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**Interviewees:** Pat Grediagin (PG)

**Interviewer:** Tom Martin (TM)

**Subject:** Pat recounts time while river district ranger at Dinosaur National Monument 1998-2001

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TM: Today is Monday, December 14, 2020. This is Part 8 of a Grand Canyon oral history interview with Pat Grediagin. My name is Tom Martin. Good evening, Pat. How are you today?

PG: I'm doing well. Thank you.

TM: Great. Well, Pat, may we have your permission to record this oral history over the telephone?

PG: Yes.

TM: Thank you. In Part 7, you talked about getting a job as a chief river ranger at Dinosaur National Monument, in the spring/early summer of 1998. And you talked a little bit about how different Dinosaur was from Big Bend as far as kind of everybody sort of being an isolated, not a lot of camaraderie, I guess, amongst the people that worked there, like happened at Big Bend.

PG: Yeah, that's right.

TM: So we kind of covered that ground. I wondered if you could describe for me your take on the rivers there in Dinosaur National Monument: the Yampa, and the Gates of Lodore, and Split Mountain.

PG: Sure. Well, I'll give you a real brief description of both of those rivers, and then a description of my job a little bit more, and then some of the trips that I did. Lodore is the name of the canyon that the Green River flows through after it exits Flaming Gorge Dam upstream—I don't know what, 40 miles, something like that, maybe 50—so it's dam controlled. The Yampa River comes out of Colorado and is wild going through the park and it joins the Green River in the middle of Dinosaur. From there downstream, it's all the Green River which ultimately goes into Canyonlands where I had worked previously in the 80s. The dam controls the flow of Lodore, so there's always a dam-controlled flow—sometimes it's low, but there's always that flow—whereas the Yampa goes up with the spring runoff out of the mountains, peaking usually in late May or early June—I think it might be more common in June—then it drops down to where, in July, it becomes essentially too low to run. The park had lotteries for getting permits to run either of those sections. Usually people would continue on those trips on down the Green through Split Mountain and take out downstream at the Split Mountain takeout, which was over near the quarry area. So, by middle of July, very few people were on the Yampa because essentially it was not enough water to run rafts down, and raft trips. One time I did do a low water trip, after...well, I don't know what, it must have been in July sometime, but the water was too low for rafts. A friend and

I...she was a volunteer and accompanied on a patrol. I took a canoe and just canoed down it, and she had... I don't know if she had an inflatable kayak, I can't remember. But it was real interesting to me to go down and see that it could be a pleasant enough river trip at low water, and then to see what the differences were when you see Warm Springs Rapid, which is the largest one, with the low water.

TM: What was that low... Well, maybe, I don't know if you're going to talk about it later, but I'll definitely want to know more about that low water trip, because that is becoming much more popular these days.

PG: Yeah, a little light bulb went off in my head at that time, as also a private... I liked to go on river trips on my own back then, I still like to, and I always thought, Well yeah, that's a great way to be able to go down the Yampa River after the official season has closed, the park is no longer regulating, or there's not a lottery to get permits to launch. You still would need to get a permit, but you're not competing with so many people because most people hadn't been interested in doing those low water trips at that time. Just to finish the description of that trip, we took out at Echo Park because we weren't ready to go through Split Mountain which would have more volume of water in it because of the water the Green River contributed, and I just wasn't ready to go through that in a canoe. So we took out at Echo Park, which is just where the two rivers come together and the road comes down at that point.

TM: Right. But I suppose you could have gone through Whirlpool Canyon and down to Browns Park? No, it's not Browns Park. What's the name of...?

PG: Rainbow, Rainbow...Island, Island Park.

TM: Island Park, thank you. Which is right at the top of Split Mountain, and take out there.

PG: Right. Yeah, that would have been doable, or it would be doable for private boaters who were not commercial or not government to go down and do that kind of trip on low water.

TM: Yeah, I was just thinking about a canoe. What could a canoe handle comfortably if you didn't want to do Split Mountain, because, you know, it's a little sportier in there. Certainly, getting to Island Park would be a wonderful little...

PG: I think it would be a great...

TM: ...summer, late summer/early fall trip.

PG: Yeah, I've thought about doing that again some time, but I haven't. I think that there's water that gets drawn out of the Yampa for irrigation. I don't know if there might be a point to which it gets to be, you know, unrunnable in a canoe. I could see that it potentially could. I don't remember that; I think it was late in my tenure. Well, I was at Dinosaur for three years, and I think it was towards the end of that that I did this canoe trip but I can't off the top of my head remember. So anyway, there's possibilities for doing that. I'm not sure you could just go any old time, but especially after irrigation season ended oftentimes river volumes will go back up again once the irrigators are not taking water out.

TM: Right, before the ice comes. And of course the whole thing, the whole river, freezes over solid in the winter; but in the fall, yeah.

PG: Yeah. So I was in charge of the river ranger patrols. Each of the parks that I'd worked in where I had rivers had different seasons because of their location, north and south. So in Big Bend, there was a lot of early spring and into the late fall kinds of trips on the shoulder seasons. And in Dinosaur, it was mostly just a May, June, July, August, September through the Lodore, kind of season. It was your classic summer river running season, and that's where we would hire. Two river seasonals worked on the river. So I did more supervising than river rangers myself there. I supervised the two river rangers who did the patrols. Then we had rangers stationed at the put-in at Deer Lodge where people would put in to run the Yampa and at Lodore, which is where people would put in to run through Lodore Canyon. Then we had a ranger station at Echo Park, which is right near where those two rivers come together. And then downstream from there, essentially the part that was in the Utah part of the park... All that I've described was in the Colorado side. The park straddles the Utah and Colorado boundary, with parts of the park on both sides and downstream... Actually, I think it's technically a monument still, or did it get switched to a park?

TM: Still a monument.

PG: It's still a monument, right. So I used the term park, technically incorrectly. It was a national monument and still is. But both sides of the monument... On the Utah side was another district ranger who supervised the seasonals that worked both in the campground near the quarry, but she also had... And those rangers would sometimes go to the takeout for the river trips and just make sure people were orderly about using the ramp space, and they would swing by up at the launch points for... You could just do a day trip through Split Mountain. So those rangers handled that physical end of the river trips because that was over in the Utah side and they could access it from where they lived.

TM: Okay, that makes sense. From Vernal, basically.

PG: Right. From Jensen and Vernal side, yeah. There was park housing over there near the quarry. There was some park housing near the headquarters just outside of Dinosaur, but not that much. So there wasn't as much of a staff on that side, as I remember. So we were busy with river operations during those... I think we did usually one patrol in April, one or two in May, and then through the summer, and I can't remember if we went into October or not. But when all the seasonals were gone, because the summer season was over for the busy river use, then that pretty much just left me to be doing patrols through the Colorado side of the park. I wouldn't do river patrols, but I would do vehicle patrols into the backcountry on the Colorado side. There's a road that goes along the Yampa Bench, up above the Yampa River itself. There was a private landowner who had a lease to run cows inside the park that was grandfathered in when the monument was, I think, expanded from the small quarry where it started from. So we had some cows that were grazing on monument lands. Then if you went sort of in that wedge of land that's between the Yampa and Lodore, kind of on the northeast aspect of the monument, there wasn't good access in there. But there was a fire tower/a lookout there called Zenobia. And there was some access into some grasslands that elk would graze in the park there. I think that's where there was a local who illegally took hunters into the park before I ever got there—it might have been 10 years before, maybe five years before—and he got busted for doing that by Fish and Wildlife Service who somehow got wind of this and had an undercover guy go in just posing as a hunter. He videotaped all these people shooting in the park, so I knew that this guy was still living out in that corner of the park and was no friend of the park. So I would patrol out there, as well as the Yampa Bench. There was land masses that were in my portion of the park and there was really no one else in the winter months to be doing any of that patrolling, so I did which was kind of an interesting change of pace from being focused on the river and the river use.

TM: Gorgeous country out there.

PG: It was gorgeous, yeah. It was a great chance to see some country that most people never get to see. Dinosaur had some of the most beautiful landscapes. Of course, it's probably mostly known to most people for the dinosaur quarry, which is on the western side of the park in the Utah part, where they have a lot of fossils that are exhibited in place in the cliffs where they were partially uncovered. But the whole Colorado part was just a great, wild western landscape with beautiful rivers going through it and low visitation in general. So it was a real treat to be working there.

TM: Hey, Pat, this Zonoba Lookout Tower -- is that Z-O-N-O-B-A?

PG: It's Zenobia, and so I think it's Z-E-N-O-B-I-A, Zenobia.

TM: Z-E-N-O-B-I-A, okay. Do you know the mountain range that that area is? Is that the Jewel Mountains or is there a name for them out there?

PG: I don't really remember what they might have been called. There is some high country there. I know that there was an old, I think it was called like the Horsethief Trail, or something like that. There's some history from the late 80s of cattle ranching up in Browns Park. Now I'm talking from memory here...

TM: In the 1880s?

PG: In the 1880s. The Bassetts were up there and I think Butch Cassidy and his gang came through there. There supposedly was a route that came along the east side of Lodore, in that high country where Zenobia Peak is, and dropped down into and crossed the Yampa River maybe within a couple miles of the confluence, as I remember. I can't remember exactly where it supposedly came down. And then they would have gone, I think into...well, maybe they came up onto the bench out of one of those side canyons down in there; maybe they went to Echo Park, I can't remember, but then they could exit down towards Jensen. One of the Bassett daughters ended up living in a cabin there, which is now in the monument. It was Josie. I don't know if you remember Josie's cabin there at the end of the road. If you're going to the Dinosaur Quarry, you can continue driving, you end up at a cabin there, and that was Josie Bassett's cabin. She's a part of that Bassett family that had been up in Browns Park. Anyway, there's just a lot of western history that was in that area. I think there was a route of travel, from what I remember hearing, through that Zenobia Peak area, but I don't remember what that highland was called, other than that one peak.

TM: I also wanted to ask, I may be jumping ahead a little bit, but there was a ranger, he might have been a seasonal ranger, named Bill Ott. Does that name ring a bell?

PG: Yeah. No, you know what, I knew a Marty Ott, and when you said Bill Ott, my brain was trying to put it together. But I don't. I wonder if I ever... Do remember what time he was there? I don't know him well, but I'm trying to think...

TM: I don't and he's passed away now. But he fixed up the little sadiron boat there, the cataract boat, and took it on patrols as an interpretive talk-about piece for the Hallacy's and Reynolds that were doing boating in there in the 50s, commercial boating. It's in the auditorium there in the visitor center now; not at the quarry, but over at the headquarters area.

PG: Yeah, I remember the boat now, but I don't... Yeah, I don't remember him. That might have been probably before my time there.

TM: That would make sense, okay. I was just thinking wait a minute, I should ask you about Bill Ott.

PG: Yeah, I don't know him.

TM: But yeah, beautiful landscape. So in the winter you would be patrolling. Were you basically the only...

PG: Yes!

TM: ...law enforcement ranger for the Colorado side of the entire monument?

PG: Yes! Yes, in the winter I was. There was the chief ranger, Dave Panabaker, I think. His office was on the Colorado side. So in theory, he was but he didn't do patrols. He was somebody I could say, Dave, I need some help and two hours later he'd show up, that kind of thing. It was a big country. But we also had relationships with the county sheriff. They would have been miles away, too. You just had to keep in mind that there really wasn't anybody else around and you needed to... First of all, I didn't really see that many people; although the potential was there for hunters to be in the park or for me to catch up with this guy that had illegally hunted in the park. And, indeed, I did catch up with him one spring day, maybe in March, in that access area where you might go in there to Zenobia, kind of the northeast face, coming in from that direction of the monument. The elk would shed their antlers inside the monument and it was illegal to go gather them up, but some people would gather them because they could sell them for, I don't know, \$10 or \$15 a pound maybe, something like that, for ultimate use, I think, in the Chinese medicine market. So they would go in and haul out antlers to sell. We knew that that was possibly going on.

So I was over in that corner at one point and kind of just checking things out and I saw a car parked, where you would park a car or a truck to walk into these grasslands where the elk would be. I wish I could remember the name of that specific part of the park, but I can't. So I thought, Ooooooh! Maybe I knew it was his truck or something. I might have radioed and read the plate or something like that, but I just became instantly suspicious that somebody was in there picking up antlers. I remember just being very filled with adrenaline because I was like, Oh my God, I'm way out here. This could be somebody that's doing something illegal, and I'm by myself, and how am I going to handle this. I started following the route in on foot, which was an old road. I don't know if there was tracks or not, and like in partial snow left over, but I was going in to where I saw these people, or this person or people, would be. I had a handheld radio. The radio in my truck was strong enough to get out to contact dispatch, but the handheld wasn't strong enough and I knew that I was not really in a good position to be confronting someone, so I was very cautious going down this road. I'd be like stopping and peeking around the corner before I went ahead because I didn't want to suddenly come upon them and not know what was happening. I wanted to be in control of... I wanted to know when I was approaching them, not be surprised by it, so I was very cautious going in. Then I heard these voices coming towards me. I remember going off into the side and hiding, you know, behind some trees and stuff. Two people were walking out with antlers strapped to their backpacks. It was both like, YES, I caught 'em! But, okay, now what am I gonna do with..., you know, how am I going to handle this kind of moment. I thought about it, and I thought I'm just gonna follow them back discreetly because at least if I get near my truck, I have a

radio there that I can radio out with. And also, the antlers are evidence and if I confront them here, then I have to haul them out because now I've taken possession of the evidence and I didn't want to haul them all out. So, I just kind of stayed back behind them and followed them out, and would peek around the corners, you know, to make sure they were still ahead of me, hadn't stopped for some reason that I was gonna... And honestly, it reminded me a little bit of being a kid, when you're kind of playing cops and robbers when you're a kid and you're hiding behind the tree and peeking around the corner to see if they can see ya. It was it was kind of fun in a way, but it was also...

TM: But you're still outnumbered and you radio doesn't work. And so, okay, I'm like then what did you do?

PG: Yeah, well, I just trailed them out and when we got to the vehicles I confronted them.

TM: They must have seen your vehicle there.

PG: They must have seen it, right. When they broke out to the zone where they were approaching the vehicles, they must have seen it and gone, "Oh boy." I don't have a clear memory of exactly what happened but it was okay. I got on my... I didn't say you're under arrest. What I did was give them a citation and take their antlers. I said, "I'm gonna cite you for picking up antlers in the park." I got on my radio, I made contact with dispatch—which I don't remember if that would have been a sheriff's patrol dispatch, or if there was somebody in our office that was monitoring the radios—but I got a hold of someone, said this is what I'm doing, this is where I'm at. I issued them a citation, I took their antlers. And they didn't put up a fuss. They were caught and they weren't happy about it, but they didn't like attack me or anything like that. So I took their antlers, I gave them citations to... It was called "mandatory citations", they have to show up in court rather than just like, you've got to pay 20 bucks because you got a citation for this or that, it was you have to go to court. A judge is going to hear the case and then the judge will decide what you're going to get fined. So it was a way to get them into court without arresting them or taking them to jail, which was...

TM: Very clever.

PG: That was, yeah. So that's what happened and they went away. I went back to headquarters and my boss was so excited, like, Oh, my God, you got 'em, and you got the antlers! And we're gonna make a great case out of this. So we prepared our story and our evidence and went to a magistrate court. They hear cases that are misdemeanors, not felonies. It's more of a local court – it's a federal court, but it was a magistrate judge. I can't remember what the description is.

TM: Right. Grand Canyon has the same. A circuit judge, basically, that comes out and hears cases and holds court, and then, you know, heads out and does the rounds. Yeah.

PG: Yeah. I think that they had a... I can't remember where the court was, it might have been in Craig, Colorado, but wherever it was, on the appointed day, which the court pretty much sets, I think, we went to court. They showed up and we presented our evidence. They got fined like \$700, something that was a little bit of a sting. But the problem was, this is the same guy. I mean, I always felt like he got away with it in a way because this is the same guy that had been illegally hunting in the park and been busted for it five or eight years earlier. So he's obviously someone who doesn't respect the rules regarding use of the park and was out there again taking advantage of the distance and the fact that it was a very

unvisited part of the park to just do whatever he felt like doing in the park. He did have to pay a fine, but it was a little disappointing.

TM: Gosh, you'd think at that point, having illegally hunted and then come back to do this, that he would get...

PG: That he would be banned from the park or something.

TM: Yeah, for five years or some sort of time period. You know, that's the next thing to do is say, Sorry, you can't come here anymore.

PG: Right. Now, here's a... I don't remember who the magistrate judge was, but I will just say, this is western Colorado, northwestern Colorado, where the local sentiment... It's a ranching/hunting community and in the whole community's eyes, the whole corner of the state's eyes, that's no big deal picking up some antlers. So it's just a reflection of what the local sentiment was, I believe. But, anyway, that's the way that ended. Most of the time I didn't really have... That's the only case I can remember of catching someone doing something during those patrols. I would maybe talk to people now and then and just be out there. So part of it is that local word is that the rangers are watching and rangers are...

TM: Just a presence, yeah.

PG: Yeah, a presence. So, yeah, that was what I would do in the winters, and in the summers do the hiring, the supervising, the making sure that the river patrols got scheduled, and following up on whatever they might find. I did some patrols. Oftentimes it was more special patrols. Like we had a interagency law enforcement patrol that went down, where the sheriff's department and state parks had some people from upstream somewhere, and the Park Service, and I don't know who else, maybe Fish and Game or something, all got together and went on a river trip together. That was part of that getting to know each other and making sure we could work together; making those contacts and establishing that communications with other people. So I would do that. I think we had a trip with outfitters, I can't remember very well. I would go on that. We had a great botanist named Tamara Naumann who was pulling tamarisk out along the river corridor. She worked hard to remove tons of tamarisk. She got a lot of volunteers to come in and pull out tamarisk. Over the course of maybe 10 or 15 years of just steadily chipping away at it, a lot of the tamarisk that was choking some of those river campsites was removed by Tamara who worked under the chief of resource management. It was a function of the resource management crew to be working on that. I went out with her on a few patrols.

TM: What else do you remember about her?

PG: She was incredibly hard working. She was very good at grant writing. She would get grants because they didn't give her much of a budget. She was more or less hired on as the botanist in the park both to identify and protect endangered species or threatened species, but also to try and control invasive species. She didn't have much of a budget, but she worked with local people to get a lot of volunteers to come down. She worked cheap and she also got grants to get tools and money to... Yeah, money to get tools, basically. I think she even ended up buying her own riverboats to accommodate volunteers who would go down to pull out the tamarisk. So she was great. I really admired her and liked her.

TM: Yeah, for very good things about her. She was married, I think, to a park interpretive ranger?

PG: Well, her husband's name is Pete and he had a number of different jobs working in the park, but I don't believe that he was primarily interpretation. He would go out... I'm trying to think of the different kinds of things... He was really good at going out in the backcountry and doing things. I think he also worked for the chief of resource management doing some... I can't remember what kinds of projects, but working on some projects. He would get hired for different kinds of jobs. She had the permanent job that continued for years and years and years, and he would pick up different projects. He was very good with backcountry kinds of things, and a smart guy, but I don't think he worked in interpretive... I don't know that he was overly fond of talking to tourists, so I don't think he was an interpreter.

TM: I probably have that wrong. We did interface with him. He was very helpful, very friendly, very knowledgeable. I think he retired then.

PG: Well, Tamara retired a year or two ago, and he probably also retired. I don't know that he had a permanent job. I think he was just on a seasonal basis. Do you remember David Whitman?

TM: No.

PG: Okay. He was the chief of interpretation, who had an interest in river stuff. He was there when I was there, so I thought maybe you had run across him somehow.

TM: Uh-uh. No. When did he leave, do you remember?

PG: No, I don't. I can't remember. I think he was still there when I left, which I left in 2001. I think he was still there then, but I don't remember.

TM: All right. Okay, so in the winter, mostly roving, and then in the summer doing some river trips but mostly kind of coordinating everybody else.

PG: Management and supervising and, yeah, right.

TM: All right. Anything else you remember about those summers or winters?

PG: I mean, some of it just was joyful in the sense of that lonely, out in the west, on your own, early in the morning kind of day where I can remember going across the road... North of headquarters, we'd go up to Harper's Corner Road. You could drive up on the plateau behind headquarters by going north out of the headquarters at Dinosaur. I think it was about 6000 feet, no, it was a little higher up there. I think headquarters is about 6000 feet, so you're probably up at 7000, maybe, feet up on this plateau. You would drive north maybe 20 miles and there was an overlook there. That's also nearby where the road would drop off to go down to the Yampa Bench, or you could continue down from there on down to Echo Park. I would go across that plateau and there might be four inches of snow on the sage there. I saw sage grouse once up there fly out. There was just nobody else around because it'd be January 14<sup>th</sup>, of some year, winter day. I'd be looking around and it'd be gorgeous. I could pick up public radio from three different states. I could get Wyoming, I could get Utah, and I could get Colorado so I had all these different programming options, so I'd just be listening to the radio. Wyoming had some great music. Probably, I'd head out there and drop down onto the Yampa Bench, and then go east along the bench and come out east of the town of Dinosaur on that highway which I forgot—is that 40? Maybe Highway 40, I guess—and then I'd circle. So that might be my whole day where I did that big loop, but it would start by driving north there. It was just nice. I enjoyed it.

TM: Would maintenance plow that road?

PG: Yeah, I think they did, I think they did.

TM: I'm assuming the Yampa Bench road was, you're sort of on your own or did they plow that as well?

PG: Yeah, you were on your own. Sometimes, I can remember, I would chain up on it because it would get mucky. Snow would melt and kind of get down into it. It'd be these stretches of mud and I'd be like, oh, man, I don't want to go all the way back. I'm just gonna... So I put chains on and it was a mess. I don't remember, I don't think I ever got stuck out there so that was good. But there was just nobody else around. There's a certain loneliness that could come from that but there's also a certain sense of really tranquility and peace that can come from just being the only one for miles out there in this beautiful landscape that's really quite natural and that you're responsible for making sure nothing's awry on it. You're just out there and it's kind of cool. I enjoyed that.

TM: Fun. Yeah, it is definitely remote country that's not well visited. It's visited some, but not like some of these other parks.

PG: No, no. The quarry gets a lot of visitation, it's the bulk of the visitation. I don't even know what the percentages would be. But that backcountry on the Colorado side... The river's got, you know, ribbons of visitor use, but outside of those ribbons there is just not a lot of people roaming around. It was pretty nice.

TM: Did you ever get into the country east of the monument's Yampa arm, into a place called Cross Mountain?

PG: No. I remember driving by the outlet of it, I think. As we would approach into Deer Park, I think you drive by. I remember it was like Class IV, maybe Class V?

TM: It's challenging in there, yes.

PG: Yeah, and I never did it. Did you do it?

TM: No, no, no. You know, the history of people getting in trouble in there—and succeeding in there—actually, way back. The first people to run it really early on, surprising they made it. It's very technical, very challenging, really gorgeous, gorgeous. The river just cuts right through this mountain, just kind of like Split Mountain only rapids are more technical and nonstop. But I just wondered if you got over that way.

PG: No, I never got into there. I think it was I just thought, yep, that's beyond what I can comfortably feel good about doing, so I didn't.

TM: Do you remember who the Lodore ranger was when you were there?

PG: No, I don't remember the Lodore ranger; but we had seasonals and it was nobody that you would know, I don't think. One of them... I can remember we had a fella that we hired there and he was just so ill-... He was not a good fit up there. I think for some reason, maybe he had... When you have people

who are veterans, they get extra points and sometimes you hire them because on your listing of available people for you to hire, you have to use objective points and you have to consider the top two candidates. I don't know why we ended up hiring him. It could be that he was on the top of the list. He wasn't really well qualified to be there but nevertheless, we hired him. He both wasn't a boater, but he also wasn't real good with people. I mean, he was okay, but he was just kind of awkward. He would be talking to boaters about... Because his job was to talk to boaters and make sure that they had a permit, and make sure that they had the required equipment. There's a little campground there, and make sure that, you know, everything was okay up there. He just was not a good... He was the wrong person to be there. I think he only lasted maybe part of the season, or a little bit... Maybe the whole season but he probably didn't come back the next year. So I think we had some seasonals. The first summer there might have been someone who'd been there for a few years, but I can't remember who that would have been. It's only this guy that was not a good fit that stands out in my mind.

TM: Yeah, this is really interesting. People that interface with river runners, it's interesting... Think of park visitors who might come to the quarry for a few hours, take a tour maybe, and that's it. But the river people, like the backpacking people, spend 24 hours a day in the park, or the monument, and they get to know the resource in a different way than the two hour visitor to Grand Canyon National Park—millions of them every year. And they, you know, they do need to interface with the Park Service at a put-in where equipment is checked, and then at the takeout where there's oftentimes a ramp ranger trying to make sure that people don't spend too long out on the ramp derigging their boats. That relationship is very important. So it's, you got to have the right people there.

PG: Yes. And sadly, it often is difficult to get people. I mean, ideally you would have people who were river runners doing that because they would know exactly...they would talk the language, they would know the gear, they would know... They would be knowledgeable about what the river runners were going to be doing. But there is very few people who are river runners who want to stand around a ramp all day, five days a week. They want to be on the river.

TM: Swatting biting deer flies and mosquitoes, yeah!

PG: So what you get is people at seasonal jobs. People who want to be working in a park, but they might not have the background that is best suited for that. But they can be a body, they can be a presence, they can be a set of eyes. Some pick up on things more so or have a personality that can interface well despite them knowing less about what's going on than that visitor at the park, or the river rafter who knows more about the river stuff than the ranger does. That was not uncommon at all and it was always a difficult thing to try to resolve. But there was no good resolution because you get a list of candidates that have applied for seasonal jobs at the park. You have to pick the people who are rated out the highest on it by whatever merits, the testing, whatever it was, that was used to come up with these lists. And you would get veterans. I appreciate giving veterans opportunities because they have served for their country, and giving them a chance to get a paying job. That's great. But oftentimes they were among the ones that weren't knowledgeable about the job at hand. It wasn't just the veterans, there was other people who would apply and you just had to hire someone that was not the best-suited person because they had higher numbers on the list.

We also would have volunteers. The Park Service is highly dependent on volunteers all over the Park Service for work getting done. Whether it's in campgrounds with campground volunteers, at front desks with front desk volunteers, or like the takeout ramp at the bottom of Split Mountain where boaters take out. Oftentimes, that's a volunteer who is working in the campground nearby maybe, and spends a few

hours in the afternoon or the morning, whenever people are clogging up the ramp, trying to make some order and make sure there's room for everybody. They aren't river people, they're just helping. I can remember a friend of mine... I was on a private trip once and he got cranky with the volunteer who was trying to put order into this mass of people who are trying to take out. And I'm like, he's volunteering for free to try and help. Don't get mad at him. He's might not know everything, but he's trying to do his best to help out this situation. So, you know, the Park Service just had to do their best with the people they had and sometimes...

TM: And that's a big ramp and a busy place.

PG: Yeah, yeah, the takeout. And everybody wants to get off the river just about the... They're camping in the same zone and they get down there at the same time and it's just this... Yeah, gets to be...

TM: You know, I wanted to ask you about an event that happened; it was before you were there. We had launched at Deer Lodge, ran the Yampa, but we were gonna go to Green River, Utah, so this was a long river trip. We were gonna go through Dinosaur National Monument, and then out into the Uinta Basin, and then through the wildlife refuge, and the Indian Reservation, and then finally into Desolation-Gray Canyons, and then to the takeout in Green River.

PG: Yeah, that would have been a great trip. I thought about that myself. I haven't done it, but, yeah.

TM: What we ended up needing to do, though, was we had some people leaving and some people joining, and we needed to get some food at Split Mountain. The assigned campsite was like 10 or 15 miles upstream from the takeout and we had a lot to do that day, which was food and shuttles and this and that. So we went much closer to the takeout and camped on a sandbar, I think in Rainbow Park, much closer than our assigned camp. In the morning, first thing, a commercial company went by and one of the guides said, "That's not a camp." We said, "Do you want some coffee?" And they went right on by. So when we got to the ramp, the Split Mountain ramp, there were law enforcement officers there that scurried us aside and wanted to see our permit, and wanted to know where we camped, and what we were doing. Basically moved us off to the mud, downstream of the ramp and said we couldn't use the ramp because that was for take-outs. So that's what we did, but it was a very uncomfortable exchange. Again, it's got to be difficult for the park, you know, trying to interface with people that are doing odd things, that aren't kind of following orders, or following the regulations. So just kind of wondered what your thoughts were on those types of situations. I guess take it on a case by case basis.

PG: Yeah, and the problem is that if you just start saying, Okay, no problem, then people start being a little bit more abusive of that flexibility. That park chose to establish fixed campsites and assign people to those campsites. As you know, different rivers operate in different ways. Most often it seems like there are no fixed campsites and people camp wherever they end up at the end of the day. But, in Dinosaur... And you know what? The heritage from that rule might have been that Dinosaur was one of the very last parks to remove their outhouses. I don't know if you remember, but in the 80s they had pit toilets at all these campsites. They did not get on the bandwagon of you have to have a portable toilet and carry it all out. They stuck with this, we'll dig some toilets, you can use those toilets, but you got to camp where the toilets are. So assigned camping became the manner which they used to manage their river there.

TM: Those fixed campsites were established in the 1950s.

PG: I didn't know that, but I knew that they'd been around for a long time. They didn't deviate from that in terms of letting people camp, they maintain that fixed campsite. I think that there's some flexibility. If there's an empty campsite and you're launching, you can say, is there a chance we can camp here rather than there and they'll move you around. You get locked into it and sometimes it makes for uncomfortable days, because you'll have a real long day and then you'll just have a four-mile day the next day because of the way that the distribution of the campsites goes. There's drawbacks with any manner of managing river camps that you can come up with, and you ran into the drawback with the fixed camp site.

TM: Yeah. So it's really fascinating. And of course, I think the simple thing is to say, Okay, well, if groups are indeed going out into the Uintah Basin, then we can revisit where people are camping so they can camp closer if they are doing an exchange like that.

PG: Right, yeah. I don't know whether your group tried to do something about the campsites before you got on the river, but once you're on the river, you're kind of locked into whatever...

TM: It's too late then. Yeah. That's too late, yeah. Okay. Just kind of curious.

PG: Some interfaces go better than others. Sometimes you get someone at the bottom end that approaches you and, you know, understands and is empathetic that might say, but, you know, you just can't do that. And other people can be hard asses. That's just the demeanor of the individual that speaks with you. My belief is that the empathetic demeanor is better. But then also, sometimes you get jaded to where you think people are taking advantage of little niches in rules and sometimes you just kind of get mad that people keep taking advantage. Not what you did in particular, but if you see people parking in the "no parking" spot time after time, pretty soon it's like, whoever that 10th person is, you know, ya let them have it because it's like, there's no parking here! So some of it's buildup of frustration about other things. I don't know what happened to your take out, but there's all kinds of ways that people get less patient and aren't as civil...

TM: I bet! It's amazing because the employee stays there through the season and hundreds of thousands, or millions, of visitors come and go, and to maintain one's sanity, cheerfulness and equipoise it's got to be really challenging. Some people make it and some don't.

PG: Yes, I think it's just some people have a personality that can do that more readily and some people have personalities that are really good at doing other things, but maybe not being patient with the same question or the same issue over and over. So it just boils down to different individuals. Yeah, anyway... That's an interesting story, Tom. Did you finish up? Go all the way down to Green River?

TM: We did, yeah. It was an amazing journey. And if you haven't done that Uinta Basin section... I'm assuming you have?

PG: No, I haven't. I haven't.

TM: You should. It's 100 miles of flat water, but just gorgeous in its own way. Lotsa oil wells and noise in the middle of the night: pump, pump, pump, pump, pump, pump, pump, pump, kind of thing. But wildlife and just different.

PG: When did you do that trip?

TM: We've done it a couple times; in the 1990s and then in the 2000s. Typically in the spring before the mosquitoes get bad because the one time we did it in the summer, oh, my, it was a mosquito nightmare. Just, oh my. Well, this isn't my oral history, this is yours, but I encourage you to go down there if you want to do it.

PG: Yeah. Did you notice differences in the oil well incursion into that basin between '90 and 2000? Or was it...?

TM: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Lots more; lots more. We were up on the bench north of headquarters. Just a few years ago, Hazel and I were up there camping and the lights at night all over the Uinta Basin! The mercury lights, just an amazing. So, yeah, in the last 20 years that area's had major changes.

PG: Yeah, so I can't think of much else to add to my time in Dinosaur. It was wonderful country, wonderful rivers; not socially the best. Not that I had problems with anybody, it's just that there weren't that many people around. It was a smaller community of Park Service people living in the housing area where I was and there was not that much nearby that was of interest.

TM: And so, how did it come to pass that you got to thinking maybe I need to move on here?

PG: Well, I can't remember. I think what happened was around the second or third year, I started realizing, okay, I've been a river district ranger in Dinosaur, where I was, but also at Big Bend and I think I thought, well, you know, it's time to do something more than that. I'm not really growing much here, I'm kind of doing the same thing. I would have started applying for jobs and honestly, again, I can't remember what jobs I applied for. But there would have come a time where I would have just thought, okay, time to start looking around. I ended up getting a job at Sequoia. I don't know where I might have applied and not gotten jobs, because I can't remember that now. It was always the case that I would apply for this and for that, and not get this and not get that, and then I'd get that. So I ended up applying for a job in Sequoia and Kings Canyon, which is adjacent, and they're in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. They're managed by one superintendent. They're managed under one chief ranger. Sequoia has one district ranger for all of Sequoia, and Kings Canyon has a district ranger in law enforcement for all of Kings Canyon. I applied for one of those two jobs. They were both open, the Sequoia and the Kings Canyon district rangers, and I ended up getting the Sequoia district ranger job which was a big sort of jump from what I had been doing.

TM: Yeah! You know, Pat, we've been going for about an hour here. I wonder if this is a good place to put a comma here...

PG: This'd be a great place.

TM: ...because there's going to be a lot happening in Sequoia. And I'm like, wait a minute, there's no rivers there!

PG: Right, there's no rivers. It was a big change.

TM: Big park, California, lots of visitors! Sierra is beautiful mountains, but, oh my, really different from Dinosaur.

PG: Right. And the job was a bigger job. This is a great place to stop because that was a big step for me and we'll save it for next time.

TM: Yeah, okay. Before I wrap this up, is there anything else you want to add about Dinosaur before we say goodbye to...?

PG: Well, no. I've had a few weeks to try and think about it since we last talked and I can't think of anything else. I did want to mention that low water trip I did which I started off with. Other than that, like I said, it was great to be able to see that resource in depth, then after three years, I was ready to do something else besides be a river ranger.

TM: Cool. Okay, well with that, this will conclude Part 8 oral history interview with Pat Grediagin. Today is Monday, December 14, 2020. My name is Tom Martin. Pat, thank you so very much for this interview.

PG: Yeah, you're sure welcome.