

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historic Society

Interviewee: Charles "Butch" Farabee (CF)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

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Keys: Ernie Kuncl, short hauls, Yosemite Parkmedic Program, Office of Aircraft Services, Hillory Tolson, Mead Hargis, EMT, NPS

TM: Today is June 28th, 2020. This is a part 13 of a Grand Canyon oral history interview with Charles "Butch" Farabee. My name is Tom Martin. Good afternoon, Butch. How are you today?

CF: Good, Tom. Thanks.

TM: Well thank you.

CF: You got my permission to use this.

TM: Yes. Thank you for reminding me. But just to clarify that, may we have your permission to use this recording over the phone?

CF: Well yeah. Well I think I just said that.

TM: You did. Thank you very much. You're training me well. This is good. You know at the end of part 13, you mentioned that, you got to the point where Dick Marx really trusted you and you were kind of getting your feet there at Grand Canyon. One of the people you mentioned a couple times, there's a fellow named Ernie Kuncl. And Ernie, was that short for Earnest?

CF: Ernest.

TM: OK. And where was he from? That's an interesting last name.

CF: So I actually have a thing that I can read. But to answer your question, he's from Chicago.

TM: I wonder what his heritage is. That's just an interesting last name.

CF: Well he's like Eastern European.

TM: I don't know whether it would be good for you to read to us or for you to just relate.

CF: Yeah, OK.

TM: Was Ernie working at Grand Canyon when you showed up?

CF: So Ernie had been there from at least the late '60's. I mean '66, 7, 8 era for sure. I got there, no let me backtrack, that's not true, From the late, mid to late '70's. I apologize.

TM: No worries.

CF: Because I didn't get the Grand Canyon until '81.

TM: So he was there three or four years before you, something like that?

CF: Well yeah he spent 18 years there at the Grand Canyon and my notes don't specifically say without me going back and researching it a little bit specifically when he got there but I do know that he was there in 1978 for sure. I think several years before that.

TM: What was his position there when you arrived?

CF: Well he was a patrol ranger. And you know the journeyman level in those days was GS-9. But Ernie was one of these individuals who was very gifted in many ways. I don't think he graduated from college. But having said that whatever he decided to do he would go in with both feet and hook, line, and sinker. And during the, sort of during hippie era, the late you know middle '70's, he really got into being a narc, even though he was a patrol ranger. And he had the, you know of course I'm speaking in generalities, but he had the concession employees there really almost terrified because you know they kind of thought he was hiding behind every tree when they'd be out smoking a joint or something. But he really got into sort of a plainclothes/undercover mentality. So anyway, so he spent a lot of time doing that. But basically he was a patrolman. But in 1978 he became the Park Service's, he used to claim first until I was able to prove him otherwise, but at least the second full certified paramedic in the National Park System. And you know he went back and did some research for me a number of years ago and so he was certified on May 10, 1978 which is how I know he was there for sure in '78. And...

TM: Hey, Butch.

CF: Yes.

TM: I'm going to jump in here because you had done some groundbreaking work in Yosemite on the Parkmedic program.

CF: Yeah.

TM: Did the other parks, the other big western parks, did anybody else outside of California know you were doing this? Because I sort of think of that as wow it was the wave of the future and you were sparking that up. But here is Kuncl as you say, here is somebody who's like sitting up trying to pay attention to push first aid forward into emergency medicine.

CF: Well the first one as far as I can determine, I've actually made a concerted effort to try to pin this down because I get pretty thorough about trying to figure out what's the first, and that is a guy by the name of Mead Hargis.

TM: What's his first name?

CF: Mead.

CF: And Mead was a super talented, one of the very first big wall climbers of El Capitan in Yosemite in the late '60's. And I worked with him, I guess the entire time, almost 10 years I was in Yosemite. He took me on numerous climbs. He was a terribly nice guy. And for most of my time there he was a seasonal. But in those days it was a long term seasonal. We would keep him and others on you know that had talents like him for you know seven, eight, nine months. So Mead went to a paramedic school on his off, when he was on one of his several months breaks up near Stanford. I don't know if it was specifically sponsored by Stanford University but I think they sort of hosted it anyway. So Mead was the first, and

probably not too many months before Ernie. So there were others, and you know a few others out there, you know paramedics started coming into their forefront a little bit, not so much in the Park Service but elsewhere. You know Miami Dade, Seattle, Denver, Phoenix, and Los Angeles for sure. So Ernie for whatever reason got this bug under his bonnet about becoming a paramedic. And he was, he taught EMT, and he was the go-to guy when it came to that sort of thing at the Grand Canyon. Now you know Ernie had a personality which means I'd like to read like a paragraph or so that I wrote to him. Maybe actually three short ones.

TM: Go ahead, please.

CF: And these were, I wrote these for the Ranger Magazine when he died, which he died January 16, 2019. So this is sort of out of context but it says, "The NPS does not lack for unique and colorful people. Ernie was pope and in some circles was near legendary. While the word colorful can mean accomplished, interesting, creative, inquisitive and enthusiastic, it can also mean irritating, difficult, egotistical, and even insufferable. Ernie was all of the above and some even considered him a real pain in the ass. Sometimes these traits were exhibited all in the same day. But whatever your take about Ernie, he left little doubt among friend and foe alike that he was passionate about the NPS mission sincerely believing in the heritage and culture of the flat hat." The last paragraph says, "Throughout his career, there were few that I would more trust my life to in an emergency than Ranger Kuncl. He was a brilliant paramedic. A great many people literally owe their lives to him including the park's deputy superintendent. I once watched Ernie save a visitor's life in the tiny Grand Canyon hospital after the local doctor had given up and while the priest was quietly administering the last rites to the patient." And that's all true. So Ernie retired in, I have January 22nd, 1998 but that I think is a full page supplement from the Denver Post about Ernie in the Sunday supplement. So he retired either about that time or not too long after. Well it says retired January 1998. OK.

TM: OK. So I've got a question for you. When you showed up at Grand Canyon, were you EMT certified?

CF: Oh yeah. And then I was this, this next level. But the next level really at that point didn't have any real significance because I was not in the same jurisdiction anymore. I did not, it was not an exclusive jurisdiction. So my capabilities or authorities didn't carry over to Yosemite, or to Grand Canyon because of the jurisdiction. I had advanced training. But Ernie was one of these guys who probably, you know I would like be watching Maude or The Golden Girls. He's working on memorizing you know atrial fibrillation charts and how to read these things.

TM: He's looking at rhythm strips while you're, while you're watching TV.

CF: Yeah, he actually, I mean, I wouldn't have used those words because I forgot about them but you're 100% correct. He actually ran, when I went down to climb the highest point in South America, Aconcaqua, one of the requirements was to bring, and this is way years ago now in the mid '80's, to bring a rhythm strip saying that I was healthy basically. And there were other requirements, had to show up and give the authorities these documents. So Ernie ran a rhythm strip because for some reason either we couldn't do it on me, it wasn't that I was not healthy, it was that somehow it just wasn't convenient. So he ran a rhythm strip on somebody else who was healthy and we, and he signed it off and you know that's you know we were just banking on the fact well how were these people in Argentina or Chile actually really know the difference anyway, right? So Ernie was clever and inquisitive, you know terribly talented, but he was insufferable at times. Sometimes he was a bigot. I directly

supervised him from the time that I got there. And Ernie and I established a pretty close friendship and relationship over the six years that I was there. He was put on a pedestal in many ways by a lot of the people that went through his first aid and EMT classes. And I guess I'm not sure of the certification process for EMT by the state of Arizona at that time, but he was able to sign off and give people cards saying that they'd been through whatever 80 to 100 hour course in EMT. And he was you know he was not strictly straight by the book. And he had these guys, I never took one of his classes, but I do know from anecdotal references that he was very creative. You know it was one of those things where people would be in a classroom setting at the training center, the Albright Training Center at the South Rim, and all of a sudden somebody would burst in and shoot some blanks at somebody and you know then leave. And then Ernie would, "OK everybody what just happened?" You know, I mean that's the sort of learning that he would often do. He was very, as I say very creative and you know passionate's a good word.

TM: OK.

CF: You're going to ask me a question?

TM: No, No. I'm, you're educating me about Ernie and I'm like wow this is very fascinating.

CF: Well so...

TM: When he would do that, when somebody would run in, step in the room and shoot somebody, would that person might have a little pouch of catsup and then people would have to do like an assessment, "OK somebody's just been shot here, what do we do?"

CF: Yeah. I mean I think it was that sort of scenario you know, specifically like that I'm not sure but, but that's the sort of thing that he was very capable of doing and often did that sort of thing. He was also a very, very talented climber and mountain rescuer. And he was a climbing ranger in the Rocky Mountains, 1963. And he spent three years there while he was going to the University of Colorado which I don't believe he graduated from. And then he spent one year at Devil's Tower, or one summer, one season, and one season at Carlsbad Caverns. And then he got on as a permanent protection ranger at Coronado national monument which is like close to Grand Junction, Colorado. And then 18 years at the Grand Canyon. And when he finished his career he went, he actually quit and got into a private enterprise, let me think about this, yeah a private enterprise, somehow in the medical field there in Flagstaff and got with a couple of other you know nurses and other people around the Flagstaff hospital. And you know I hate to be you know nebulous. I can't think of all the nuances at this very second but he ended up after a year or so not being able to make a go of it and I know that both J Q Reynolds and I, he called both of us and asked if we would go to bat for him, because he had reinstatement rights. He just needed to have somebody hire him, you know in a position. Which he ends up becoming an investigator for the Park Service and station at the regional office, in our Denver office. So that's where he ended up his career.

TM: Wow because that's a big step to leave the service so late in your career and try something in the private sector which didn't work and then have to go back into the service. Wow.

CF: Yeah you know if it hadn't been I mean you know in many ways I liked Ernie but there were some things I did not like about him. And he knew it but he also knew I'd go to bat for him when he needed to have somebody go to bat for him.

TM: Nice.

CF: But if he hadn't been so talented I don't know that you know I wouldn't have gone to bat for him that much. One of the things we did at the Grand Canyon because you know Ernie was certified as a paramedic, there weren't many in the county for sure, I mean in Coconino County. I mean in theory of course we had Mojave as well, but I don't know that he ever went to Mojave County for anything. So it was always Coconino. And you know we had our fair share of fatalities, with people dying in the park, down at the bottom, you know along the trail, and what have you. One instance I recall where, make sure I can get the sequence on this one correctly, we had somebody, this was right at dark actually, right at dusk, and Ernie and one of the pilots, and I had mentioned Tom Caldwell and Dave Roman before as pilots and there was another pilot by the name of Morris, and that's his last name, who was a younger guy, really a nice guy that ended up living all over the world as a helicopter pilot, last time I heard in New Guinea. But they flew in on a potential heart case of an older man which anymore it's hard for me to say that because you know he was probably sixty and I'm almost twenty years older than that now. But they go in and Ernie communicating with the medical control declared this guy dead. And then he moves the body out, you know flies the body out. So there was nothing wrong with that it's just that the county, which I can get into here a little bit later perhaps, the county always sort of would bow their backs on that sort of thing even though we had the skill and the resource and the talents, in this case Ernie, that they did not have, plus the helicopter. Right?

TM: Right.

CF: And, but he moves the body outside the park and I meet him at the helicopter. You know it's now dark, you know with this deceased individual who has been pronounced dead. And there's no question about him having died. But I remember talking to Ernie. I said Ernie, please you know if you get into this situation again make, if you're going to pronounce somebody dead do it on top of the rim so that we don't have to worry about any you know, any problems in moving this body from below the rim and get crosswise with the sheriff you know, because the sheriff and the county in general were really pains in the rear when it came to that sort of thing when it came to us at least. So you know and Ernie fully understood. It wasn't like you know it was just one of those things where you know had he probably given him another thirty seconds or if I had been on the radio you know which I wasn't going to do on the radio anyway you know tell him, "Hey Ernie, don't you know this guy is dead don't say anything until you get up to the top." Because once you're on top then the sheriff's deputies can come over and say, "Oh yeah this guy's definitely dead." You know, and they can do their coroner things.

TM: Right.

CF: So I remember that was one instance. One thing that we did do that Ernie can take a lot of credit for is you know the Park Service has, and a number of parks now have these, we used to call them flyaways, but now they're just short hauls, or even long hauls I guess, where there'll be a rope, generally a rope, occasionally you know the helicopter might have a cable, but generally there'd be a rope where we would fly in and take somebody out underneath the helicopter in the stretcher which you know and again I mean I have full knowledge on how this all came about because I was right in the middle of this but the, technically it was illegal, or against policy, not so much illegal but against policy of the secretary of the Department of the Interior.

TM: Why?

CF: Well, because it was a single engine, and you know our ships in those days at least were single engine, and there was this misguided belief that it was too dangerous. Well first of all the pilots you know in the park, in the Grand Canyon helicopter if push come to shove which fortunately it never did for a person anyway, you know these guys jettisoned that sling or that stretcher. So you know generally that person's not tied to the... I'm screwing this up. The stretcher is not connected to the wall or the bottom or anything. You know the pilot has discretion to get rid of it. So it wasn't until a number of years later when I after I went to the FBI academy and I went back there for some other, not training, I was helping develop their special response team held a program and I was able to get some real, some real power people to say, "Yeah you're right, Butch, in this case you know, we'll tell the Department of the Interior to go." You might want to cut that out, I don't know about it.

TM: Can you open this up for me a little bit actually? I'm going to explore this more because today in 2020 we take short hauls for granted. They are a well used tool that takes river runners off of stranded boats on the Colorado River, that takes, that takes people out of remote areas that have broken their hips or legs or somehow damaged themselves to such an extent that they cannot extract themselves and, but the ship can't land near them, and to move that person out of where they are would be a danger to the staff, the protection staff, that would move them.

CF: I mean sometimes you didn't have any choice. I mean it's like this guy's either going to die or we're going to fly him out of there.

TM: I'm sort of wide eyed and open jawed. I'm thinking about a time when short hauls were technically illegal. And I'm like wow. How did the park get around that illegality to use that as a functional tool?

CF: Well I mean I should have not used the word 'illegal'. It was against policy which for us was almost illegal. Well I mean there were times over the years, I mean we did a couple of occasions in Yosemite, but we had a different kind of a jurisdiction for one thing. That was one of them. But at the Grand Canyon in the late '70s maybe even once or twice before that and Ernie really couldn't remember because again it goes back to my necessity for figuring these things out but, but we do know even while I was there, there were a couple occasions when we would do these short hauls where you know I mean we were, we meaning whoever was in charge, and often it was me, I mean I have one great, definite case where I really irritated the guy that was running the operation until I stepped in and took it over from him. But you know because it was a single engine, you know we didn't have any training. But there was no real training in those days anyway. It was all seat of the pants. It was like the Parkmedic program that I helped develop. You know we just did what we needed to do. And you know oftentimes we were dealing with you know not totally bureaucrats because the guys with the Department of Interior and the Office of Aircraft Services which is within the Department of the Interior who oversees aviation and helicopter operations and stuff. You know those guys are all accomplished pilots and what have you but they're not the guys on the ground either saying that you know if we don't move this guy right now he's going to die. So, there's that, that you know butting of heads conceptually at least.

TM: So Aircraft Services, is that a part of the FAA?

CF: No, no it's part of the Department of the Interior. OAS, Office of Aircraft Services. And it's a function of the, but they also have control, I mean the Department of the Interior, the Secretary of the Interior has given them the mission, the position of overseeing aircraft contracts to make sure that you know if we're using them for fire flights, or we're using them for fires or... You know when I was the aviation

manager for the Park Service there, we had roughly 25 collateral duty pilots and about, no about 35 pilots and about 25 planes. So OAS would you know ensure that insurances were up to date and certificates were up to date and reviews and checks on engines and the standards of the pilots, all these things were up to snuff. And that's what OAS does. And it's you know a little bit once the camel gets its nose under the tent of course it gets, you know it expands its area of responsibility. But in the late '70's at the Grand Canyon and I went down you know one or two other places where you just have these life and death kinds of scenarios, you know Grand Tetons, the Rocky Mountains, maybe Yellowstones kinds of places you know where the rangers on the field or the people in the field have to make a split second decision. So I don't know if I'm rambling now or not for you but that's the way it was conducted in those days.

TM: You know in the six years that you were at Grand Canyon, was the short haul of people, either visitors or personnel, was that against policy for those entire six years?

CF: Yes.

TM: So I would like to take this avenue forward and could you talk to your role as how you change that or how the regulation was changed because again this activity, the short haul activity, to hang people off of helicopters, is an integral tool of park operations today. Training, etcetera, I mean everybody is training for it. How did that come about?

CF: Well, OK. So you know we did that while I was there. We did it a couple of times, early on in my time there I think. And in 1976 I went through the FBI Academy, the national academy which is three months long in Quantico, Virginia, which is a fairly prestigious school for mid-level and upper-level law enforcement people, sheriffs, chiefs of police kinds of people. And I was, but the Park Service had one of these, without going into a whole lot of detail, you know almost in agreement with the FBI that the Park Service, the park police and/or rangers would have somebody at least once a year and if not twice a year because they had two academies to do it. And so going back in time, the Deputy Director of the National Park Service, Hillory Tolson, was brothers with the Deputy Director of the FBI.

TM: Oh wow. OK.

CF: And so over time that relationship stayed and even after these guys disappeared from the scene somehow that you know that stayed in place basically.

TM: So, Assistant Director Tolson, his brother was Assistant Director or Deputy Director of the FBI,...

CF: Yeah.

TM: ...and they got to talking about a relationship between the FBI and the Park Service, and how that could be fostered.

CF: Well no, I said, skipped over, what did you say about right after the Deputy Director for the FBI?

TM: Was Tolson's brother, Hillory Tolson, one of the two?

CF: I actually have to double check on that, Tom.

TM: Right. I would, too. But because these guys were in these two agencies and they were clearly good friends, they're brothers, that started a training relationship between the NPS and the FBI. I think that's really neat.

CF: Yeah, and that is true.

TM: Yeah, so you had a chance to go to this academy in 1976?

CF: Yeah, I went to the, the bicentennial year, the summer of '76. So while I was there I ended up giving a couple of you know night programs. You know just you know I got somebody from Yosemite to send me a bunch of, because I was in Yosemite at the time, and one of the things the we really instituted and I made a real effort to make sure that we got photos of different rescues in Yosemite. And so I had a whole collection that was sent to me on the big wall rescues and pretty interesting kinds of things that most of these other policemen from you know New Jersey had never seen before. And so I gave a couple of night programs to, you know, other classes and classmates and stuff. It had nothing to do with the school itself. It was just something to do on a Tuesday night. So but in my class a guy you know I mentioned way back when, he used to swim in the police Olympics. So the guy that was my lifeguard at the Academy, because you couldn't swim there by yourself, you know I'd go and workout. He ends up becoming part of the Hostage Rescue Team, HRT, which is what the FBI has for things like if some ambassador is kidnapped or there's a hostage kind of an incident, you know like in Atlanta say, that they take in this HRT team. Well, I got to be pretty good buddy buddies with him and so a number of years later about, I could put this in perspective, figure out how old my kids were, so like maybe about '79 I'm asked to go back to spend a week with some pretty heavy hitters from my perspective - the deputy chief.

TM: So in 1979 they sent you back to Washington, D.C. Is that right?

CF: Well, at Quantico, Virginia which is basically Washington, D.C. And I've got my two young sons and my wife. My wife had never been to either New York City which we took in while we were there. And then I, she stays with her girlfriend and I go down to Quantico for a week. And I'm part of a group that is to design the helicopter response program for this rescue team, this HRT team. And my expertise in this case is really sort of the, you know the, you know the search and rescue angle, the vertical, the cliffs, how to you know rappel out of helicopter kinds of things. That was my, the expertise I'm bringing. But as I was starting to say I think, that you know the Deputy Chief of the Los Angeles County Fire Department was there who I got to be really good friends with. The, and I'm sort of making this up, but I'll just, just to give you some level, you know the chief pilot per se of the Maryland Highway Patrol, the chief pilot for the California Highway Patrol, you know about four or five of these guys, the chief pilot for I think it was at that time, I think it was the Tucson Police Department, was just getting a helicopter in those days. So there were about seven or eight of these guys. And then Russ Anderson was my only other Search and Rescue counterpart. He had been with the, well one of the big Search and Rescue units, civilian units, out of the Los Angeles basin. But he also went on to design a bunch of carabiners and different things that they still use today although he sold his business. So anyway, there's a group of about I don't know maybe a dozen of us. We sit around this big table and we design this program for the FBI. So at the very end you know we present the product to whoever we needed to present it to. And at the very end they you know an hour or two. And of course during the week I got to know most of these guys, not everyone very well, but a lot of them, several, pretty well. So I posed this problem to these guys. I said, and I said you know, "I would like to take you know half an hour, 45 minutes your time. Here's my dilemma." And

you know I stood out in front of the group or something and I said you know, "We have these vertical rescues in remote areas", etc., you know I, you know I laid it on thick. Of course they knew, I'm sure I did some slide programs talking about all this stuff. And I said, "But my policy that I am supposed to adhere to is that we can't do these, because of the single nature of the helicopters that we almost all have." In those days they were all single engine. And a lot of what these guys were flying where single engines. But they were all high time pilots and collectively, and I made this, I can't remember the estimate anymore, but I one time when presenting a paper about this, I came up with something like 40 or 50,000 hours of helicopter time among all these guys. One or two of them were, had been in Vietnam. So there was a lot of juice there. There was a lot of expertise that I would never have access to again. So I said, "Here's the dilemma." You know I want to be able to do this on rare occasions. I don't want to do it all the time. I don't want to abuse it. I just would like to have somebody, you know some entity, some group approving or at least acknowledging the necessity to do this and I said, "So what do you guys think?" So they went and you know within 15 minutes or less they lost me because they got into a lot of very technical, not scenarios as much as analyses of you know what a helicopter can do under certain conditions. And you know even if that one motor stops, you know how far can they glide, and what's going to happen. And you know I mean they went through it pretty intensely. And as I say I quickly lost a lot of their, I didn't know what they were talking about half the time. But at the end of the time, the consensus was, you know there's actually no risk. I mean the risk is so minimal statistically between somebody, between that they need, between the time you know the helicopter engine quitting, being at the wrong place at the wrong time, all that sort of thing, that it's infinitesimal. So I said, "OK thank you guys." And so I go back and you know I'm at the Grand Canyon early on and I'm because of my aviation position, you know overseeing aviation and the helicopter at the Grand Canyon, I'm starting a relationship with the Office of Aircraft Services and some of the people there. So you know I go to them. It wasn't like I waited for them to say something. I went to them and said, "Here's the deal, guys." You know we need this latitude, officially. You know having been in the field, having seen this necessity play out in real life, having violated the policy, knowing that you needed to conduct myself professionally with these sorts of things knowing that you know this red faced test where Walter Cronkite puts a microphone in my face. If something were to happen, I know that maybe I'm going to be liable, that maybe I'm going to be out, and you know put out, hung out to dry. But I also know that perhaps the right thing to do is to try to save this person's life or to do this or whatever. And that's the way I try to conduct business. So you know dealing with OAS, we got along pretty well as far as I'm concerned. And you know I oversaw the, I think it was the Park Service's, except for the park police, I think it was the Park Service's at that time at least the only full time helicopter program in the park system. I can't think of any, of any place else. Maybe Big Cypress, not Big Cypress but, there's a place in, there's a park in, not Everglades, but a place in Florida. But mostly it was the only operation in town. And so I had a, you know, I was kind of a big player for them in a small way. So our relationship was pretty good. But you know I was trying to make a case for helping the rangers in the field which is what I thought my job was, to try to make life easier, and safer, and more efficient and cheaper and all that stuff for them.

TM: And this is 1987. Is that right?

CF: So, well I went to D.C. as the you know as the Emergency Services coordinator in '87 but I was making a play with OAS long before that.

TM: OK, so this took some time to...

CF: Yeah. As I say it didn't happen, I didn't bawl them out one week and the next week they're giving me permission. You know I know that I went to the FBI Academy in '76. I went back there in '79, I believe roughly at least, to work on this task force for a week for their, the FBI Hostage Rescue Team. Met all these guys who developed this 50,000 hours flying time concept at the end of that week. Took that memory with me back, moved on to the Grand Canyon, had a couple of short haul incidents there. And you know it started registering on me that we need to, we need to have something that helps us work in the field. And once in a while I'm sure that other parks, maybe even you know Grand Canyon, we would violate that, but you know we still adhered to whatever the OAS was telling us to do. And the following I guess it was just enough's enough. We've got to tackle this head on. So I did. So...

TM: How did you do that? How did you tackle it head on?

CF: I challenged the guys at OAS that were my liaison and I got to know them because of the, even though I had a fixed wing in the summer time I had a helicopter 24/7. So I worked with one or two of these people, these men, you know on a pretty regular basis. So I mean when I say head on I mean just I would pick up the phone and we'd have these discussions and they'd say well how about, so put us something on paper and you know give us some examples and propose this and whatever, justify it. And you know I would do that and we'd go back and forth and there's all the bureaucracy in between. And I know that before I left and went to Washington, D.C., you know I had at least a verbal permission from them to do what you need to do. Just don't kill anybody and maybe don't tell us.

TM: Yeah, but that's not good enough.

CF: Well, it might have been the way it was but...

TM: Well, so then how did you finally get it on paper?

CF: Well, then when I got to D.C., you know part of my portfolio was I oversaw Search and Rescue, EMS, diving, health and fitness, the command system, and aviation.

TM: So this was, this was back to D.C. in '97 having been working this issue for at least ten years.

CF: No, no I was in D.C. in '87.

TM: Sorry, '87. Thank you.

CF: Yeah. Well you know I don't think the stuff hit the fan really between them and myself until the, you know '84, '85, '86 era. It wasn't like there was big time in between there. There was some time between you know one or two minor short hauls in Yosemite, a couple, three or four perhaps in Grand Canyon. And then you know at Grand Canyon when I got this verbal agreement. Then I went to D.C. and ended up writing 90, 95% of the aviation policy, the directives for the agency which included you know, you know these exceptions, these variances, like maybe a wet suit and high-altitude gear is fine if you have to. And you know if you have to do the short hauls and you got only a single engine then that's the way it is.

TM: Oh this is really good. So, so you had a chance to write the directives and include in some variances, which is a really nice word, to allow short hauls and also you mentioned wet suits and high-altitude gear. So the regulation was you had to wear the Nomex fireproof clothing?

CF: Well that was the SOP. You know but, and you know we'd adhere to that most of the time. Sure.

TM: But occasionally there would be some, some, some variations...

CF: That's right.

TM: ...for specific reasons.

CF: That's exactly right and I don't know you know maybe the people today you know are more concerned about the liabilities and lentiginous aspects of all this, but I wasn't. I was concerned about taking care of the rangers.

TM: Well on the contrary, Butch, because what I think of today with short haul, and you can see this on the Internet quite a bit, is not only is there a helicopter short hauling a visitor in a litter, in a basket, but there's a ranger connected to them as well.

CF: That's because they've got the policy approved now. The policy didn't approve it then.

TM: So, I look at your work as being groundbreaking to get to where we are today.

CF: Well I think that's, I think that's correct.

TM: Which is pretty neat.

CF: I hadn't thought about it too much.

TM: Instead of going off into the litigation of today, going off into how a clearly needed tool is continuing to get better. And you guys saw it and you used it and then the next thing you need to do is get the variance to do it.

CF: Yeah.

TM: That's pretty neat.

CF: Yeah. And you know I mean you know it's written in that you don't do this every day and it's not something that, but you know there's always an exception to the rule. And that's what I was dealing with was to cover the exceptions to the rule. You know let's put this out in front of everybody and let people know that there are exceptions to the rule.

TM: Excellent. You know this might be a great place to wrap up this part 13 interview and next time we'll go back and talk a little bit more about Ernie Kuncl and maybe some of the short haul activities that you did have. And with that, that'll conclude part 13 oral history interview with Butch Farabee. Today is June 28th, 2020. My name is Tom Martin. Butch, thank you so very much.