]. But we always had good relations with them. In fact, I think they've done some land transfers up one of the arms of the lake there with the Forest Service and we've gotten some of their properties in the Recreation Area.

One of the things was in 19... Was it 1988 was the Yellowstone fires. The Forest Service always kind of looked down on the Park Service as far as having any firefighters. More the elite firefighters were the Forest Service and the BLM and the Park Service was kind of the stepchild. In 1988 we got a call from the Gunnison National Forest, they didn't have any firefighters. Everybody was up in Yellowstone and elsewhere. There was a fire that started up north of...called the Lily Pond Fire...north of Gunnison, so they had to call the Park Service to come and send crews to help them put the fire out. John Sheek and his group from Mesa Verde came up, they had a crew. Then we just scavenged a whole bunch of people from Curecanti and Black Canyon, and we all went out and helped them put their fire out. That sort of broke the ice as far as having more interagency cooperation. We had a memorandum of agreement with the BLM and the Forest Service on initial attack of fires. Anything within a mile of the boundary we would make an initial attack on regardless of whose property it was on. We did have quite a few little fires over the years that we made initial attack on. Then BLM and Forest Service guys, mostly BLM because that was the agency that had most of the properties around the Recreation Area, they would eventually get a crew there and take over the fire.

TM: Did you see that transition during your time from fire, we got to attack and put it out, to a fire, hmm, maybe we want this to burn. Maybe it's going to be a good fire?

BC: Well, I did. I remember going to fire training over in Rocky Mountain National Park and they were talking specifically about natural fire. They were talking about the plans there at Rocky and also plans in Yellowstone. Of course, then the Yellowstone fires occurred. I guess, probably still debate whether it was a good or bad thing to let things burn, but they were extraordinary fire behavior up in Yellowstone. So it made you kind of question it. The fact that if you look at historical photographs, for example, Colorado and the west are much different now than they were 100-150 years ago. Something was making the ponderosa forest down in Flagstaff a lot more open than it is now, or was then before they started doing control burns and stuff like that.

TM: Yeah, there's an argument that said after decades of a no fire policy, then when you did have a fire, especially one you couldn't control or even one you wanted to burn naturally, it would burn so hot because the fuel load had become so high. What's a manager to do?

BC: Yeah, that's right. We did have a fire management plan at Curecanti and Black Canyon, but we're kind of a sliver of park that goes through millions of acres of federal and private land. So anything that Black Canyon or Curecanti does is, I won't say it's insignificant, but it's got to be in with a much larger plan to make any sense. If you have a little sliver of park and the fire starts in your park it's going to spread to somebody else's property pretty quick so they better have a fire management plan and the two do have to be coordinated. I know they have refined the kind of Mickey Mouse plans that we had to begin with, when I first got there.

TM: That makes sense.

BC: Another thing that I was concerned about when I first arrived at Curecanti were search & rescues. I had worked at Grand Canyon and I'd worked at Glen Canyon, and both these places had lots of search & rescue, lots of medical emergencies, lots of people injured. So I came to Curecanti with that mindset. The first thing I remember I did, I went out to Blue Mesa overlook, which overlooks Blue Mesa Dam and what's called the Pine Creek Area. At Pine Creek there's this gigantic stairway, it's like 230-40 stairs down to the river. People carry their boats down there. It's all hand-carried craft. In those days, a lot of local guys would get little 12-foot aluminum boats and outboard engines, and they'd pack it all down there and pack it out. I just knew that we were going to have lots of searches & rescues there. Over the years, there were virtually none. I mean, there were a few, but they were few and far between.

We did have one drowning during the high-water year. It was kind of interesting. One of my seasonals had driven up to Pine Creek, which was in itself kind of unusual because usually we took boats up there. He was just out patrolling around and getting familiar with the area. He had someone run up to him and said someone had fallen in the river down by where the tour boat dock was. He ran down the trail. I wish I had saved the tape recording of the radio transmissions, because you can hear this guy huffing and puffing and trying to get other people to respond. What had happened is these guys in this canoe were going to portage this little rapid above where the dock was for the tour boat. It's about half a mile down the old railroad grade at the base of these stairs. Boaters would put in at the base of the stairs and then boat right on down the river and then go on to the lake. [Pause] These guys in this canoe had put in at the base of the stairs, had gone down the river, but when they got to this rapid they decided to try to reconnoiter the rapid. While they were doing that, they hadn't tied their boat up and it washed away. There were some guys fishing down below where the dock was, where they had the tour boat. They were able to take their fishing poles and they got their lures on the boat, and they got the boat into the shore. Rather than just keeping it, one of the guy gets in the canoe and starts paddling kind of upstream. It wasn't too long before the canoe capsized on them and this guy went under the tour boat and under the dock. That was the last we saw of him until his... We did recover his body, but it was several weeks later.

TM: So he was unable to get to the surface.

BC: Right, his brother was with him. It was kind of the last wave and he was down. I don't know if he was a swimmer or not. He was an Iranian. That was kind of unusual.

TM: Huh, and it wasn't their canoe. I mean, the canoe belonged to the other guys, is that right?

BC: No, no. It wasn't their canoe at all. For some reason, he got into it. Maybe he thought somebody else was in the water. I have no idea.

Then there was another rescue. I actually wrote about this. There was a book that was published, it was a new edition of the Old Ranger book. I have this story in there about this rescue at night on Morrow Point Lake. What happened is it was a Memorial Day weekend. There had been a number of real high winds all day, really, really, really high winds. At Cimarron, below Morrow Point Dam, there was a guy had a little raft and a small motor on this raft. I think it was electric motor with battery. The wind picked this whole thing up and just dumped it back into the river. We recovered the raft but not the motor. Ironically, the raft belonged to my next door neighbor down in Montrose. So I met one of my next door neighbors by taking his raft back to him. Then there were several other people tipped over in the river at Cimarron that day. We were able to get them out because there's a trail along there. So we were able to help them that way.

I went home that night. I get this call about 11-11:30 from Jim Riggs, my supervisor, the chief ranger. He says a couple of brothers had borrowed a boat from a guy in Gunnison named Ron Caper, who owned the A&W root beer stand. Ron was always going down and boating. He'd loaned a boat to them. He knew how dangerous Morrow Point Lake could be in a small boat down there because you get a lot of wind shear and high winds/gusty winds. He had gone down to Pine Creek to pick these guys up and they didn't show up. He was concerned and he called Jim. So Jim called me. Jim was always kind of laid back. I told Jim, I said, "You know, I probably should go up there because there were really, really high winds all day and it's conceivable that they might have had an accident." So I went up to Cimarron, had a kid there named Ken McCullick that worked with me. I woke him up and we got a bunch of gear and got in our big patrol boat. Previously, we'd practiced at night and went out on the lake, so we were kind of familiar with it. I think this was my second summer there, I believe, or second year there at Curecanti. We worked our way up-lake and we got about 7 or 8 miles up-lake in what's called the Narrows. We came around this corner and I saw what I thought was a flash of a flashlight or something, maybe it was just a reflection. It's real, real narrow there. It's only maybe 100 feet across in these high walls. The lake goes from one wall to the other. There's no beaches there or anything.

There was this little shelf of rock that came down, kind of at an angle. The Garcia brothers had started up toward the Curecanti Needle and they kind of they came around a corner, the same corner we came around, and the wind hit their little boat and just flipped it from end to end. They went in the water. They were able to grab some life jackets, but they didn't have them on I don't believe. They got over to this rock shelf and were able to climb up on it. It wasn't very wide, maybe a foot and a half wide. They got out. They'd had some first aid training. They knew about hypothermia. So one of the brothers, they took turns taking their clothes off and holding them in the wind and trying to dry them off and putting them back on. Now this is like 1:30-2:00 in the morning that we find them up there and this accident had happened about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. So they'd been there for 5, 6, 7 hours on this little shelf. We got them in our boat. One of them was real chatty and one of them was real super quiet. We put a big tarp over them. Wrapped them in blankets and a tarp and headed back for Morrow Point Dam because we had vehicle access at the dam. So we took them back there. I remember one of them saying, "If you guys hadn't come along," he said, "we were just about done. One of us would've fallen in the lake and drowned." Because they were just exhausted. That was a situation where I made a good decision to go up even though it was the middle of the night. It was actually below freezing.

TM: Oh, wow, I didn't realize that.

BC: When we got to the dock... We had a mop there that we'd mop the boat out with, and the mop was frozen to the dock. So it was cold. It was probably one of the best decisions of my career to go after...

TM: Yeah, you saved their lives.

BC: ...those guys, looking for them.

One of the things that I became interested in was search & rescue and prevention, the PSAR stuff. When I moved to Black Canyon, I think I mentioned in an earlier interview we had a government shutdown, and I went down and looked through all the Black Canyon records. That was the other thing I did at Curecanti when I first got there, too, is I read all the incident reports for at least my district so I was very familiar with them. I used that knowledge, plus what I found at Black Canyon, and we came up with a PSAR plan for Black Canyon of the Gunnison. I think it's helped over the years. The main body was to put

up more signage and put it in places that you wouldn't put normally. Not along trails and stuff, but off trails where people were climbing down into the Black Canyon and then getting stuck. So I designed these little Carsonite signs that said basically you can't get to the river on this route. You need to go back to the visitor center and get a permit and talk to somebody. That's not the text, but that was what we were trying to get them to do. Black Canyon tended to have more fatalities than Curecanti.

Curecanti is really a pretty safe place. There were a number of fatalities. One was where a couple old guys were out fishing. One of them stood up in the boat, we think, and flipped the boat over. They drowned just a few feet from shore. These guys were lifelong fishing buddies, I remember. I don't remember when this actually occurred but I think it was in the 1980s.

One of the worst accidents I went on was actually in the Elk Creek campground. This was a really odd situation. There was an elderly couple, I think he was actually in his 80s, and they had gone camping up there. They had backed into the campsite. They were getting ready to leave. His wife was in the truck. No, I take that back. His wife was by the trailer and the elderly man was in the truck, but she was on the other side of the trailer so he couldn't see her, she couldn't see him. He yelled something to her and she pulled the chalk out from under the wheel of the trailer. He had actually gotten out of the vehicle and the door was open and he was doing something. Whatever he yelled we'll never know, but the trailer and truck took off. The campgrounds kind of at an angle and it went across the road and it starts down across the field and through the sagebrush. This guy decides to chase down the truck, he's going to stop it. He tried to get back in the vehicle and he fell and was run over by the truck and the trailer.

TM: Oh, wow.

BC: When we got there he was still alive. We got some oxygen on him and then we tried to do CPR, but he had just been crushed. It was just terribly, terribly sad.

We had a lot of heart attacks, things like that, at Blue Mesa. A lot of accidents and injuries that occurred in the campgrounds, along the highway and stuff like that, people they went straight to town. They'd just throw people in their cars and went to town. Other than automobile accidents. We were involved in a lot of those.

Then they had one year, and I don't remember... It seemed like it was around the high-water year but I'm not sure. There was a whole series of fatalities in the Blue Mesa area. The first one occurred early in the spring. Was a guy who worked for the city of Montrose. I don't recall his name now. They found his boat floating around out on Blue Mesa Lake. There was enough evidence there that he apparently was working on his engine or something on the boat and he fell overboard and drowned. We searched and never found his body. So that was the first fatality. This was all one year. Then a young guy drowned on the Lake Fork Arm of the Gunnison. Kids would go up there and inner tube the river. Well, this kid was a non-swimmer, didn't have a lifejacket on, and fell out of his inner tube and was drowned in the river. Lake Fork Arm has some pretty serious rapids in it, depending on lake level, too. Then there was a young girl and she went up also the Lake Fork Arm. She was camped out and decided to take a hike and hike up the cliffs above the campground. Somehow she worked her way around and decided, we think maybe, to take a shortcut back down to the campsite. I don't know what class climbing it was, but it was pretty serious, or she was just out on the edge and she fell. I got this call from Bill Munsie, he was the area ranger up at Blue Mesa, and he said, "We've been searching for this girl and we can't find her." They had dozens and dozens and dozens of searchers up there. I said, "Well, I'll go down to the airport in Montrose and get in a helicopter and we'll come up and aid you with the search." I flew up there. It was

really bizarre because it's real wooded. You've got a narrow canyon with lots of trees. We decided to kind of circle down into the canyon and there was that woman just lying under a tree, Doug fir tree. Just plain as day right out, and there were searchers all over, all over the cliffs. There were even people within about 50 feet of her down at the campsite. She had fallen almost into the campsite.

TM: But the vegetation was that thick.

BC: Vegetation was so thick, but she just stood out like a lightbulb down there to us. So we just flew up there and in five minutes we found the body and were flying back to Montrose. I remember we got criticized for using the helicopter.

TM: By who?

BC: You know everybody's trying to save money and there was a lot of debate going on at that time at headquarters about use of helicopters because we were using them at Black Canyon quite a little bit. One of the problems we had there, when somebody would get... Before we had our PSAR plan, people would go off in these weird places and get stuck and we didn't know how to get down to them. I thought, well, we'll use a helicopter and we'll figure out the route down to them. If we can drop them some food or some water or something, we'll do that. If we can pick them up, we'll do that, but that's pretty much out of the question at Black Canyon.

We did this on one of our search & rescues and we got criticized for it. I'll never forget, we went up one day to the firing range. We used to go to this firing range off of what's called Dave Wood Road here in Montrose. Linda Alick who was the chief ranger, and Marion Parker, who was my area ranger at Black Canyon, and myself, we were up there. We had to qualify and I was a firearms instructor, rangemaster, whatever. After all the shooting ended, we went in and we were going to have a little squad meeting. Linda brought up this subject of helicopter use. You know, I love Linda. She was one of the best supervisors I've ever had. I don't think we ever had a cross word or anything except this time. We're sitting in this meeting, and I said, "You know what the problem is, Linda?" She said, "What's that?" I said, "The problem is none of the managers up at your end of the park have ever hiked down into the Black Canyon, so they don't know really what it's like down there as far as the difficulty of the place." Oh, she got red in the face. And I said, "None of the managers have ever hiked down in the Black Canyon including you." [chuckle] Oh, she was made at me. She said, "Okay, this meeting's over." We all went home and as we were leaving the meeting, Marion Parker whispers to me, she says, "She needed to hear that," she says. Then about a week later, here's Linda up at the Black Canyon, Linda Alick, and she goes down the Gunnison Trail.

TM: Oh, good for her.

BC: I think it gave her a different perspective, too, so that when she went in these meetings and people are complaining about use of a helicopter or other resources in a search & rescue that it makes sense to do it. We didn't just do it willy nilly. We did it because we thought we had to. Living where I live, I would hear helicopters. They would come from the airport and they'd go right over my house. I'd hear them go toward the Black Canyon. Whenever I saw that, I'd go up on the hill in back of the house, get my binoculars, look around, watch where the helicopter went, then I'd get on the phone and call up, "What's going on up there?" [chuckle] That was just a funny aside.

TM: They are a very powerful tool especially in search & rescue. Demonstrated in Grand Canyon back in the 1950s.

BC: Right. We tried some different experiments, I guess you could say, with helicopters. One of the big problems at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, is you get climbers. They'll break an ankle, break a leg, fall on a wall or something and get seriously injured. A minor injury in the Black Canyon, or Grand Canyon for that matter, is a major problem, and a major injury is probably a fatality. So we tried to figure out where can we land helicopters in the Black Canyon? Really the answer is you can't. There's a couple of exceptions. For example, we had this one... Well, let me go back to the experimentation. What we did is we got I think it was an Alouette. It was a French-made helicopter. Usually the local ones, when you came out of the Black Canyon, you had to go up-canyon and then you had to circle and gain altitude in an open area, like East Portal or something like that, to get out of the canyon. This Alouette, he went from river level straight up the wall of the canyon. Two thousand feet just straight up and powered out. Our mouths were just open. We thought, wow, this is what we need. And he landed right on the river. He said, "You can land right here." He landed on some slick rocks right next to the river. I said, "Well, this is great." We were trying to find landing pads. I said, "but in high water..." About 10 feet of water. We looked and everything's either got boulders on it or it's at an angle. There was one exception. One time they landed a helicopter down... There's a big rock pile where the river... The Gunnison River actually goes under all these huge boulders and everything. When these kayakers do run the Gunnison through the Black Canyon, they have to portage several miles to get around all this stuff.

We had a guy that decided... There was a group of guys. They didn't get a permit. They went down to called SOB Draw and they camped out. In the morning they got up and they were going to go fishing. There's a lot of athletic sort of guys that like to fish down there. They were able to... There was one guy, and he had the unusual name of John Madden, I always remember that. He asked the guys what they were going to do. They said, we're going to go across this big rock pile, get to the other side of the river, go upstream, swim across the river, and then go upstream on the other side and there's some great fishing holes up there.

TM: Gee, that's ambitious.

BC: John Madden says, "Well, you're doing this but I'm not." He stayed behind on the north side of the river. So these three guys in his party, they managed to climb across all these boulders and stuff. They go as far up on the south side of the river as they can. The river was really cooking through there. It was a couple thousand second feet, at least.

TM: Wait, wait. I want to make sure I understand this. The river is a fairly substantial sized river and it goes right into a boulder pile and disappears. Which means that it's basically a strainer.

BC: Yeah, a gigantic strainer.

TM: It's like the bottom of the bathtub when you pull the plug out and the water's going down, and they assumed they were going to be able to swim across this thing, upstream, there?

BC: Above it you have what appears to be quiet water. The river widens out there, above this... Well, it's hard to describe. Above it is kind of a pool. Then there's a big cascade. It kind of makes a big turn and then it goes right down into this boulder pile. Under really, really high water conditions, the river will go up over the top of these boulders. We're talking about house-sized boulders. These are enormous

boulders. Most of the time the river, under most water conditions, it just disappears under this pile of rocks. So what these guys do is they go cross the boulder pile, they go up along the shore as far on the south side as they can to get to what they think is quiet water. They're sitting there contemplating swimming it, but the river is a lot higher than, I think, they were anticipating.

The one kid, he had just moved to Boulder, Colorado, from somewhere back east, I think in New York state. He was supposedly an Olympic swimmer. The first two guys... one guy says, "I'm not going to go first. I'm not going to go first." Finally, this guy says, "Well, get out of the way, I'm going to swim across." He has his fishing pole and he starts swimming. He gets a little ways from shore and the current grabs him. Now he's not swimming across, he's swimming for his life. He ends up just getting sucked right into this area above this boulder pile and then just disappears in the pile of rocks. I guess the distance there is probably, maybe a tenth of a mile or so of water. Maybe even a quarter mile to the rock pile. We had to make a lot of efforts in trying to find him. I happened to be on the north rim. My boss, Pete Armington, I think Pete Armington was supervisor then, he says he didn't like me going to the north rim, because every time I went...no, it was Linda Alick...every time I go to the north rim someone dies, she said. There were a lot of fatalities. I just happened to be over on the north rim when they occurred. This was one of them.

We had this kind of back and forth radio traffic running this search & rescue operation. A gal named Nancy Zanger, she did a lot of it. She was pretty good talking with different groups and finding out who we could bring there. We had a dog team came in, cadaver dog team. We had climbers from Western State College and a few guys from Blue Mesa came down and went across this boulder pile searching the shorelines and stuff like that. The first night we had a helicopter went down looking for the guy. It was really an extensive search. Went on for days. Did not locate the body. We had lowered the river level. That was one of the beautiful things we could do at least for a period of time. You'd call the Bureau of Reclamation, you'd say we have this major emergency, we need you to shut the water off at Crystal Dam. They would accommodate us as best they could within limits. They might give us a 2-hour window, 4-hour window, 6-hour window. But you can imagine the amount of revenue that's not being generated when this is taking place. If you ever include that in your search & rescue budget...

TM: Oops.

BC: ...it's enormous. Oops is right. So, we shut the water down.

TM: Would Reclamation just eat that or would they send you a bill?

BC: No, they would just eat it. It was just assumed that once in a while they were going to have an emergency. In fact, one time, it was one of the Bureau of Reclamation's sons fell in the river down in an area called Margaritaville and drowned. They shut the water down to try to find him. I think they did actually find his body.

Anyway, this other thing went on for probably a week we searched. Then we finally said, well, we're not going to find him. But, two weeks later or something like that, all of a sudden someone from the Park Service gets a call that the family is going to continue to search for their son. Oh, we had even brought in... It started out with helicopters, we brought helicopters we could land on this big rock. That's how they supplied the search & rescue people. This was the second search that happened on. We thought everything was copacetic, everybody was happy with all the efforts we'd made. The family went to their Congressman in New York. Their Congressman got the Navy to send divers out to Black Canyon to search

for this guy. We all knew he was gone. There's no question, nobody's going to come out of that rock pile.

TM: But now you're going to put divers at risk because the same thing that captured the group with John Madden, that captured that young man, was now going to capture the Navy divers.

BC: Right, it could've. The Bureau of Reclamation was then forced again to shut the water down and really shut it down for several days. The local outrage was unbelievable because of fishermen and boaters through the lower gorge, the rafters and everything. People were just up in arms. They were so mad. Our local Congressman, Scott McGinnis, he was mad because nobody had even... This other Congressman from New York that was an important Congressman, I don't even know who he was... The family had connections to him. That's what the whole deal was. So they shut the water down and these divers came in. They looked all over the place. There were a couple places we thought conceivably he could've gotten hung up, some big boulders or something before the rock pile. The divers had absolutely no success at all either. After a day or two they turned the water back on and accepted the fact that they weren't going to find the body or anything.

TM: So hard for a family, when they don't get closure.

BC: That's right. That's right. We had another interesting search & rescue, a recovery actually, at Black Canyon when I was there. Let's see, how did this happen? We got a report that there were five kayaks that came down and went through this basically un-runnable section of river, and then later... What we would do at Black Canyon is when you knew you had backcountry users, part of the job of the road patrol is to go out and kind of keep track of these folks. If they were climbers in an area, they'd kind of watch and kind of know where they were. We'd be checking for whether people were having illegal fires or things like that at night, you could see at night from up there. This particular thing, the ranger at the north rim got a report that somebody had seen five kayaks go into this one area and then later had only seen four kayaks down below. Then one guy came to the visitor center and said he thought there had been a boat accident because he saw a bunch of people on the shore and it seemed like there was a boat on the river and they were trying to get it out or something.

The seasonal, unfortunately, he took the report and then he went out and looked, but he didn't take the visitors out to the viewpoint with him to say where exactly did you see this? What had happened between the time of this accident and the time the ranger went out to the rim is the water level had changed and the river had come up. What happened is this one guy in the kayak went down... It was kind of a stair stepped waterfall, sort of, of the river in one section, and the tip of his kayak... There was a big boulder and the boulder was split. The tip of that kayak went right into that split and trapped his legs in the kayak. The force of the water kept pushing the kayak further and further into this rock. His brother and the other kayakers, they set up a z-pulley system. His brother climbed and made a heroic effort to save him. He got a rope hooked on the back of this kayak as his brother is going underwater and they got a z-pulley on the shore, but they just didn't have the strength, the ability, against the current and the weight of water and the kayak, and the brother in the kayak, to pull it out. They finally had to abandon their efforts and try to get help. This whole thing, it was very confusing. We got five kayaks coming in, four going out. We had a report on the north rim of maybe an accident. So, I didn't have a lot to go on. I went home and later that evening, about 7:00/8:00, I get a call from the Montrose County Sheriff's Office. There's some guys down at the Sheriff's Office that are reporting a fatality and a boating accident. I went down there and I interviewed them and got enough information. I had them

draw some diagrams of the river and whatnot. Got an idea of where this accident had occurred. Of course, I called my guy on the north rim. We discussed it a little bit, too.

The next day, got the Bureau of Reclamation to shut the river down, got in a helicopter and I flew up the gorge. It was really obvious what had happened. There's this boat caught between I think it was a single boulder with a crack, it might have been two boulders. Then we got guys from... I forget where all the rescuers were. I know Western State College they always were willing to come. I think we got a special group of people that did river rescue, but I don't remember where they came from. They swam across the river and eventually they did the same thing. They put a z-pulley system on this boat, but they had more manpower and they were able to eventually extricate it and flew the body and the helicopter out of the canyon. It was really a sad, a sad situation, but the guys were in some really serious water there. Right at the limit of how we challenge ourselves, I guess.

TM: That's an interesting question and this is indeed a tragedy. I was looking at some film from 1940 of the United States National Kayak and Canoe Championships. The river that they were on, the Rapid River up in Maine, you look at it and you go, hmm. In today's standards of whitewater kayaking, doesn't look like much. Maybe in a canoe it's a little challenging but certainly not in a kayak. So there is this learning curve with gear, boats now have plastic instead of fiberglass or canvas and sticks before then. The advances in lifejackets and their floatation and helmets and paddles and people's understanding and skill level. So you guys were sort of on the cutting edge of that.

BC: I look at the equipment I used to have as a kid and compare it to... You go in a sports store now and it's like a candy store. People can get equipment that allows them to do things that 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago you couldn't do. I'm always interested at Grand Canyon, people talking about microspikes for their shoes and stuff. I did have a pair of those, but that was when I got to Curecanti when there was always ice and snow around. But I didn't have anything like that at Grand Canyon. I had a pair of waffle-soled Redwing boots I wore.

TM: And that's it.

BC: I would just take baby steps if I was on the ice. But I fell a couple times, too.

TM: That section where that individual drowned, is that run by kayakers today? Or is it still not run?

BC: You'd have to be the cream of the crop to run that. You'd have to really know what you were doing and you'd want to reconnoiter it before you even thought about it. And, water level would be really critical. The Black Canyon, they'll turn the water on and Crystal Dam evens the flow out, but still, certain times of the year... You would obviously not want to go down there in the spring when it's huge, huge volumes of water. There's always a challenge for certain people. They just want to push the envelope a little bit more. I don't know, the park tends to... I know when I was there anyway, and of course that's 15 years ago, we didn't want to publicize it much, because we didn't want people going down there and having the same fate as this guy. So we tended to discourage it.

There were a couple of guys. What was the one guy... He called himself Captain Black or something. One guy that would kind of take people through. I don't know if he was taking money for it or not. I don't think he was. He just did it for fun. One guy did it a number of times. What they do is there's one section there that I call un-runnable. People would take out above that and then they portage for several miles on the north side through all the poison oak and over the big boulders, and they come back in below the

rock pile and there's one big waterfall down there, then they put back in the river and go. It's more doable that way to go through the Black Canyon than to try to run this one section. There's actually a movie out, you'd be interested in it. It's a video about running the Black Canyon, but I don't know what the name of it is. I used to have a copy of it. I don't know if I still do or not. It shows these guys sliding between these great big, giant boulders. They didn't run that section either. I mean, there's no way to run this rock pile. You have to portage that.

TM: Yeah, yeah. Well, it is fascinating to look at the skills, the things, river running. You'd portage the rapid. You take all your stuff, you'd carry it up on shore, and you'd walk all your stuff all the way around the rapid, and get back in the bottom and keep going. Now today, even people very little experience, because of the gear and the quality of the gear and the size of the boats and all that stuff, you just line up at the top, hang on, and pop out the bottom, and off you go. There's a lot of training education. Of course, people get really good. Clearly, this guy, Mr. Black, whoever, people get very good at understanding certain sections. That does bring in a level of safety.

BC: Yeah. And the same thing applies for other types of recreation. Whether it's hiking, now running. I remember going to the podiatrist one time and I said, "Are there any kind of special shoes that I could get to wear with my orthotics?" He said, "Running shoes. Just running shoes." He says there'd been so many changes and such an advance in the running shoe because of the popularity of running that that's the best shoe you can get to wear with your problem [chuckle].

TM: Fascinating. Well, we have happily been chit-chatting for about an hour and forty minutes here.

BC: Well, there's always a lot more. I'm always full of stories. My problem now, Tom, is that I can no longer... I used to be able to remember stories that I told individuals. My mind was good enough. But it's not anymore, so I probably repeat myself multiple times to the same individual. They just have to roll their eyes [chuckle].

TM: I understand. I think you did really well here in Part 15 of capturing some new material that I don't think you've mentioned before. It sounds like we are rolling into a Part 16 interview, because I don't think we're quite done with Curecanti here, is that right?

BC: I've got a few more things I could talk about, I guess. I made a little list here of things. Let me see. I don't know, I think I'm probably am pretty well finished. Maybe the one thing I didn't talk about was our relationship with the Bureau of Reclamation, that's always an interesting thing.

TM: Okay. All right, you know what, let's wrap up this interview and we will stage for one last one. How about that?

BC: Okay, that sounds good.

TM: Because Reclamation, capturing that relationship is important, too. In that case this concludes Oral History interview with Bob Cornelius. My name is Tom Martin. Today is April 18, 2019, and Bob, thank you very much.

BC: You're welcome.