

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Curt Sauer (CS)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)

Subject: Curt Sauer describes his experiences working at Olympic National Park, 1988-2002

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TM: Today is Monday, October 19, 2020. This is a Part 8 Grand Canyon oral history interview with Curt Sauer. My name is Tom Martin. Good morning, Curt. How are you today?

CS: Good morning, Tom, I'm doing well.

TM: Great. May we have your permission to record this oral history over the phone?

CS: Yes, sir.

TM: Thank you. At the end of our interview last time, you had been talking with the superintendent of Olympic National Park. I think it was Jack Reynolds.

CS: Actually, the superintendent at North Cascades was John Reynolds. The superintendent at Olympic was Bob Chandler.

TM: Sorry about that. Thank you for the clarification. So, John talked to Bob, how did that work out that you were able to, at a very short notice, transfer out of North Cascades?

CS: I think it worked out because John and Bob were good friends and professionals, and they took care of their people. I think it was coincidental that there was a vacancy with the East District ranger at Olympic at the time. That move was orchestrated to get myself and my family out of Stehekin.

TM: So that was basically a lateral move for you?

CS: Yes. That was a GS-11 move. It must have been because... I'm sure it's done, but I don't think that John and Bob would have arranged for a transfer and a promotion without competition. I was probably a GS-11 when I was in Stehekin.

TM: Getting into Stehekin was quite a job. Was it that difficult to get moved over to Olympic?

CS: No, not really.

TM: I mean, no long boat ride, no float planes, all that stuff.

CS: Well, again, we had to use Tom Courtney's barge for the moving truck to come in, it was a low lake level time of year. I think I mentioned in a previous interview, or maybe not, that when they were loading the moving van onto the barge, I think my wife walked away just because it was too nerve

wracking. If that truck had tipped, it would have gone into the lake and all of our stuff would've been damaged. In true Tom Courtney fashion, it worked. That was the only rough part, and going away party. Put our one Karmann Ghia on the barge as well. We left the pickup truck that we purchased over in the Spokane area...no it was down by Wenatchee. Anyway, we sold that truck and just left it there, as so many other vehicles are left by people. Did the four-and a-half-hour drive over to Olympic, actually we probably had to go through Sedro-Woolley and do all the paperwork to check out, then headed over to Port Angeles and started work.

TM: What were some of the challenges that you faced working at Olympic?

CS: The first challenge I faced was working for the chief ranger that didn't want to hire me. When I got to Olympic they had a much stronger law enforcement program than I had come from and he was looking for a fella that wanted to do mostly law enforcement work. There was some resource management work, such as poaching, but his emphasis was on crimes in the campground and marijuana drug use. It wasn't my orientation. The patrol vehicle that I was given I rapidly christened Battlestar Galactica because it was totally tricked out with every law enforcement communication system available at the time. All kinds of lights and sirens. The previous district ranger must have wired his own car because there were all kinds of bells and whistles in that thing, but it was just indicative of his relationship with the job being mostly law enforcement. He had good communication with the Port Angeles police department, the Clallam County sheriff's office, and they were given a lot of work with those agencies outside of the Park Service, outside of Olympic National Park.

TM: Is that normal for national parks to work on protection issues or law enforcement issues outside of their geographical boundaries?

CS: Yeah, fairly common. Just like I was a deputized state game warden over in Stehekin. Most of the rangers were deputized, won't say most of the rangers, several of the rangers were deputized sheriff's deputies. I don't really recall how many of them were deputized game wardens.

TM: I guess that would make sense. I think of the tiny town of Tusayan, Arizona, which is gateway community to south rim Grand Canyon National Park. Lots of times the law enforcement in the park would respond to some sort of action outside the park in Tusayan, bar fight or automobile accident, something like that.

CS: That was because at the time the sheriff's department had one sheriff deputy stationed at Grand Canyon/Tusayan, and he lived inside the park. So yeah, mutual aid response was quite common. We frequently assisted deputies with transport to jail down in Williams or Flagstaff. That was common at Olympic, but I'm talking about more reactive... There were at least two rangers that were on the Clallam County drug task force. A lot of the work that was done was done outside the park. Now, we had some drug use inside the park. Down on the southwest corner we had a drug raid, turned up some methamphetamine, but most of that work was outside in the county.

TM: Again, thinking about it, that would make sense because these are rural communities where resources are spread kind of thin and far apart. But I also kind of wonder, too, because park personnel could, as you say, spend a lot of time working on issues outside of the park if they weren't careful. Again, it's a double-edged. It's good because you have good working relationships with surrounding agencies, but again, in shortages of manpower, you end up doing another district or agency's work.

CS: Yeah. It was, and may still be, a rough area. We had one deputy killed while I was there, and we had one Forest Service officer killed after I had left. That's in a period of 15 years. It was a tough place to be as far as doing law enforcement, drugs and other work.

TM: So, it sounds like kind of a rough landing.

CS: Well, yes. The east and west district basically just divide park north and south roughly half way in the middle. The east district, there were four sub-districts there. We had around twelve fulltime rangers just in the east district. There was a welcoming party, Mike Butler had that party at his house. He and the law enforcement specialist took me aside at that meeting and said, "We know that you weren't the chief ranger's choice to be hired, and that you were put in this position. We don't understand why, but we know that something was going on and we are here to work with you."

TM: That's really nice.

CS: That was a major breakthrough. So we started working on programs that, in my perspective, were more appropriate for Park Service management. There was less time spent on drug enforcement outside the park and more time spent on wildlife protection. Poaching was a big problem on the west side, which I got more involved with when I became acting chief ranger because then I had the entire park. It was pretty much standard law enforcement with a lot of backcountry management. Mountain goats were a big issue at the time. The Park Service wanted to eradicate the mountain goats because they were an exotic species introduced many years before in the 1920s, I think by the state for a hunting opportunity, long before Olympic became Olympic National Park. Bear control, bears in campgrounds, your standard concession employee problems. Basically the campgrounds were pretty smoothly run. There weren't too many problems. In the backcountry at that time you needed to get a permit but it didn't cost you anything. So, there was a backcountry permit office, backcountry seasonal, backcountry rangers. Every year I would work together with Ruth Scott, who was a resource management specialist who was writing the wilderness management plan. She and I would plan and coordinate the annual seasonal backcountry training; very similar to the boatmen training up in Grand Canyon. That was two or three days of training some thirty backcountry seasonals from throughout the park.

TM: Nice. You mentioned Ruth Scott, did I get her name right?

CS: Ruth.

TM: Ruth. Thank you.

CS: In resource management crew primarily, Rich Olson was in charge of capturing, tagging, guarding the mountain goats.

TM: The interesting thing about mountain goats, is if you don't have a keystone predator to eat them and keep their numbers in control, then who's going to do that work, how's that going to happen? How did you guys deal with that?

CS: Prior to the time the park decided they needed to be eradicated, they weren't dealt with. There was no hunting in the park and predators to take them down were few and far between so they proliferated, which resulted in impacts to the vegetation, et cetera, which is why the Park Service wanted to take them out. That went on for years. It was a highly contentious issue with PETA and other wildlife conservation organizations. That gets into another influence of a congressman who was... His name

might come to me, but that was during the time... When I got there Bob Chandler was superintendent, and after Bob left a gal by the name of Maureen Finnerty came in. The congressman's last name was Dix. We had had several meetings with the congressman. He told the superintendent that he was in favor of the eradication. We were proceeding merrily along when an organization found a National Geographic article from, I don't know, 1912, 1922, something, that talked about fur trappers trading with Native Americans and they were given mountain goat pelts from the Olympic Peninsula, which turned out to be an incorrect story, but they gave that information to the congressman. The congressman believed them and told the superintendent that she was lying to him and that he wasn't going to support any funding for the eradication of the goats. All because of misinformation from a 1920s era report. Spotted owl controversy was raging. Loggers in the Forks area, one of the standard jokes was you could go to the store and get some not Hamburger Helper but some Spotted Owl helper. They were opposed to any protection of the owl because of the impact on commercial logging.

TM: Did the park have any commercial logging? I'd assume that it didn't. This would've been outside?

CS: It was all outside. One of the reasons that many of the loggers didn't like the park was because the park had locked up all the old growth. Well, the park had locked up the old growth that was remaining and that's highly lucrative. We were involved with the Forest Service on several different occasions on demonstrations when Forest Service didn't have enough officers in the area; did that type of activity. The rangers would offer mutual aid. That went on for a couple years, must have been three or four. Then the chief ranger retired. They waited and waited for a year to advertise the job, but the superintendent put me in as the acting chief ranger, which I served in that capacity for 13 months. During that time, they advertised the job and brought in a new assistant superintendent. The name will come to me...Roger. Anyway, he had come from Yosemite. Trying to remember his name. Anyway, he came in, and he had been assistant superintendent for about six months during the time that I was acting chief ranger for 13 months. He was responsible for hiring the chief ranger position. He hired another fella and told me that, well, I just don't think that you're a team player.

TM: Wait a minute, he'd been there six months, you'd been there, certainly in the geographical area, quite a while and understood east side/west side, the issues. Okay.

CS: So, I went back to being the east district ranger. It was a low point in my career, emotionally, as far as career goes. I totally expected to get the job, certainly after a year/13 months of being in the acting position. Let's just say I didn't behave properly, to the point where one of my good friends, a ranger at Olympic National Park, we were out doing something and we were talking about it. He basically said, "You know, Curt, it's been six months. You ought to quit acting like an asshole." I said, "That bad, huh?" He said, "Yeah. We'd like to have the Curt back that was here." I said, "Okay." So, that was a real comeuppance coming from a very good friend. So I tried as best I could, knuckled down and worked under the chief ranger that had been hired for exactly two years to the day that he was hired and then he retired. He had taken that job to get the paygrade and had to be in the job for two years to not pay for his move. So on the day that he was hired, two years later, he put in his retirement papers.

TM: Was the deputy superintendent that had been pulled over from Yosemite still there?

CS: Roger Rudolph. See, they come back after I think about it for a while. Roger was a great guy. Roger and I were friends, stayed friends. He was a good ranger. He was just looking for somebody else, finally figured out. The week after the retirement was announced, Maureen Finnerty and Roger Rudolph, superintendent and assistant superintendent, invite me into the superintendent's office. They say,

“We’d like you to be acting chief ranger.” I said, “You have to be kidding me. I’d been chief ranger acting for 13 months and you hired somebody else. Now you want me to be acting chief ranger again, and I’ll do it if you’re going to hire me.” Maureen sat forward in her chair and looked at me and said, “Curt, you know that I cannot pre-select someone. I’m asking you to be the acting chief ranger.” Well, when Maureen talked in that tone of voice, you knew that the argument or the discussion was over, so I said, “Okay, I’ll be the acting chief ranger.” I think it was like four months later that I was hired as the chief ranger after competing for the job. Then, things got even more fun for me because I was responsible for the entire park ranger program, which included the fire program and the backcountry throughout the park, and they’d get actively involved on west side with poaching patrol. I forget all the years that went by, but we moved there in 1988, April of ’88, and transferred out of there in December of 2002. It was about 14 years.

Was mentioning when the family moved there, Connor, Damian and I, just to show you how isolated Stehekin was, Damian would’ve been four-and-a-half. The first time I took him to a grocery store, which was probably a Safeway or something like that with the automatic doors, we were walking up and the automatic doors opened by themselves. He literally sprung back about two feet because he had never seen those before. When the change came down the little tray, you know, it spins around in the bottom, your pennies and your nickels from your grocery store bill that you’re supposed to pick up—and, oh, conveniently there’s a donation box for a charity right next to the tray—money came down that tray and it was right at his nose level and he let out a yelp. The cashier looked at him and he looked at me and I said, “He doesn’t get out much, we’re not from around here.” Something like that.

TM: So, you moved to the east side of Olympic and were the district ranger there. When you were the acting, did you stay in the same housing? Then when you went back to be the district ranger were you based out of the same place for that time?

CS: Yeah. Headquarters for the Olympic National Park is in Port Angeles, Washington. When we transferred to Olympic National Park, it was the first park I had ever worked at that did not have required occupancy for everyone. So for the first time, at 38 years of age roughly, we had to either rent or buy a house. Since we were stationed in the Port Angeles area, many of the rangers on the east side lived in the Port Angeles area, the town. Actually, we ended up staying with Richard Hansen in his Victorian home for about a month until we found a place. That was also at a time that my wife was pregnant with our second child, which had to be aborted after six months because of environmental poisoning, which amazed us because she lived in Stehekin. There weren’t that many incidents of environmental poisoning, but what the epidemiologist told us was that we had probably driven through a road or orchard being sprayed in eastern Washington and just ingesting that amount of air was enough to cause the damage to the fetus. Which both of us found incredibly unlikely because we just didn’t go out that much out of Stehekin, but there was no other explanation that the epidemiologist could give us. She didn’t go poking around in old orchard barns, where there’s probably chemicals from 40/50 years ago, or any of that. During that time, we live birthed a child that breathed for about 15 seconds. So, not only were we at a new location, we had just lost a child, we were looking for a house, I had a new job.

Anyway, we ended up going and looking at a house before we had gotten the word about the baby. We decided that a three-bedroom house was too small, so we didn’t make an offer. This is an interesting story. Then we had to do the live birth abortion, whatever it’s called. I guess it’s not an abortion. We did a live birth, but it was induced labor and they knew that the child was not going to live. So, we were talking about this house and said, “You know, now that we’re only going to have one kid, that house

would be just right.” Well, I had gone and looked at it and Connor hadn’t gone and looked at it. I said, “Okay, let’s go back and look at the house.” We got our real estate agent and drove over to Rog and Verna’s house. Verna was from Vancouver, Canada and Rog was American. They had had this house built by Verna’s brother, probably in the 1980s. It had a beautiful garden in the back with about 14 fruit trees. The master bedroom was about six feet longer and wider than most master bedrooms because the brother had figured out a way, at no increased expense, to build a larger master bedroom. Connor walked into that bedroom and looked out the large picture window overlooking the orchard and the garden and she said, “Does the backyard come with this?” I said, “Yep.” She said, “Let’s buy it.” Well, we had walked in and there was a signed offer laying on the counter for \$500 less than full offer. We come back and take a little more look, said, “We’re very interested in the house.” Rog said, “Well, let’s just talk now,” and Verna said, “Connor, come on let me show you the backyard.” We sat down at the kitchen table; and Rog was a World War II vet. There was a mill in town owned by the Japanese. The person that was offering to buy the house was in management and was transferring into the town, and was Japanese. Rog said, “Curt, the person that made an offer on this house made an offer on my house, not my home. I want you to buy this house. You make me an offer and sharpen your pencil.” “Okay, well, I’m going to offer you \$99,500, that’s what you’re asking for it.” About that time, Verna and Connor came back in. Verna said, “So how’s it going, Rog?” He said, “Well, I was hoping to get a hundred thousand and they’re only offering \$99,500.” Verna says, “Oh, I think that’s enough money.” Rog stuck out his hand, and that was the deal. Then he told me, “I don’t like Japs.” He had spent years in the Pacific and he did not want to sell his house in 1988 to a Japanese person. World War II vets hung onto stuff a long time. He was a nice man, he just had that particular bias. In fact, they were going to take a week-long vacation after we closed the deal. They had a little dog and they didn’t know what to do with the dog. I suggested, well, how about if we just take care of your house? We’ll live here and get out of Richard Hansen’s hair. They agreed to it. Their kids, a daughter and a son, both thought they were crazy to be letting someone who was going to buy your house live in it with no guarantee, you don’t really know them, had a couple cups of coffee. So, we did and stayed there for a week. Took care of the place, took care of the garden. When Rog and Verna moved out, they left all of the gardening gear. Including a Rototiller. They said, “You just have that. I know you’ll take care of the place.” So anyway, that was our first house and required occupancy became a thing of the past as far as my career was concerned. When I became acting chief ranger, I just stayed in the same house because it was literally a four-minute drive to park headquarters. Of course, at that time, in Port Angeles, it was no more than a 15-minute drive to anyplace in town. That’s changed, but not by much. I was in Port Angeles a couple years ago, it certainly looks like a failing mill town. I’m sure that if anybody listens to this tape and they live there, they’ll be trying to get my address and write me hate mail because it’s a beautiful town, beautiful views. It’s right on the Straits of Juan de Fuca. Its 18 miles across the strait to Victoria on Vancouver Island, which is a gorgeous island. We lived there until 2002.

TM: And the schooling for Cubby, just thinking about that versus Stehekin, I would assume it was quite the step up?

CS: Well, when we moved he was four-and-a-half so he had not actually attended the school in Stehekin, the one-room schoolhouse with eight or twelve kids. He went to a regular elementary school. I don’t know how many kids were there, 400. Just guessing. Still a small enough town that they were on first name basis with all the teachers. He did Montessori halfway between Port Angeles and Sequim for a year. Then he went to first grade, or kindergarten. I guess he went to kindergarten. Had his twelve years of schooling and graduated from high school in Port Angeles I think in 2002. Interesting times. We’re off track from Park Service.

TM: Well, I was just thinking about the issues now that you're having to deal with as a district ranger versus a chief ranger. Now you're seeing it all, it seems like; resource protection issues, personnel issues, as you mentioned concession employees' issues, backcountry issues. Did you learn to appreciate one job more than another? Was it easier to be a district ranger or did you really appreciate the challenges that came with the chief ranger job?

CS: I would say... People always ask me, what's your favorite park? My answer is, whatever park I'm at because they're all beautiful. They all have their issues, but they all have their grandeur. I'd say the same thing about every job that I was fortunate to have. I had excellent supervisors, I had excellent people working for me. It just became on a grander scale. The stuff that I witnessed... Marv Jensen having a hand in the area management plan; and John Reynolds having to handle with the writing of the firewood management plan and gravel extraction plan; trapping issues; and interactions with the county commissioners and congressman, and Bob Chandler, too; and Maureen Finnerty dealing with the issues. As I became chief ranger, I was sitting in the offices with the superintendent when these meetings or conversations were going on, so I developed a much greater appreciation for what they had to deal with. I think it's the same... You start out as a seasonal ranger, and you're out there having a good time. The district rangers sending out memos castigating the seasonal backcountry rangers at Rocky Mountain National Park for their liberal ways. You don't really understand where the guy is coming from. Then you end up working in Stehekin in the same place that he worked. He was there 16 years before I was and put up with a lot more of the issues and were a lot more strident at the time. Then you become the chief ranger, and now you're dealing with all the other chiefs in resources, and interpretation, and administration, and maintenance and you start to develop an appreciation for how complex all of their jobs are. You start sitting down in budget meetings and you start thinking maybe I've got enough of the pot. Maybe I don't need to do this particular program right now. Maybe the maintenance guys need this extra \$500,000. They have just been all very rewarding experiences.

TM: Yeah, it seems like, at that point as the chief ranger, you're flying at 30,000 feet, you get to see the whole operation instead of just okay, I'm going on patrol today and this is what I'm going to see, which is a small area. Nice area, needs protection, but you certainly don't get the bigger picture.

CS: Right. And trying to cast that perspective on as the district ranger and the chief ranger to the seasonal and backcountry rangers in training... One of the big things is what do we do with a dog in the backcountry. Well, by that time, I came to realize that dogs in the backcountry are prohibited but you're never going to get rid of all the dogs in the backcountry so just deal with the issue. If the people are cantankerous, and you're a seasonal ranger and you are not commissioned, all you do is make contact and try and make a friend. Call it in and maybe somebody that is commissioned will meet them at the trailhead. It's fun to look back and think about how adamant we were about some things. In the big scheme of things, a guy making an illegal river trip down the Grand Canyon wasn't really that big a deal from 30,000 feet or 60,000 feet. Certainly not from Congress and the Senate when they've got lobbyists and constituents visiting them in Washington, DC.

TM: How was Connor handling all this?

CS: She handled it very well in Stehekin, and, I think I mentioned, the community itself was very respectful of Connor and Cubby. They were respectful of me as well, up until Eddie showed up. But, they had their own points of view. Connor was learning to weave and all kinds of things, and she was a craftsperson. She's a master at leatherwork and created all kinds of beautiful costumes for various women in the valley. Then when she got to Port Angeles, it was actually a community of...how many

people were there, 15,000? She pursued her own interests. Ended up becoming a massage therapist, opened her own business in downtown Port Angeles. She was very involved in the women's drum circle. She was handling it very well, and Cubby was having a great time until he hit high school.

TM: What happened there?

CS: In my opinion, what happened there is his testosterone didn't set in until one or two years after everybody else's testosterone set in. He had been raised to be respectful and kind, and he ran into a lot of boys that were not respectful and were not kind, so he would droop. He ended up with three very good friends, though, which were computer geeks. That's how they spent their time. Although I wanted to be a professional baseball player, I think I may have passed some of that perceived failure off on my son because I became an avid Little League dad. Not the kind of dad that sits in the stands and yells at the umpires, or yells at the kids, which is just amazing to me. I was assistant coach for a couple years then after he went from Little League to Junior Babe Ruth, I became a coach of the Little League team. There were a couple of old codgers, we'll call them, whose names will come to me. One of them had actually played on a traveling minor league team in the 40s trying to get into pros. These guys knew baseball. There's a transition from Little League to Junior Babe Ruth; you can lead off instead of having your foot on the bag until the ball is pitched; you can slide headfirst; you're expected to turn double plays. They would put together a training session for the twelve-year-olds coming out of Little League going into Junior Babe Ruth every spring. Mr. Mudd was coaching everybody about leading off at one of these sessions which I had dropped Cubby/Damien off at. You're supposed to lead off with your right foot striding out and close up, you don't hop off the base. First time Cubby went out there and demonstrated how he was going to lead off, he hopped off the base. Mr. Mudd walked over to him and said very sternly, "Young man, are you listening to me?" And, of course, here's this old codger that just scared the hell out of a thirteen-year-old. He told me later, "I said yes sir." He said, 'Get back on the base and do it right.' So he did it, about three times. "Okay, I don't want to ever see you hopping off the bag." "Yes sir." I picked him up from practice and he gets in the car and the first thing he says is, "Dad, there's no way. I can't be on Mr. Mudd's team. He's terrible." "Okay, what happened?" So, he told me. Well, sure enough, Mr. Mudd drafted him and Cubby played the outfield.

I mentioned testosterone. He needed twelve boys to perform in an all-star team when they were 13 years old; 13, 14, and 15. They only had eight or nine so they called me up and said, "Would Cubby be interested in playing on the all-star team?" I said, "Yeah, I think he would. I'll go ask him." "Hey Cub, do you want to play on the all-star team?" "What's an all-star team?" "Yeah, sure, I can do that." So, he was placed on the all-star team. Some of the kids that he ran into later in high school were on that team. A couple of them had run-ins with the law when they were 18/19. Anyway, that Junior Babe Ruth team from Port Angeles, Washington, 1986 I guess it was, went to the World Series and finished fourth in the nation. The next two years, they always went to at least state and I think twice they went to regionals and that's as far as they got. So, he played baseball, and he was not in the starting lineup. I look back on it now, thinking, you know what, after that first year, I could tell that he wasn't really having a good time. I think it was more his dad wanting him to be on a baseball team. That's a lesson that I learned in hindsight.

The other part about that is after I coached Little League, I became a Little League umpire. After he finished Junior Babe Ruth, I became the chief umpire for Junior Babe Ruth and I had to recruit kids to be umpires. They got paid five dollars a game. I had sent myself to umpire school and I made a couple of friends there and invited them up for two successive years. We put on a one-day umpire school for high school baseball players. That's who we recruited. Cubby became an umpire. One of my happiest Father's

Day day, he and I umpired two baseball games together. I took home plate on the first game, and he took home plate on the second game. The dads were yelling at the kids, the dads were yelling at the umps. I just looked at Cubby and said, "You know, that's a pretty good Father's Day where I can be out here on a baseball field with you. We're umpiring, and that idiot in the stand is yelling at you." He said, "Yeah, just let it go, dad." I think one of the reasons that many people, not just rangers, tend to stay at Olympic National Park for a long time is half of you are living in the Port Angeles area and there's actually a town there. You don't have to drive an hour to get to the hospital to birth your child, or drive an hour to get to the grocery store, or send a blank check in the mail to Safeway to get your groceries delivered on a boat. It balances out. So, that was Port Angeles.

TM: Nice. I think it would help with community buy-in that you are living in the town. Your wife is actively engaged in the community. It kind of helps make Park Service employees more integral parts of the community, and it helps the community understand more about the Park Service and how that works.

CS: Yeah. You become a known entity, rather than an authority. Of course, there were other communities on the west side that didn't feel that way about Park Service folks. There were actually stores and bars that Forest Service employees, and by association Park Service employees, would not be served. We just didn't go into those stores. There were certain bars that you did not go to. Those were rougher days. Times are changing.

TM: What else do you remember about Olympic? Some of the things that you did that you look back on now and were really glad that you did them? Program development or certain issues that came up and how you handled those?

CS: I'm really glad that we created a strong illegal hunting and anti-poaching program on the west side of the park. I had some very dedicated rangers. We were able to stop them in the season longer into the fall. That was one of them. I think I ended up getting more funding for the west side programs. It's pretty standard: if headquarters is on the east side, then the west side is not going to get the attention; if headquarters is on the north side, then the south side's not going to get the attention. That's where the administration is, that's where they're focused. When it takes two and a half hours to get out to your northwest-most subdistrict, you don't get out there very much. Two other things that I'm proud of. I'm proud to have hired, I think the first...no, it would've been the second...permanent female ranger at Olympic, Sannie Lustig, put her on the west side.

Not sure that pride is the right term, at least fortitude, my fee collection manager came to me when I was chief ranger and told me that she thought somebody was stealing from the campground deposit boxes where you fill out your little envelope and put your money in there. So we did a two-month surveillance program and ended up putting together enough information that the Elwha subdistrict ranger was cited into court. We stripped him of his legal authorities and told him he was on administrative leave while we concluded the investigation. He resigned two days later. It took about six months, but we were able to put him in jail for eight months. Sitting in the courtroom with our prosecutor/law enforcement officer, his legal clerk, Kim, who later became superintendent of Glacier I think, and a couple other district rangers hearing the judge just lambast this former park ranger and call him out as being a cheat and betraying his fellow rangers. It was a rewarding case and I got calls from throughout the country from other rangers thanking me for pursuing it rather than just allowing the person to resign, which had happened for the past 20 years on different occasions that they knew about, that I didn't know about. Relationship with the resource management unit. I think the

relationship with the maintenance unit. When I transferred to Joshua Tree after Olympic as the superintendent, the first thing I called all the staff together and told them I come from the ranger ranks, but every division here is of legal importance. You might have a patrol car, but you can't drive it on the roads if the roads aren't maintained and none of us would be working here if we weren't getting paid, so administration's kind of important too. I think it probably started in Stehekin with John Reynolds and John Jarvis, but the recognition came at Olympic that all of them are integral parts to making the park run. As a buck ranger, you're up there in the clouds, hiking down the trail, thinking you're the coolest thing on Earth. Firefighters and trail dogs working out there, they're working just as hard as you are.

TM: Right. The packers and the maintenance guys that are working to clean out the roto-rooter sewer machine, everybody.

CS: Basically, Rocky, Olympic, Joshua Tree...basically you're a town. The maintenance workers are the water district or the electrical company, or whatever. You're basically running a town that has a bunch of transients.

TM: Yeah, especially with the seasonals that are coming and going, and short-term hires...

CS: I'm talking about the tourists who... "Oh, stayed for three days, did you? Okay, I'm going to have to... after you." It was a cumulative impact. I think Olympic, maybe the proudest thing I could say is I realize that the whole park unit, all of the employees, are integral to making things work.

TM: Well, maybe this a good place to wrap up this part of the interview. We'll pick up Olympic and then at one point you're going to head to Joshua Tree. Is that how that's going to go?

CS: Yeah, for the final hurrah.

TM: Does that sound like a plan, where we're at here?

CS: Yeah. Wrap it up. I don't have much else to add about Olympic but it sure was a good time.

TM: I just want to make sure we don't leave Olympic too fast cause you were there, it sounds like, twelve years. That's the longest in your career that you stayed in any one park, is that right?

CS: Yeah. There was lots of other stuff. I'm walking down the hall to look at the calendar here and thinking, you know, I think I got four rangers honorary awards from the director of the Park Service for their bravery during that time. Thinking back on it just indicates the dedication that these folks have.

TM: Alright, we'll pick that thread up next time. With that, this'll conclude Part 8 Grand Canyon oral history interview with Curt Sauer. Today is October 19, 2020. My name is Tom Martin. Curt, thank you so very much.

CS: You betcha.