

**Transcription:** Grand Canyon Historical Society

**Interviewee:** Charles "Butch" Farabee, Jr. (BF)

**Interviewer:** Tom Martin (TM)

**Subject:** Oral History Interview

**Date of Interview:** Friday, June 5, 2020 Part 4

**Method of Interview:** Phone Interview

**Transcriber:** Emma Murray

**Date of Transcription:** July 24, 2021

**Transcription Reviewers:** Susan Collins, Tom Martin

**Keys:** Frank Kowski, Lake Mead, Winnebago, Death Valley, La Jolla, Drownings, Scripps Institute of Oceanography, Jim Stewart, B29, Echo Bay, Sundowners, Tucson Police Department, North Shore Road, Cessna, Boulder Beach, Overton, Roger Allen, John Murphy, Luscombe, Don Chase, John Riffey

TM: Today is Friday, June 5 2020. This is part four of a Grand Canyon Oral History interview with Butch Farabee. That's Charles Butch Farabee, Jr. My name is Tom Martin. Good morning Butch how are you today?

BF: Good.

TM: Butch, do we have your permission to record this interview over the phone?

BF: Yes.

TM: Thank you. We left off part three with your discussions with Frank Kowski about returning to the Park Service, having worked for the Tucson Police Department for three years. And this is in 1969. Can you talk to me about the transition from Tucson -- you're married now to Anne, how did that transition to Lake Mead work?

BF: Well, I may have to think about this a little bit I suppose. Frank was then the Regional Director for the Southwest Region, which Lake Mead National Recreation Area was in. He got a position description written specifically to include or incorporate my police experience because they needed what amounted to a highway patrolman, a ranger who could work the North Shore Road, which goes from Las Vegas Wash to Echo Bay, but pretty remote. There's nothing for 30-some miles out there. It's also an access to Las Vegas. In those days, the state of Nevada did not have an upper speed limit, so you could drive as fast as you wanted to, within reason, except that you were inside the recreation area, where their laws were a little bit different. So they wanted somebody who could work there independently, work at night principally by themselves, to watch for a lot of drinking, a lot of speeding.

So they created that job for me. Not too long into my tenure there, they actually got a California Highway Patrol-equipped cruiser, a Park Service patrol car. It was painted the white colors and that sort of thing, but it had a big engine in it, and I was a patrolman on that North Shore Road, working at night. I'm not sure I even had a gun. I often didn't, generally I didn't actually. Or if I did have a gun, it was the days when you had it in the glove compartment or in a briefcase and I did not own a briefcase, so I'm sure that it was stashed away. That was a different time in the

Park Service in general, which is sort of a whole different issue, but there are any number of Rangers of my age, my generation who can testify that you did not wear a weapon on site, although at night it was a little more lenient. But during the daytime, you pretty much did not.

I made this decision to leave the Tucson Police Department because I loved the Park Service, I love what they stood for. Although leaving the police department was pretty hard in many ways - I really enjoyed doing what I did and I've always told people that, for me, being a policeman in Tucson in that era was one of the hardest jobs I've ever had, perhaps even the hardest, to do it with conscience and integrity, but at the same time with some common sense. I thought it was one of the most challenging things I've ever done for sure.

But I still loved working in the parks and I was very impressed when I went through the training center with the organization and the overall philosophy and direction that the National Park Service was taking -- you know, the focus on conservation, preservation, ethics. That was pretty close to when *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson came out. So the preservation/conservation movement was starting to blossom further. I bought into all of that.

As a minor aside, I've always thought that my contribution to being a ranger in the National Parks was not so much for the conservation and preservation mentality of the agency, because there are plenty of my peers who bought into that hook line and sinker and really got into it. I always thought that my contribution could be in working with people. I know that not everybody is a good person, although, I tend to think that I'm much more positive than negative when it comes to interacting with the tourists and the visitors. But I've always thought that my contribution would be able to work with people in all kinds of different situations, good and bad. There are lots of people who are very passionate about the real conservation policies that the Park Service stands for, who are very dedicated to that concept. I thought that I could make a contribution by working with the people in law enforcement, less than the conservation frame of mind... I don't know if that makes sense to you, Tom, but that was, I thought, my thing.

TM: It seems like the Park Service has a lot of people that are focused on resource planning and management, that is mandated to preserve the resource unimpaired for future generations. But it also needs the front line people that are interfacing with the public and have that preservation and conservation background always behind them.

BF: Yeah you're right, you phrased that better than I can. I just thought that, at least initially, for the first several jobs and Lake Mead, and then Death Valley, then into Yosemite, that was sort of my direction. But again, in the background was my empathy towards the environment, my empathy towards conservation and preservation, my background enjoying the outdoors. Through hiking and camping and climbing and caving -- I hadn't gotten into the water yet particularly, although I guess diving, I suppose that's right too -- that was the way I sort of entered my job.

So I was asked to go to Lake Mead, or I accepted the job to go to Lake Mead. I had actually a sort of an interesting introduction to Lake Mead. I had just gotten my pilot's license in 1968, right before I got married, and my instructor -- his parents owned a little mom and pop aero company. As a wedding present, he gave me the use of a Cessna 172, which is a four-seat aircraft. He gave me the flight time from Tucson to Las Vegas. So another couple, myself and

my wife flew to Las Vegas, and in doing so we landed in Boulder City and we were met by several of the Rangers from the park. They took us out on the big patrol boat at Boulder Beach or Hemenway Harbor, and took a tour around Boulder Basin, down to the dam and that sort of thing. They knew of course that I was transferring up there, and that at one time, I had already been a permanent Park Service employee, although admittedly for a short time. I sort of spoke the language, but at the same time also brought this police law enforcement experience with me as well. They also knew that I had postponed my entrance-on-duty date a little bit until my wife graduated from the University of Arizona. So, from Boulder City we flew into Las Vegas-- now I've got about 50 hours flying time, but I was pretty comfortable, and I didn't deviate, I wasn't a hot dog out there. I was pretty conscious of the fact that it was not my plane and that they were giving me six or seven hours of flight time, up and back. So that was my real introduction to Lake Mead, and then we transferred up. We had to move ourselves in this case so I had a U-haul trailer, and I towed one of our two cars up there. We went to Echo Bay, which is a fairly remote part of Lake Mead -- I guess Boulder Beach is not so remote, but there are probably six or seven other places at Lake Mead that are fairly isolated, and Echo Bay was one of them.

TM: So, Butch, I'm curious about the lay of the land. Hemenway Harbor and Boulder Bay are right down near Boulder City, but the North Shore Road is farther north and there's a whole little Marina out there, isn't there?

BF: There are actually three of them, there's Callville Bay, that's halfway to Echo Bay, and then Echo Bay, and then above that was Overton Landing. As the lake would go up and down with its capacity and its elevation, Overton Landing was always sort of marginally operated. I don't know that made any kind of a profit. Part of my job was to overlook them as well.

TM: Callville Bay and Echo Bay had roads that went west, back to Vegas, is that right?

BF: Well, no, not exactly. The North Shore Road had just been completed maybe a couple of years before I was there. It would go from Las Vegas Wash and skirt the mountains, and then there'd be a side road that went down to the lake at Callville Bay. It was a dead end, I mean you'd drive and end up in the water. That was five or six miles in length, that side road. North Shore would continue north and east up to Echo Bay, and the same thing existed there, there was a side road that went down to Echo Bay, and it would end in the water as well. It was roughly -- you know, you would think, having lived there for a year and a half, I would know this -- but it was roughly five or six miles in length as well. There were three houses, three Mission 66 houses, and a couple of duplex apartments, and a little maintenance yard, and then a hotel and a marina. A pretty busy marina for that area. And then the North Shore would continue up to the little town of Overton, again with a side road that went down to Overton Landing. So there was nothing other than maybe a couple of dirt roads, there was nothing that did as you were suggesting, going east towards Las Vegas.

TM: Got it. So it was the North Shore Road, and that's what, maybe 30 or 40 miles long?

BF: Yeah, yeah. I'm not so sure was 40, but between 30 and 40, I believe -- you know my memory of some of the specifics is a little bad.

TM: No worries. What was Anne thinking she would do? Nice house out there in Echo Bay, but it's 30 miles outside of Vegas, which is kind of nice -- it's quiet out there, I would assume. But if she's going to be teaching or working, that's going to be a commute into Vegas every day.

BF: Well, no, she didn't do any of that. Her degree was in geography, which I think is a great degree, but it's probably not too useful when it comes to any kind of profession. But the fact is that she she's a graduate, very smart woman, very independent, a self-starter, so she ended up working at the hotel in the registration part of the Echo Bay Hotel. She worked there, and when they developed a little Visitor Center at Valley of Fire State Park, which is a pretty unique geological part of that whole basin, it's really a unique area. She was very attractive, very articulate, very organized, well-spoken, and she was a natural, and she liked being out there almost by herself, it was pretty remote -- she ended up running that visitor center for the state. I think she had a supervisor, and then maybe there might have been a maintenance man there someplace as well. We were only at Echo Bay for about a year and a half anyway -- part-way through my initial assignment there, the superintendent and chief ranger decided they really needed me more as an Area Ranger rather than just a patrolman on the North Shore.

TM: Okay, what was the difference?

BF: Well, the difference was that as an Area Ranger, I got a lot more out on the lake, and my responsibility included the North Shore. I did a lot of the same sorts of things as a patrolman. But my interest was more towards offroad driving, poaching, boating, boat inspections, boat accidents -- you know, that sort of thing for the whole area. During that year and a half, I went up to the fire camp on the Shivwits Plateau and spent several different shifts up there, and there are some interesting stories regarding that as well.

TM: Like what?

BF: Well, one that comes to mind ... This is a day when Lake Mead had an aircraft, for one thing. There's a little airstrip at the Shivwits fire camp, which is one of the most remote parts of United States, actually. I don't know if you've ever been there, but it's terribly interesting, very remote, lots of archaeology out there, a lot of resources. There's also a fire camp there with a little trailer and a quonset hut with some fire equipment, what have you. I was out there for two weeks on one go around, and my first wedding anniversary popped up and the superintendent -- Roger Allen was his name -- was having a home built in Boulder City, but in the interim, he actually lived out there at Echo Bay, and he was a Department of the Interior certified pilot. So he would occasionally bring that aircraft out, much to the consternation of the Park, that had a real pilot as well.

TM: Oh boy.

BF: GS12 pilot perhaps, or at least GS11 pilot, who was a maritime pilot that taught the WASPs how to fly, crossed the ocean in World War II. So, you know, with 30,000 flying hours, he was at the end of his career and it was sort of the way to taper off. The superintendent lived out there and we got to be pretty good acquaintances and, of course, his wife and my wife got along famously. I maintained a sort of a professional distance without being rude or anything. He

recognized that it was my first wedding anniversary and he had the pilot fly up and pick me up at the Shivwits Plateau and bring me home for my wedding anniversary, which I thought really was a class act. Obviously it was self-serving on my part, but I also thought that he had his employees in mind, and their well-being. So I appreciated it and I'm sure that my wife appreciated it as well.

But again, those are the days when the management was good, at least at Lake Mead, and I think elsewhere, although I can't totally speak to that. My wife went up and they gave us a tour of the park with her on the aircraft and then she was more than welcome to go out on one of our boats at Echo Bay. I mean, she couldn't take it out, I would be the one taking it out, but she was welcome to be on board. I think the idea was that tourists, the visitors would see the boat, and there was just a presence. It wasn't that we were stopping them and talking to them or anything like that, it's like having a police car, you see the police car and you know that they're out and about.

So that was one of the better things about the Shivwits. In one of those two week sessions -- it was during the monsoon times -- I was out there by myself and it's really a two and a half or so hour drive from St George, Utah, out there. A lightning storm came in one night -- it's one of the most intimidating things I've ever experienced, you almost felt like you wanted to crawl underneath the bed in your little trailer. Lightning was so intense, and it was constant, it was like being in the middle of a battle where there's big guns going off all the time. I don't know that I literally crawled under the bed, but I think I would like to have crawled under the bed. So the next morning, I went up to the top of Mount Dellenbaugh, which has a lot of history -- those who know much about the river riding know that that's part of Separation Canyon where the three guys left off of Powell's [first expedition]. That was part of what I was supposed to keep an eyeball on. You had to walk up there, that road is bad enough that you couldn't drive up to the top anymore, although there used to be a road there. I'd go up, it was part of my job, it was a fire camp, that's what it was called. There was something like 25 different smokes taking place. And I'm all by myself out there -- I've got a good four wheel drive truck, but there's only so much that one guy can do with that many sightings of smokes.

TM: Butch, was John Riffey out there at Grand Canyon National Monument?

BF: Well, Riffey was there at the time. I actually flew over there with my wife, I had rented a plane from Boulder City, we flew out there to spend an afternoon with John.

TM: Can we take a little diversion here, we'll come back to the smokes in a minute. Can you tell me what you recall about John Riffey?

BF: Well, he was at Toroweap Overlook ranger station, a little airstrip, which actually is not in the park, it was right on the fence line right outside the park. His little airplane -- Pogo, I think -- was out there, which I think was a super cub. I wrote him a letter, I had never met the man before this, but I wrote him a letter, or somehow I communicated with him, anyway. I couldn't do it directly, it wasn't like we had a radio or anything that we could talk to him directly. But in some fashion, I communicated with him and found out that on such and such a day, he would be there. I said if I fly over there, can we spend a little time with you, and he was very gracious, and I think... Again, he was a self-starter but he was also very used to being by himself, his wife

would be there occasionally but she wasn't there at that time, I never did meet her. But we set it up for some afternoon, and I flew in.

So my wife and I are flying over in a little Cessna 150 over the middle of the Grand Canyon, probably some of the most rugged territory in the lower 48, at least. And I don't have that many more hours since I got my license, maybe 50 or 60 hours total. But we flew out there and, and met with him, we spent several hours -- we went up to the ranger station which was his home as well, and had a light lunch and probably some refreshments, iced tea or something like that, and spent some time. He took us out to Toroweap Point itself, the overlook, the little campground. I remember John as being a lot older than me, he might have been in his mid-50s at that point -- he was sort of a tie back to an older era. His interest was principally in the resource, because where he was living out there -- and frankly, I don't know much about his earlier history, I don't know where else he had been before that or what his career was before that, although I do have a little biography on him here someplace. His interest was principally in the resource and that end of the park and keeping track of the river runners, and he would get visitors out there that would come in from Kanab, and probably Saint George -- you go through Bundyville, I guess. I found him very entertaining very willing to spend some time with a young Ranger and his wife, he was just generally a nice person. He was old enough that he wasn't that caught up in any kind of an ego thing like the rest of us young bucks were. You know, I mean I'm no authority on John, although after I got to the Grand Canyon, I met with him once or twice also along the way. Although not professionally, he ended up dying pretty quickly. I don't have too much more to say about going out there and spending an afternoon with him, I guess.

TM: That's fun, that's a nice snapshot of him there. And then, Roger Allen, what recollections do you have of Roger?

BF: Roger came from the Everglades where he had been the superintendent. I don't frankly know exactly why he left the Everglades to go to Lake Mead, either. I'm sure there are political and Park Service reasons for doing that -- in some ways, he didn't fit in, but he was an authority figure. He was very nice to my wife and me. I think that he was probably a pretty good manager, although I never was a recipient too much of -- you know I was so far down the totem pole that I don't know that I ever was a recipient of any real policies that he instituted. I think he ended up leaving Lake Mead not too long after I did, I believe he went to Olympic National Park as a superintendent. He must have had some career history with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which is where I think he ended up becoming a pilot for them. He was a pilot, a biologist probably. And he brought that flying experience with him to Lake Mead, but he also brought this management from the Everglades, as well. So, nice man. I don't remember if he had any kind of military history. He probably did but I just don't recall that. Not too long after he had a pilot pick me up at the Shivwits fire camp. They ended up moving into Boulder City where they had built this house.

And so our paths really didn't cross until the very end. There's a pretty embarrassing thing on my part, but I'll share it anyway-- I bought a little airplane, a little Luscombe Mayday 1946, 65 horsepower. The Luscombe was a little two-- it's almost a one seater, except there's a side-by-side. You have a stick for your control, but the big thing is that it was a taildragger. And I learned in a tricycle gear -- most pilots do, as a rule. But there's a big difference between a

tricycle gear, which has a wheel on the front, as opposed to a taildragger, where the wheel is at the very end of the plane. There's a whole different landing and takeoff, the flying itself isn't too much different, but landing and takeoff is a lot different because you have to control the aircraft with your feet with the pedals,

TM: And you can't see the runway ahead of you,

BF: Well yeah, that's right. Yeah, you're right, that is correct but in a small plane you're not very far off the ground anyway. But in this case the Luscombe was sort of notorious for having a fairly narrow wheel, the wheels are fairly close, I mean, they weren't broad -- the farther apart, of course, the more control you have, and if the wheels are close together, then you have lesser control. The guy that I bought this airplane from in the little town of Overton -- which is where we got our mail and went grocery shopping and stuff, probably didn't have more than 500 people living in it at the time -- it's a big retirement spot now. I bought this little aircraft, and like all young pilots, all I wanted to do is go fly. And, you know, the guy that I bought it from, he gave me a couple of hours' worth of instruction and we did some touch and gos. But I was totally unprepared for this little plane. The flying part was no big deal. It was the landing and takeoffs, I just didn't have the experience. So I spent \$1,900 dollars to buy this little airplane, when I was only making \$5,000 a year at the time. I was out practicing touch and gos, -- I didn't have too many hours in the plane, I only had maybe five or six hours at this point—and one day, I crashed the airplane when I landed, I got caught in a little crosswind that I wasn't able to compensate for. I pressed on the wrong pedal at the wrong time, and I did a real quick turnaround on the strip,

TM: Like a 180?

BF: Well yes, exactly, it was 180. And in doing so, I ended up tipping over. I took the prop into the ground, of course, that's no good for the engine -- the wing went into the ground and I broke the left wheel strut -- I found out that it's gonna cost me \$1300 to repair this thing. So, I called my wife after this wreck and we got it off of the runway. It was at this little isolated strip out of Overton where there wasn't much traffic, so that wasn't too much of an issue, but we got it off the runway. And I was probably in tears and told her that I'd wrecked this plane and she probably made the best decision of my life by saying something to the effect of, "Well, we talked, you know, either we're going to have kids, or we're going to buy another plane, but we can't afford both."

And, of course I have two great sons and four beautiful grandchildren. So that was a super decision on her part and, had it been left to me, I probably would have gone forward. But at the same time I'd accepted a transfer to Death Valley. And we had a going-away party so my best friend at the time, Don Chase, still is my best friend I guess -- he was much more mechanically inclined than I was -- we went out and took the wings off of this little airplane. We were to go to a going-away party for me, it was going to be at the Boulder Beach Visitor Center, rangers and a few others will be there. I'd only been there a year and a half so I didn't know people that well, and they didn't know me all that well. But the superintendent, Roger Allen, was there. Well, I missed my going-away party. That was the part that I was sort of embarrassed to tell you -- the party was supposed to have been at a certain time, I thought, but it turns out it was an hour earlier. So, Don and I are driving in and just as everybody is leaving this party which had been

for my wife and me -- of course she was there. And I'm totally embarrassed. One I'm almost embarrassed to tell you, but I was more embarrassed at the time. So, I literally went around to almost everybody. Certainly, the superintendent and the chief ranger and others, and personally apologized to them. You know, it was an oversight on my part, it was thoroughly not very classy on my part. My wife was not very happy with me, that was for sure. But as I say, she was there. So that was my other real definite encounter with Roger Allen, which is how I got into that story to begin with, I guess.

TM: Yeah, you mentioned that he was good to his people.

BF: He was certainly good to me and my small sphere of people. Now how he was received by all the other people at Lake Mead, I can't speak to that really.

TM: Right, right, no worries. The question I had for you about Lake Mead, in the 50s, looking at the accident reports for the different Western parks, Lake Mead National Recreation Area had a high incidence of fatalities. A lot of them, alcohol related with boats. Can you speak a bit, was that something that you saw when you were there?

BF: I saw a lot of that. I made a fair number of arrests for being under the influence either in a vehicle or in a boat. Prior to my time getting there, and one of the reasons they wrote this job description for somebody like myself, was because they're having these big-time accidents, with three or four people killed in a car wreck along that North Shore Road or some of the other auxiliary roads, because of the speed and the drinking. So, part of my job as an Area Ranger -- not as a North Shore Patrolman but as an Area Ranger -- was I'd go out on the boat. We had the luxury of picking and choosing -- no one really told us, go out on the boat today or do this or whatever. There were three Rangers stationed at Echo Bay at that time, and I had the most law enforcement experience, but I didn't have the boating experience. Before we'd go out on the lake, we would monitor who is going out, who was launching, and what their status was. You would watch them and talk to them and that sort of thing so you know who was who was launching and who might be giving you trouble later on. And, you know, if it was a big weekend, 110 degrees, lots of beer, fast boat, that's a recipe for disaster. Cases up for sure. Big, open basins where there's a lot of room to open that throttle up and zoom around the lake. I saw a fair amount of that.

I don't really remember being involved where anyone died on the lake in an alcohol-related boat accident. I got involved in quite a few drownings. I seem to remember diving on probably 30 drownings. Okay, maybe one or two boating accidents as well, but mostly just drownings. And, it wasn't that I recovered all of them, but I participated in that many dive searches, I probably found eight or nine, and helped search for the rest of them. Some of them are pretty dangerous in some ways, certainly unique. Some of them are pretty mundane, if a body recovery can be a mundane thing, they were pretty routine. And from my perspective, not a big deal. I'm sure from the family's perspective that's different, but in this case, I did a fair amount of diving -- that was one of the beauties of being a park ranger in general -- if you've got the interest, and perhaps the physical ability, you can get involved in all kinds of things. I ended up going back to a two-week diving school at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography in La Jolla, California, as a result of being a ranger at Lake Mead.



TM: You had mentioned the diving school, that you kind of slipped into at Glen Canyon.

BF: Correct.

TM: Tell me a little bit about this, the diving school at Scripps.

BF: You know, this other man and I wrote a history of National Park Service diving, the administrative history -- just a couple of days ago, I got the books to sign and send them off. So, I have a pretty good feeling for the diving program in the national parks, certainly historically. The Scripps Institute of Oceanography -- you know, the University of California system has a quite a biological and research component to it that involves oceanography. They had to have a professional diving cadre to teach these graduate students how to dive. The Park Service was able to make arrangements with a man by the name of Jim Stewart -- this book I just mentioned a moment ago (which is not open for general purchase,) is dedicated to him and another guy.

So, he's sort of the godfather of National Park Service diving. Jim, would have a two week school every year. Rangers from around mostly the West or the Southwest would go to it and there'd only be about twelve or so Rangers going. There might have been a maintenance man or two in there as well. Mostly it was Protection Rangers, such as myself. For me, the first week was in La Jolla, diving off the coast and going through the school aspect of it in the school room. But then we had access to a pool and did a lot of early diving training in it. Now in my case, I was sort of a retread I guess, there are probably a few other people there who had never been taught diving. So the first week was in La Jolla, and then the second week was back at Lake Mead. They got this whole class over to Lake Mead -- we drove from La Jolla back and spent the next week diving in the waters of Lake Mead. We ended up getting two certifications, one was from the Scripps Institute of Oceanography, which had its own credentialing system. Jim was also a Maui national underwater instructor, and I ended up leaving with that certificate. And then, when I was at Yosemite, I actually went back to an advanced class there, a dive master class. You know, terribly well respected. At the time, it might have been one of the only school systems that had a diving cadre. Probably in Florida, and others, maybe Woods Hole kinds of places developed it afterwards. But Scripps was right at the very cutting edge of diving and oceanography and had lots of graduate programs in oceanography-related things. So we got in part of that. Of course, for our need, it was really for body recoveries principally. A little about maintenance, we moved buoys around and occasionally somebody would drop something valuable off of a dock and we might go down and get something that some visitor dropped. But mostly it was body recovering. That's what we did a lot of anyway.

TM: There's a couple of interesting dives there in Lake Mead, there's a sort of a bomber in some low water --

BF: Yeah, B-29 --

TM: Okay. And, and it's fairly deep isn't it? I mean, in the deeper sections, it's 6-700 feet deep, is that right?

BF: No, It's not nearly that deep, probably 200 feet.

TM: All right, not where the bomber is but, but further down towards the dam --

BF: Oh, down by the dam, I don't know that's six hundred, maybe close to 500, though.

TM: Okay, which is deep enough.

BF: Fairly deep -- technically we could only go to 130 feet, and this B-29 -- I've never seen it, I never dove on it; in fact, I'm not even sure I knew it existed at the time; most people didn't, I don't believe. But with the lake level going up and down it has become a dive site -- the lake is a lot lower than when I was there -- you could dive on the B-29, now, it's an advanced dive. I think at least one person has already died as a result. Most places, many places, visibility is very limited. There are few places in the lake where the visibility might be 20 feet or so if you're lucky -- it's not someplace if you compare that to Hawaii, or lots of other places that I've dove around the world, it's certainly not very attractive, but if you live in Las Vegas and that's the closest big piece of water, that's where you go.

So one of the dives I made that was pretty spooky was with this other Ranger, Don Weir, who probably had more experience than I did. A fisherman drowned at the upper end of the Overton arm, where there were lots of tamarisk growing up through the water. So the fishermen went over and -- I don't know if he had waders on, but for some reason he went down pretty fast. They had a fairly good idea of where he was, they saw where he went down. So Don and I went out and the visibility was zero, so we held hands and went down -- you got the tamarisk to contend with, and there's lots of them -- I mean they're all these little saplings, just skinny and 20 foot high.

TM: Oh, so as the reservoir level has come up recently, then what was a tamarisk on the shore, in an area where water would inundate, is suddenly underwater and you have to work your way through these thick tamarisk with your regulator and all the rest of your gear. Wow.

BF: Correct. And you did that with the boat as well. You go up and we'd tie off to tamarisk -- and to some degree, we're doing it just for the sake of the family. I don't think we had any great expectations that we're actually going to find this guy in zero visibility. And we didn't. We spent a couple of tanks holding hands and just sort of thumping around trying to feel to see if we could find this guy. And in some ways I'm glad we didn't. Because it's hard enough to deal with somebody like that on the surface, but when you got to do it in zero visibility and underneath 20 feet of water. Well, I'll tell you, this guy surfaced after about eight or ten days, and we went out and got him, brought him back in.

So, diving was exciting and interesting and you had to be prepared for it. But again, if you're 26 years old or so, and you're fairly confident in your skill level -- I was an Allstate swimmer in high school, so I was pretty comfortable in the water -- so it was interesting and exciting, most of the time. But it was just part of the job, you didn't have to focus on that, you did other stuff as well. My thing there really was to get to know the resource, I've always contended that if Rangers don't get out and range how do you know what to protect. There are some fairly

minimal but still existing archaeology sites around Echo Bay and that part of the lake. I made a point of trying to find those and I knew where some of the endangered [Humpback] Chub were located. So that was my thing. This conservation, preservation ethic, sort of kicked in at this point as well. If it was a quiet afternoon, if there wasn't much going on, then I would take off in a four-wheel drive pick-up and just go explore some of the little dirt roads that exist. You know, just so that I could say that I knew -- part of it was to see what's going on out there too. I discovered an airfield that somebody had plowed, graded. I suspect that it had something to do with drugs, but I never did find anybody on it. That was part of my job, to be out there ranging.

There are lots of fun things at Lake Mead. Let me give you one more fun thing -- I think this is a very interesting example. It was a major weekend, something like the Fourth of July or Labor Day, I don't recall which it was. The outlawed motorcycle group, the Sundowners -- which were somewhat equivalent to the Hells Angels, but in the Las Vegas area -- they were not welcome in Forest Service areas or other areas where you could camp, but they were welcome at Lake Mead. It wasn't like we had big open arms for them, but we were still allowing them to camp. So they're having this encampment with all of their members coming to camp out for a couple of days. It's a hot weekend, and you can see what's coming, with lots of alcohol, there might have been drugs that I don't know about, but mostly alcohol.

So, the first night we know they're coming, and Don and I are in a patrol car, and just sort of wandering around at night -- I'm sure we weren't even getting paid it, it was just what we had to do. And we look at the top of the Launch ramp and there's a big gathering of probably 30 to 40 of these bikers standing or milling around, and they had some women with them. They didn't know where to go, that was part of the thing, and so Don and I drive up there -- when I was in the Tucson PD, I dealt with the Hells Angels a fair amount, and was sort of used to working with motorcycle clubs, even though there was some danger involved. But being the cocky guy that I was, I get out of the car and Don doesn't want to get out of the car -- I walked to the middle of this group and say, "Okay, who's the boss here?" And somebody's identified and I had sort of laid out for him real quickly what they can do and what they can't do. I said, you guys are looking for your camp spot as a group site, not in the main campground -- it was sort of off to the side. So, we took them over there and they were fine.

The next day, we're back out patrolling around and in this case I'm by myself, and I get a call about a Winnebago that a guy has backed up and he's about to go over this embankment of about 30 or 40 feet, and drop into about 40 feet of water with this Winnebago. It's hot and it's crowded and there's lots of things going on around that part of the lake. There weren't any wreckers available at the time that could help this Winnebago guy out. I looked up at the top of this ramp and here are these same 30 and 40 bikers standing around, so I said, "Okay, Mr. Smith, don't panic, but I'm gonna come back to you in a few minutes, and probably be able to help you." So I go up -- I had already fixed one guy's ankle. He'd twisted his ankle and I'd taped it up for him -- so they knew me and they were a little bit used to me, I guess. So I said, "You guys want to prove that you're not as bad as a lot of people think you are?" And you know, I think the sentiment was, oh okay, I don't think they were jumping up and down. But okay, so I said, "Okay, follow me." So we all walk down to where this Winnebago was, and I said, "Okay, we're going to push this Winnebago back up the hill." It wasn't too far down, but he was trapped. There was real potential for him to have this thing go into the water and sink, so I got all these guys

behind it, we push this Winnebago back up onto flat ground, no cost to this guy, so he ends up, much to my chagrin, going down and buying a couple of cases of beer as thanks. As a result of my interaction with these guys over the next day or two, they literally wanted to induct me as an honorary member of this biking club, which I regret not ever actually doing. I don't know that they would have given me any kind of colors or anything, but it would have been a nice memento of having been inducted into this outlawed biking club. So that's the story I wanted to tell you about the bikers.

TM: The Winnebago pushers award.

BF: Yeah. You had to think on your feet, outside the box. Maybe I'm giving myself too much credit, but I always like to think I can think outside the box on these kinds of things.

TM: People want to be friendly and not much going on and they can help.

BF: Well actually there's a heck of a lot going on. It was just that it was an efficient, expedient way to take care of a problem, that, if it worked, everyone comes out a winner.

TM: There was a ranger out there for a while named Chuck Laytrell.

BF: Ah, I don't remember that name.

TM: He might have been a little after you.

BF: Everybody's after me, I'm that old.

TM: I just wanted to check. It may not be the appropriate time to talk about this, but I want to ask you to ponder it. You're mentioning that it's during the days when anyone in maintenance or interpretive ranger or law enforcement, if you had the interest, you could be part of the diving team or part of the search and rescue team or part of the ropes team -- that was going to change and people became much more specialized. You couldn't, if you were in maintenance you couldn't be part of the search and rescue team because you needed to be a search and rescue ranger for that.

BF: Well, sort of... I wouldn't make that as black and white as you as you make it sound. Part of it has to do with being willing. As an example -- I'm jumping out of Lake Mead and going to the Grand Canyon -- when I was the assistant chief ranger, I was responsible for the SAR program and EMS and fire and whatever. One of the interpreters was a paramedic, Lonnie Frederick, a very talented, very good guy. I just reached out to him and said, "You know we need you, would you like to participate?" He was very eager and he got permission from his boss and that sort of thing. So, I dovetailed him in.

TM: What year was that?

BF: Well, that would have been, I was at the Grand Canyon from '81 to '87.

TM: Yeah, and this is 2020, so I guess I'm speaking from today versus the late 60s, a 50 year time span. I would like to hope that if somebody was an EMT and they were an interpretive ranger that they would be able to use their skills in other in other areas.

BF: Well it's a two-way street that that Interpretive Ranger has to let it be known that they're interested, but if you're responsible for a program then you have to be willing to reach out as well. It's a two-way street.

So I wouldn't be as black and white about that, saying you can't participate because you're in maintenance. The fact is that at Glen Canyon for the last 30 or more years, all the body recovery stuff was being run by a maintenance guy. At Lake Mead, long after I was there, they got into a lot of research, and the researchers were the divers -- they actually turned all the body recovery stuff over to Clark County, sort of to my disappointment, although it was after I retired -- I always thought Rangers ought to get involved in that stuff as well.

I have one thing to tell you about Lake Mead that is really pretty important. While I was there in '69 and '70 -- I was there for 18 months, roughly -- everyone has sort of heard of the Yosemite riot in July 4, 1970. But about a month before that, maybe six weeks before that, a seasonal Ranger killed a young kid at Lake Mead. I don't have it at my fingertips, I never even thought that it might be of relevance, but it turns out I think that is very important when it comes to law enforcement in the national parks. Because that Ranger -- his name was Lamoro -- had very little training in law enforcement -- this is during the days when the Rangers did not have any law enforcement training, I was one of the exceptions to this. He was a patrolman in Boulder Beach, for whatever reason I wasn't in the Park so wasn't involved with it. But he's on patrol at the Boulder Beach swimming area, and a 16 year-old boy is being a 16 year-old boy, just sort of raising Cain a little bit, driving around the bowl of each campground. I don't remember exactly what he was doing, it was something as innocuous as driving the wrong way around the camping loop. The seasonal ranger was a teacher most of the year with kids that were troubled -- I think he was with Henderson School District. He dealt with these kids day in and day out for years. So, he was on patrol, and he had a sidearm on. He stopped this young 16 year-old boy, who turns out to be the son of a Lake Mead employee. His mother is in the personnel office or something at Lake Mead. This Lamoro stops this young boy, but the boy walks away from him -- I don't know that they got into any kind of verbal thing, but he ignores the Ranger's demands and so the Ranger goes up, and he pulls his weapon and he accidentally discharges it, and the boy ends up dying a day later.

TM: Oh my gosh,

BF: No training. Like all that stuff that's currently going on in Minneapolis. There was no need for any of this, it was way too high handed. Part of it has to do with lack of training, perhaps lack of perspective. Regardless, this young boy dies -- of course, the kids in the school district and the Boulder City kids and young people get very much upset, and they actually have a pretty significant protest in Boulder City, breaking windows there at the park office in Boulder City, and they have to bring in some rangers to talk to these kids. It was only about five or six weeks roughly before the Fourth of July riot -- this gets the attention of Park management back of Washington DC. And then you have this "riot" in Yosemite. Of course, there's a lot of things

working up to that as well, it wasn't like it was totally isolated -- it was the straw that broke the camel's back in some ways. But if you couple that with what was taking place around the country with Vietnam protests, and the race riots, and what have you, of that era -- a lot of us will remember that very clearly. The Park Service starts to recognize that it's totally inept when it comes to dealing with this younger counterculture anti-establishment sentiment that's taking place around the country. They recognize that they needed to get on board with some of this. You know, there was a sea change needed when it came to how the Park Service dealt with law enforcement, and the younger generation, and some of social ills that were taking place around the country—you know, national parks were not immune to any of this -- in some places, maybe even focused on some of these ills. So I just want to mention this incident has become lost in the history -- because everybody reflects back on the Yosemite riot as being a big deal, which it was, but there are things that led up to it as well. So, that makes sense to you?

TM: It does, and I would like to explore this more, but I'm looking at the time here and we've been happily yikyacking for about an hour and a quarter, not bad. I wonder if this would be a good time to wrap up part four and then in part five I would like to explore the Yosemite riot a little more, that concept of changing culture, changing time and Park Service with a non-impairment mandate which is leave it as it is -- how did, how do they change with the times?

BF: Not very well,

TM: Well, yeah. And I wonder if that's something we can we can talk to for a little while.

BF: Yeah, but we have to sort of go through Death Valley to get there though.

TM: Okay, so maybe that is the appropriate avenue -- we could wrap this up here and we could head out to Death Valley on our return.

BF: Yeah, I already have broken my airplane, I'm being transferred to Death Valley, I've missed my going away party, it's time to move on to Death Valley.

TM: Okay. All right, well with that, hang on a second. This will conclude the part four oral history interview with Charles Butch Farabee Jr. Today is June 5, 2020. My name is Tom Martin and Butch, thank you very much.

BF: My pleasure, Thank you.