U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Region Five History Project

Interview with:	Roy Feuchter
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Location:	Vienna, Virginia
Date:	July 8, 2004
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KIRBY: We need to start over.

FEUCHTER: It's all right.

KIRBY: I'm sorry about that. But we didn't catch much. We're now running.

FEUCHTER: Okay. So what am I doing? Starting at why did I go to work for the Forest Service?

KIRBY: Yes, please. Your short time with Sequoia National Park, had introduced you to options, private and public.

FEUCHTER: Okay. So I had the short time with the blister rust control with the Park Service. That'd be in '48. In '49 I went to forestry summer camp for UC Berkeley. And in '50 I had a job with a fire crew at Mammoth Lakes for the Forest Service. And since Mammoth — or the Inyo NF was pretty much of an asbestos forest, as we considered it in those days, well, the fire experience there wasn't very hard or heavy. [laughs] Then when I graduated in '51, I had the option of either private or state or federal. The private had never interested me much, working out in the woods, you know, chasing timber fallers around. The State of California, CDF, was primarily, at least in those days, a fire fighting outfit, and I didn't care for that. So I just sort of naturally went to the Forest Service.

I got out of school in the winter of '51. I went to work at Mammoth Mountain Ski Area that winter, and worked there for a month or so, and then got on with the Forest Service again, running their timber stand improvement program. That lasted through the fall.

I had taken the JF Exam but still didn't have a permanent appointment, but an opportunity arose to go to the Eldorado on an engineering survey crew. The reason for that was that the Forest Service had just acquired the Pope-Baldwin Estates at the south end of Lake Tahoe. The larger part of that was that owned by Lucky Baldwin. He had a lodge there. And the access to the lodge was — you came by railroad to the north end of Lake Tahoe, and then by steamboat to the south end, down to his lodge. He built a

concrete road, or sort of a pathway. It was about eight feet wide, and colored pink, as I recall it. And it ran up through the woods from the steamboat pier to the lodge. It was named Anita Lodge, after his wife Anita. San Anita Race Track in southern California was also named after Anita Baldwin. The lodge was a huge thing, and it was built out of huge logs, you know, roughly two feet in diameter. And it was apparent [laughs] to most of us it was really sort of spectacular at that point, but it was going to be an awful headache for the Forest Service to try and maintain it. And so we destroyed it. And I suppose nowadays we would have just caught all sorts of hell from all sorts of people for doing that. But I think in the long run, it probably was the thing to do, because we never would have had the funds to maintain the thing.

It was a very interesting building. In the dining room, the walls were totally wallpapered with deerskin. And he had his own light plant right off of a stream that came out of Fallen Leaf Lake. The light plant had a huge room, or actually a building that was probably twelve feet square, a real high thing, and it was just chuck full of wet cell batteries that would be charged by this turbine in the stream. And then that would run the lights in the lodge. But anyway, this pathway that they had, a year or two after our survey, the Forest Service made the film, The Forest Ranger, and it starred Vaughn Hoefeldt, who was, at that time, the ranger at Myers. And they used that pathway for the camera crew to run their pneumatic tired camera platforms along, so it would be a nice smooth ride for the cameras, and could follow Vaughn riding his horse through the woods. I remember one scene where he came into the ranger station and he was greeted by his wife, Kaye, and you know, gave her a hug. And as he was hugging her, looked over her shoulder [laughs] — she had her back to the stove — and lifted the lid on the pot that was boiling on the stove to see what was for dinner that night. So it was sort of a cute movie, and basically, of course, told the story of the Forest Service, and what we were all about. I don't know if that's still around or not, but might be of historical interest because of the tie to the Baldwin estate.

Another thing about that survey, the Pope-Baldwin Estate, was that we were surveying for recreation potential, so we laid out the Fallen Leaf — no, Spring Creek Summer Home Tract, and several organization site tracts. And I think that that was probably the last summer home tract to ever be laid out in the National Forest, because it wasn't too long after that, although permits were issued for that summer home tract, it wasn't too long after that that we decided that summer homes were a private exclusive use of the National Forest, and really wasn't something we ought to be promoting anymore.: Roy, did long-period leasing enter into that with those homes, then?: Well, it did and it didn't. Actually [laughs] their permits were annual permits, which we called terminable permits. But it wasn't their understanding. The people that took those permits somehow got the idea that they were getting ninety-nine year leases. And as a result, over the years that gave us terrible problems. We had the right, actually, under the Special Use Permit Act, with the annual permits, to change the fees every year if we wanted to. And it wasn't, I guess but a few years after that that Region Five became a leader in trying to adjust summer home fees. I'm probably hopping around. But the leader in that was Earl Bachman in the regional office, who was a very strong proponent for having users pay fees for use of the public lands. In those early days, that was sort of an unheard of thing, because everybody thought the public lands belonged to everybody and they were there for everybody's free use. Earl's point was that the people —

particularly with summer homes were getting more free use than anybody else, [laughs]and they had an exclusive use to a certain piece of land that they had under permit. He was able to make that argument pretty well, and so we started adjusting fees.

And that, in turn, led to quite an uproar from all summer home permittees, who by this time, in summer home tracts throughout the National Forests had formed associations, summer home associations, and given themselves some political muscle, if you will. And so they started objecting. They discovered, then, that they had only an annual permit that technically could be just — not renewed at the end of a year, and they would have to remove their improvements. On these summer home tracts, these people had all built their cabins themselves. And some of them, were, you know, pretty simple, but others were pretty elaborate over the years. Families had come to vacation there for years, and all that. [laughs] And so I guess sort of grudgingly, we finally decided that the best thing to do was to issue term permits for a specific length of time. We had a second authority under the Term Permit Act of 1915, to issue term permits to people. So we issued term permits, anywhere from twenty to thirty years to these people, depending on where they were. If they were in a very choice location on a lake shore, or something like that, well, then we issued a shorter period of time. And in some cases, we even told them that it wouldn't be renewed. And that of course, raised all sorts of trouble. Probably one of the first big fights on that was on the Stanislaus up by Dodge Ridge, where they were on the shores of Pinecrest Lake. [Pinecrest Lake]: They're right on the lake shore. In fact, they were so much on the lake shore that people couldn't even use that part of the shore. They had their fences going right down to the lake, and you couldn't even walk past their homes on that part of the lake shore. So we had a pretty good case of showing that they were private exclusive use and had to go. But it still went very political, and we had all sorts of congressional letters and problems, but did finally, in fact, remove some of them. We tried to remove the entire tract, but we finally had to back off and remove just the lake shore lots in the initial go around. We immediately built a picnic/swim site there thought we had to re-program funds to do it**.** But we did accomplish that, and then over the years, I think we, as I recall, managed to remove all of them, though I'm not positive of that.

Let me see, where was I?

KIRBY: You started — when did you start adjusting these, approximately? Do you remember that, Roy?

FEUCHTER: Gosh, it was probably about — it must have been early '50s. We did that survey... I'm trying to remember when Slim Davis came to the regional office. Slim came from Region Two, and he went to the Inyo as forest supervisor. And he was there a relatively short time, I think less than three years, and then went to the regional offices, the director of recreation. At that time it had been Recreation and Lands together, headed up by Millard Barnum.

KIRBY: Yeah. Remember Barney? And they split it with Recreation, separate from Lands. Barney took Lands and Slim took recreation. And about that time, I guess, is when Earl Bachman must have come into the picture. And Slim was a strong proponent of people paying fees as well. And the two of them [laughs] were the ones that really got

all of the fee discussion going in Region Five. Region Five, actually, was a leader in the promotion of fees.

Fees had been paid in all — in the other regions as well, but in Region Two, where Slim had come from — well, for example, the Forest Service Manual at that time set minimums of what fees should be paid. Like for summer homes, it was half of a percent, and for winter sports it was one and a half percent of gross. And in Region Two, all of the winter sports areas were at one and a half percent, because that region felt that that was really probably too much for them to be paying in the first place, but since that was the minimum in the manual, they had to do it. But Slim was one of the first people to negotiate a higher fee than that, and that took place at Mammoth Mountain. When he was supervisor there, a young fellow by the name of Dave McCoy came to him. He'd been a water surveyor for the City of Los Angeles, who, as you probably recall, had built the infamous aqueduct that ran out of the Inyo Mountains—: Yes.: — I mean, out of the Sierras in the Inyo Forest, and took water down to Los Angeles. Well, he was a water surveyor for them, and so he ran snow surveys all winter long on skis, and had become an expert skier. And he had the idea of developing a ski area at the north slope of Mammoth Mountain. And so Slim issued him a permit. It was notable for a couple of things. One was that he negotiated a fee percentage that was higher than one and a half per cent. As I recall, it was two. It may have been two point two, something like that. And so that was a rather unheard of thing. And then also, most of these ski areas were being built by companies or corporations. This one, the permit was issued to simply Dave McCoy. It [laughs] didn't say "Mammoth Mountain Ski Area," or "Mammoth Mountain Corporation" or anything like that. And over the years — and Mammoth, of course, became one of the leading ski areas in the whole country, in fact, in the whole world, and that permit remained just "Dave McCoy." : Is that right?: Yeah, very simple. Dave built three rope tows. He built it — there was a road took off from the little town of Mammoth, which didn't amount to much in those days. Up to that point it had always been a summer location. There were some summer home tracts on National Forest land, there was a lodge or two or National Forest land, and a little bit of private land right at the community of Mammoth. And then a road ran about three miles up towards the base of Mammoth Mountain. That was where Dave built a little — it wasn't a lodge, it was just sort of a stand where they could serve hot coffee and hot dogs. And he built three rope tows in tandem, one after the other, each one becoming more difficult as it went up the mountain. The third rope tow was very small in diameter. Ropes generally were anywhere from an inch to an inch and a quarter in diameter, you could get a hold of it pretty well. Well, that last rope tow was only about a half inch in diameter, and you had to be almost Hercules to be able to hang onto the crazy thing. [laughs] And that was the beginning of the Mammoth Mountain Ski Area. To get there we had to drive up this dirt road from Mammoth to the base of the mountain. It went past the old earthquake fault, which had been there for eons, and became, later on, developed by the Forest Service as a tourist attraction. And it was notable because down in the crevasse, or the fault of the earthquake fault, down in the very bottom of it, the ice and snow stayed all summer long. It never did thaw out. But anyway, the only way to get up there was up this dirt road. And Dave would haul people up the dirt road in an Army six-by-six truck. And that was the only way you could manage it — either that or in a Sno-Cat. And at that time Dave only owned one Sno-Cat, and it was forever breaking down. So primarily

the six-by-six truck was the way to get there. And that winter of '51, when I had graduated and went to work at Mammoth Mountain, well, that was my job, driving the six-by-six truck, which I had never done before. [laughs] But with a little faith and all, well, we managed it. And I never actually seriously injured anybody, though we did toss a couple skiers out of the back of the truck a time or two when we hit rough spots.

Well, I was going to say something about after I finished that survey at South Tahoe — then I was transferred — well, about that time I was picked up off of the JF Roster from the JF Exam, and so I got a permanent appointment, and was assigned to the Regional Office Survey Crew since I had been surveying at South Tahoe. At that time, you know, the Division of Engineering in the RO ran this survey crew. [laughs] And they put us through four weeks of training at Elk Creek, on the Mendocino, which was for road location and design. And then we were split into two groups and assigned out on the forest. So we never actually were in the regional office at all. In fact, I never saw the regional office at that time. I just knew that it was some place on high, you know, [laughs] somewhere. And they put an engineer in charge of each of our two crews — one was Don Turner, who later went on to become regional engineer in R-10.: Yes.: At that time, Don had come from the Midwest — Iowa or Kansas, someplace like that, where he had been on a highway construction project. He was a graduate engineer, but he'd been a highway engineer on flatlands, and so the mountains were really something different to him and his brand new wife. And gee, who was the other guy? The other guy ended up in the Washington office. He was from Alabama. I know, it was Heyward Taylor! He's an interesting fellow, too. But, we were sent to Covelo on the Mendocino then, after the Elk Creek training. We surveyed a road up out of the Covelo Ranger Station, a timber access road. We spent the spring there. And then from there we went up to the old Trinity Forest. We were on the Hayford District, and went out to what they called the town of Peanut. Actually, it had been an old sawmill town. And the only thing left was the sort of the remnants of the sawmill foundations and what have you, and a bunkhouse and mess hall. So we were headquartered in the bunkhouse and provided a cook for the mess hall.

And we surveyed a timber access road, started in Peanut, and ran, gosh, southeast, as I recall. I'd have to look up to get the name of that thing, but it was a major road. I mean, we surveyed to a really pretty high standard, closing to four-hundredths of an inch on our closures.

KIRBY: Close.

FEUCHTER: Yeah. And an interesting thing happened there. As we traveled, of course, along the P-line of the road we were surveying, you had to walk further and further every day. And there was an old fire road ran along the ridge above where we were. We were able to drive out that road for a ways, and then hike down to our survey line. But the further we went, the further we got away from that road.

And so Don Turner [laughs], who was still with us, he managed to talk somebody — I guess the Forest, into providing a bulldozer and an operator to drive up that old fire road, and then take off down a side ridge with a road that we could drive our Chevy Carryall down, to get a lot closer to our P-line. And that worked really fine for a while, and then we got beyond that. And so the Cat operator started pushing another road down.

By this time, we were working like nine and a half hours. We'd have a half hour lunch, and we'd have about five hours to and from the job, and we'd only get four hours on the stump. And so it was really bothering us, you know.

KIRBY: Sounds familiar.

FEUCHTER: Yeah. So something happened, and the Cat operator had to leave. He left the Cat. Oh, I should back up a minute. While he was doing this last piece of work, he needed somebody to swamp for him, you know, be out there looking for rock outcrops and checking out slopes and pulling logs out of the way and that sort of thing. And so I got that job, partially because I was tired of surveying, I guess, but also I was interested Cats and tractors and bulldozers and that sort of heavy equipment.

So while I was swamping for him for several days, I talked the guy into showing me how to run the tractor. So when he left — and I don't remember what it was, I think he had a personal emergency, something like that — but anyway, here was the Cat and here we were still walking, you know, five hours a day trying to get to the job. And Don Turner was lamenting the fact that we were going to be doing this until that darn Cat operator returned. And so I said, "Well, gee, Don, I can run that tractor." [laughs] So he and I went out there, and of course, nowadays, it wouldn't be even close to being possible with all of the licensing and all we have to have. So he and I went out and fired up the tractor. It was a cable operated wench and blade on the thing, and the very first thing I did was snap the cable. And so I thought, "Oh, we're dead." [laughs] Well, Don, because of his work back in Kansas, or wherever he'd come from, was familiar with the fact that any dozer with a cable operation would have a cable cutter somewhere on the Cat. And sure enough we found one on the back. And we were able to cut the cable and re-splice it and get the thing operating. And so for two days, Don and I finished constructing that road and got ourselves back in operation where we only had a short walk to get to our survey job again. But, you know, certainly something that wouldn't happen nowadays. We surveyed for a little bit up on the Klamath. I don't remember anything in particular of note on the Klamath, another timber access road, though by then it was Fall and we had some good goose hunting.

After that I was assigned to engineering on the Eldorado. Jim Usher was the forest engineer at that time. I had met Jim when I was doing the site surveys up at South Lake Tahoe on the Pope-Baldwin Estate. And so we hit it off. I remember one thing about Jim, that winter that we were there. He was a big guy as you probably remember. And we were out surveying in a snowstorm [laughs] late in the fall, and it was freezing cold, you know. While trying to take notes, you know, and your hands were just freezing cold all the time. I remember, I was the note taker that particular day, and I was trying to warm my fingers up, blowing on them. And Jim came by and he says, "What's the matter, anyway?" "Oh," I says, "my hands are freezing." And I looked and he wasn't even wearing any gloves. And he said, "Well, here, hold mine." And I took hold of his hands, and he had the hottest hands I've ever seen of anybody in my life. It was amazing. Yeah, without gloves! Well, his hands were warm, they really were. And so I've always had that mental image of Jim Usher's hot hands, as it were. [laughter] But let's see, from the survey crew I was put into the forest supervisor's office. The supervisor at the time was Wes Spinney, W. W. Spinney. Remember that? Always signed his name, "W.

W. Spinney." And they made me forest dispatcher. And I had very little fire experience at this point. I'd had a little tiny bit of training during forestry summer camp. And I'd had the summer fighting fire on the Inyo, which didn't amount to much, and a couple of fires in the Fall, but really very little big fire experience. But I served as forest dispatcher. I had a real nice office to myself, and my big microphone, you know, forest wide radio network, the whole bit. So I was pretty happy with that situation. I was living in the town of Placerville. And you know, life was really pretty good. But because of that — oh, then an interesting thing, we were having cutbacks in personnel and financing, of course, like we did every so often.

Tom Glazebrook was the ranger at Pacific Ranger Station. And Tom came up with the idea — he didn't have enough money for a full-time clerk, which is sort of astounding nowadays to think that a ranger district wouldn't have a full-time clerk, but he didn't. And so he came up with the idea, and he sold Wes Spinney [laughs] on it, that if we move the forest dispatcher up to the Pacific Ranger Station, the dispatcher, which was me, could become not only the forest dispatcher but the clerk for the Pacific Ranger District.

KIRBY: Oh, yes.

FEUCHTER: And of course, I wasn't very much in favor of that, [laughs] but that really didn't matter. So I transferred up to the Pacific Ranger Station, and moved in up there. Like most combination things like that, probably neither job got a very fair shake. They changed it back shortly after I left. I wasn't there very long before I was offered a promotion. I was still a GS-5 at this point. I was offered a promotion to the Sequoia, to the Hume Lake District as FCA. We called them fire control assistants at that time—

KIRBY: Right.

FEUCHTER: — as you remember. This promotion was really based pretty much on the fact that here I was in fire control on the Eldorado, you know, fire control dispatcher, and I think most people thought that I probably had a heck of a lot more fire experience than I did. I guess I had been to a fire school in the Forest Service, during the time I was fire dispatcher, so I had learned about how you use an ax and a shovel.

So I showed up down on the Hume Lake District of the Sequoia, which was up at Pinehurst, and about an hour and a half drive up out of Fresno, and really just a short distance below General Grant National Park. At that time, it was still General Grant, and the Kings Canyon hadn't been added, because Kings Canyon was still National Forest at that time. So I was moving in on a weekend when the ranger, who was Lou Gihl at the time. Lou was pretty much an old-time ranger at the time, and became noteworthy a few years later when he refused a transfer to a staff job, because he felt that the ranger job was the most important job in the Forest Service, and he wanted to stay that way. And so he transferred up to — God, I think it was — jeez, it was the Lassen or the Modoc — no, Plumas, transferred up to the Plumas as a ranger, and he retired as a ranger. And he always maintained that that was the job he was cut out for. [laughs] Anyway, he was real good at it. But anyway, he came to me that Saturday. And I was just moving my few things since, I was still a bachelor, into the "B" Building, that was the building for

the FCA on the district. And that was important because of the buildings we had, only the ranger station and the FCA's house, had a commercial telephone in it. And also, the Forest Service switchboard, because we had five different Forest Service telephone lines running out of Pinehurst Ranger Station in those days. So he came over there and said, "You know, if you've got a mind to, you want to go with me? There's a little bit of a fire problem over at Highway 180, where the Wouton Brothers, that was W-o-u-t-o-n, a couple of local guys in their twenties that owned a few acres of brush down below Pinehurst, were clearing and burning brush to get more grazing land, and it had gotten away from them. So I said, "Sure." It was great to get some fire experience. So we drove on over there. And the thing had already jumped Highway 180, which was a state highway, a two-lane paved highway, a pretty high standard road. So we got there with a tanker. And I took one tanker crew member and myself and the hose and started up the side of the fire, knocking it down. And the rest of the fire crew was coming along, you know, constructing the line behind us as we knocked it down. We got up there quite a ways, when all of a sudden the water stopped.

And it turned out later that what had happened was that they'd had a blowup on another spot where it had jumped the highway, and they had disconnected the hose and pulled the tanker away to go attack that spot fire. And so there I was with this one kid up there, and no water, and the fire crew was still a ways behind us. And the fire jumped across their line, and so suddenly it was on both sides of us, coming up the hill. So that was a real introduction to my fire fighting on the Sequoia. He and I managed to get out of it without getting injured really seriously. But we had been taught, you know, to always run into the burn if you got in trouble. And so we did. It turned out that running into the burn only works if you're in low fuel type. When you're in heavy brush, there's just too much heat there, still from the stuff that had just burned, so we had to run back out. And we finally managed to run across the hill through a brush field to where the fire was no longer below us, and then fight our way down through the brush back to the highway, which was, you know, pretty fortunate for us, because if it had shifted over underneath us with us in that brush patch, well, we'd have been in big trouble. But when we ran into that burn and we decided it was too hot, well, at that point, I was carrying a Forest Service radio, and dropped it. And I heard about that for years, about the loss of the Forest Service radio. I had to fill out all manner of reports. [laughs]It was one of the new radios, you know, the one that came in the canvas bag with a hand set like a telephone. Because before that, we had had the old SX radio, that came in a wooden box that was maybe like the size of two shoe boxes put together. And that was our portable radio. You had to screw in an antenna or throw a wire up over a tree branch. And then they had a bigger radio called SPF that was for fire camp use.

Gee, that reminds me, when I was still on the Eldorado, I spent some time — I was — yeah, I guess I transferred — how did that go? Oh, I know. Before I became fire dispatcher, I was on the Amador District for a while. Kenny St. John was the ranger. At that time they had two ranger stations, or two locations. In the summer they had a ranger station up at the lumberyard on Highway 88. And then in the winter they moved down to Amador Creek, I guess was the name of the town, something like that. And they had just built a new administration building, that sort of glorifies [laughs] the building, really, at the Amador County Airport. It was about a three or four room structure, though. And

they really only needed one room. And so the Forest Service had arranged to lease that space for Kenny and me and our clerk for the winter as our ranger station there at the Amador County Airport. And that was really neat, because at that time I owned an airplane and was able to fly from Placerville to the Amador County Airport to go to work, since I was still living in Placerville at the time. But anyway, the fire control assistant was a fellow by the name of Deke Lundley, I think it was. I'm pretty sure that was it. It was Deke, and I think it was Lundley. And Deke was one of the really old school. You know, he didn't believe in even those old SX radios. For him, the way that you contacted somebody was by telephone. And if you were out in the woods, why you hunted up one of the old Forest Service grounded line telephone lines, and you threw a line up over it, you know, and you hooked up your portable telephone that you carried with you, and called somebody. And to make sure it was grounded, well, you chopped a notch in the base of a tree, right where the roots were going into the ground, and you drove a spike in there, and you tied your ground wire to that.

I can still remember [laughs] Deke one time when we were out and I was carrying the old SX radio, he couldn't find a telephone line, and so he grudgingly agreed to try the radio. We got it fired up. And he called the supervisor's office. And sure enough, they answered, and he said something to them. And he couldn't believe that he was getting a response out of this thing, you know, so every time he'd say something he'd say, "Did you get that? Are you sure you got that?" And they'd say, "Yeah, Deke, we got it." [|Laughter|] But sort of the old line firefighter, one of the, you know, cream of the crop, just a wonderful guy. And he and his type were the backbone of our fire fighting organization for many, many years. I ran into the same thing when I transferred down to the Sequoia, and survived [laughs] my first fire experience there. Well, I was the first college educated FCA on the Sequoia. The rest were all old-timers, you know, ala Deke Lundley, fellows like Frank Watson and — gosh, I've forgotten some of the other names. So of course, I was [laughs] eyed with a bit of suspicion by that crew, but they were all real gentlemen, and really eager to make sure that this young kid not only survived, but was successful. [|Laughter|]

Early on we had a fire school, a forest fire school. And of course, as an FCA, I was expected to put on a good share of that training. Fortunately I had had a Forest Service fire school on the Eldorado, so I was able to teach the ideas of fire fighting, and you know, the principles and the triangle, and how to use a shovel and an ax and carry it, and what have you. And as long as it wasn't actual practical experience, well, I got along fine. We did have some practice fires at that fire school, and with great good luck, my practice fire was in grass and was easy to put out, so [laughs] we didn't have any disaster from that. That was during the period, for the next several years, that they were having really bad fires in the winter down on the Angeles and San Berdu.

KIRBY: roughly what period was this?

FEUCHTER: Okay, this would have been 1954 to '58, about. And they were — each winter, the Santa Ana winds would blow, and sure enough there'd be a big fire. And it usually started, you know, late November, early December. More than once I spent Christmas and/or Thanksgiving on the Angeles or San Berdu, fighting fire. But what they

did in those days, they would pick up sector teams from the various forests up and down the San Joaquin Valley.

They'd fly a DC-3, starting up north and coming down and stopping at various places, cities along the way, like Stockton, Modesto, Fresno, and Porterville, to pick up sector teams. I was on one of those sector teams that always got picked up there at the Porterville Airport. And it was on one of those trips, and then several times thereafter that I first met Bill Murphy, who at that time, I think, was on the Sierra, a guy about my age, and background sort of similar, and a sector team leader. We became pretty good friends. And I ran into Bill again in later years over on the Inyo when I was the recreation staff and he was the ranger in Mammoth. And I can tell you some things about that later. So we would make those jaunts down there. I never did really like fire control.

And by fifty eight well, I guess I should back up. In '56 — yeah, '54 — no, '55, well, there was a controlled burn outside the forest — which got out of control on the McGee Ranch below the Hume Lake District of the Sequoia. I was still FCA at the time and made the initial attack. And the thing got away from us very rapidly because the conditions were just really terrible. It was steep terrain, heavy brush and really high temperatures and low humidity. We tried to hold it on that same Highway 180 that I had [laughs] been on before, and we weren't able to do it, and it blew right over the top of us like we weren't even there. So our next place to stop it was — oh, we called that the McGee Fire. I named it that, since I was the initial attack. I named it because it had started from a spot on the McGee Ranch, private land. But as it turned out, [laughs] our forest dispatcher at the time was a fellow by the name of Bob McGee. And he never did forgive me for naming that fire after him. I never could make him believe that I didn't name it after him. He was an old-time fire dispatcher, a really wonderful guy. But anyway, I guess as you recall, we were always told, pick a short name just in case it becomes a big fire, because you're going to have to write that name a lot of times. And as it turned out, I spent about three years associated with the McGee Fire and must have written that name thousands of times. So I really thank God that I hadn't made it any longer than that. But anyway, our next line of defense after Highway 180 was a fire route along the top of Delilah Ridge. And we figured we'd stop it there. We were up there, busily trying to backfire along that ridge, that evening when the fire came roaring up and hit us — it was my first experience with a real firestorm, and it just blew right over the top of us. Since we were on a road, we were able to backtrack down the road without anybody getting hurt. But we realized then that we had a major problem with the McGee Fire. It went on down into the basin below there which was heavily timbered, and as a result, wiped out a tremendous amount of timber, and then went back up over another ridge and into — the area around Hume Lake, which had been heavily logged in the redwood logging days, and there was still all sorts of remnants of redwood logging. And of course, in those days, all they took was the redwoods, and they left all the other timber. So there was still heavy stands of mature timber. The losses in terms of timber were really pretty heavy from the McGee Fire, although it was a relatively small fire. It was only 17,600 acres, as I recall, but you know, really heavy losses.

A couple of things that happened on that were a little different. There was a place near that Highway 180, right off of Highway 180, called Sequoia Lake. And there were five organization camps around Sequoia Lake. It was a piece of private land. One of our chores was to protect it, and we were able to do that. But then an old dirt road ran from

Sequoia Lake up pretty steep, to the Grant Grove section of the General Grant National Park. And one of the concerns was that the fire would come roaring up that way, and you know, get into the park and destroy national park values. And of course, everybody was really worried about that. So we decided — and Lou Gihl, the ranger, was the fire boss, and came up with a really nifty idea of lifting water from Sequoia Lake all the way up to Grant Grove. It took us five Pacific pumper transfer stations to do that. Yeah, we pumped out of the lake up into a canvas reservoir we built, put a pump on that, pumped up to another one. We had five of those. And then we got a huge big canvas reservoir from the military that we pumped into up at Grant Grove so that we'd have a basically unlimited water supply. As I recall we lowered the level of Sequoia Lake about six inches during that operation [laughs]— which is a really astounding feature. But it worked. We never did have to actually use it to protect the Grant Grove redwoods.

Another thing, that, I think, was probably one of the very early uses of helicopters was on that fire. We had a Bell Helicopter, the old 178 horsepower helicopter that carried one passenger, and was able to operate up to roughly 8,000 feet. And I recall we built a heliport on a ridge at 7,800. [laughs] And he landed there and met me. And I climbed in, but we couldn't get off the ground. [laughs] He was able finally to lift up just enough to clear the ground and then dive off the side of the ridge to pick up air speed, which of course, was a rather horrifying experience for him and myself. And of course, again, wouldn't be allowed nowadays. But you know, we were just beginning the use of aircraft in those days, and so really didn't have any guidelines to go by. I think he made one other use of that heliport before he decided [laughs] that that was just too hairy a thing to be doing. I don't know how much helicopters had been used on other forests at that time but probably not very much, because they were still a fairly new animal.

Also during the time that I was on the Sequoia we started using air tankers. And because of my background in aviation — I was a private pilot and had my airplane — well, I sort of gravitated to the air tanker program. And I did have, you know, sector boss qualifications. At that time when we first got the air tankers, we started out with old Stearmans, biplanes that were used for crop dusting, which only carried 180 gallons, as I recall. And that obviously never gave us very much. We shifted pretty soon to the TBMs and the PBYs. But the pilots for those airplanes, which were still available in those days, and that would have been about '57, I guess. You could still find some of those on the private market that were surplus from the military. And guys were buying them and converting them into tankers. The TBM was a good tanker because it had the bomb bay, and you just took the bomb bay doors off and put a tank in there. It had a quick release valve on it. But the pilots didn't have any fire experience, the guys that flew those. Those were old pilots from the military that had flown the TBM and the PBY, and loved it. And they probably hadn't done anything that they liked as much since getting out of the military, and so they were a bunch of gung-ho guys that just loved it. You know, they were ready go. Boy, as soon as you blew the whistle or sounded the siren, well, they were out there firing up their engines. It was like the old days for them. But for them to be of any real use to us, we had to have some way of telling them where to drop the water — or the retardant. By that time we had started using bentonite as a solution in water, as a fire retardant, though originally we used sodium calcium borate and consequently called the tankers "Borate Bombers".

And so we came up with the idea of lead planes, that would be a plane that would lead the air tanker in. We'd have a qualified fire control person on board and be in radio contact with the tanker. And then we would tell the tanker — we'd lead him right through where we wanted him to go, and then as he went through, we'd tell him when to drop. And so I became a lead plane person. And that was an interesting part of my fire experience. I enjoyed it much more than being out on the ground climbing up and down those hills. [laughs]

One of the things that happened — and as I say, that was in the early days of the air tanker program. I don't know how many air tankers there were around the region then, but there couldn't have been very many. We had two that were owned by the Forest Service, two TBMs. As I recall, I think they were numbers 01 and 02,with the big number painted on the engine cowlings. I guess the idea of that was at first to test the practicality of it, and then perhaps to teach pilots. I'm not really sure about that.

We had some good Forest Service pilots at that time. Fellows like Cal Ferris, Lee Meyer, Bob Woolford (not sure of Bob's last name) but he was a really outstanding PBY pilot, and helped a lot of the contract pilots.

On the Sequoia, one fire, we had was a difficult one and it was a small fire, but it was very difficult. It was on a steep ridge, and the darn thing was burning on the side of the ridge down below the top, not all that far down. But it was starting to spot and throw fire over the ridge. We tried to drop on it, but if the air tanker cleared the ridge, he was up high enough that the retardant all dissipated before it got to the fire. So we had an air tanker pilot, and I guess maybe — I don't know, maybe I shouldn't mention his name because of the privacy thing. But he was an old-time TBM pilot. And he came up and he says, "I can get that fire. All I got to do is do a pitch-in." And I asked him what the heck was a pitch-in? And he said, "Well, I'll fly right at the fire, and just before I get to the side of the ridge, I'll flare straight up and I'll dump my retardant. And that'll lighten me enough that with full throttle I'll hop right up over the ridge." And I said, "Well, do you really think you can do that?" And he was sure he could. So we gave it a shot, and it damn near worked. He almost cleared the ridge. But as it turned out, he didn't. And it killed him and wrecked the airplane, of course. Yeah, he came within a few feet of clearing the ridge And as a result of that, the Forest Service outlawed pitch-ins. I think it was just about that time that we became aware of the need to have some regulation — government Forest Service regulation on the use of air tankers. And that was one of the major things that was written into that, "No more pitch-ins."

KIRBY: Well, that was really exciting stuff.

FEUCHTER: Yeah, it was. It really was.

KIRBY: Fire and air craft.

FEUCHTER: Yeah, that's true, because it was stuff that was beginning. It's always fun to be in on new stuff.

Well, I was just going to mention one other thing about that period. Around '56 or so, when we were messing with air tankers early on, that the Inaja Fire on the Cleveland took place in 1956. And that was an early use of air tankers. It was also a

serious fire where we lost eleven men. I was on that fire as a sector boss, and had been sent down from the Sequoia. Like I told you, they'd fly the DC-3 down the valley picking up teams which included a Sector Boss and three crew bosses. And the remnants of that crew where eleven were killed were straggling out to an access road where my crew and I were going on to the fire that night in San Diego Canyon. So that was a really tough experience and a mighty hard night on the fire line.

I was back to that location years later. I think I was in the regional office at the time. It was all freshly re-grown brush, not heavy yet, but coming back. And it really had to make you wonder if, you know, at the time that you looked at that, there was just a brush hillside brush hillside, and about the fact that eleven men died out there to save it. I guess there isn't anything of great significance that I can impart in the way of wisdom. But it was — it may have been somewhat of a turning point for the Forest Service. I think that we installed some additional guidelines shortly after that. But I do know that air tankers were used on that fire.

There was one thing I was going to mention on the Sequoia. When I got there, there was a thing called the Western Divide Highway, which was on the south part of the forest, and on the divide between the San Joaquin Valley and the Kern River Valley. It was a highway that was to be — it was on the Forest Highway Program, which were special funds that were to be made available by the Bureau of Public Roads to the Forest Service. The Forest Service didn't get them very often, as I understood. But they had gotten a chunk of money on the Sequoia. And the idea of the highway was to run from the Bakersfield area, where presently the drive would be up the Kern Canyon. Well, when you would first enter the Kern Canyon, the highway was to take off there and go up the rim of the mountains and to run up the Western Divide. And I think I understood it right, that the decision was made to build a centerpiece of the highway first as a leverage for getting future funds. It would be a lot easier to deny funds if you have one end, you know, and then it just stops. But if you've got a piece built in the middle... And so when I arrived on the forest, well, there was this [laughs] beautiful piece of highway that as I recall was three, maybe four miles long, two-lane, paved, high standard radius of curve and vertical curves, and yet just sitting up there in the middle of the forest. [laughter] And there was two tiny little dirt roads, one almost a jeep road on one end to get up to it. On the other end, well, it led down to the town of Johnsondale, which was an old company town from the Johnsondale Lumber Company.

Years later, that Western Divide Highway was completed, and it would supply access to Slate Mountain, which was to be developed as a ski area on the north end of the Western Divide Highway. I'm not sure what the development of Slate Mountain ever took place. Maybe that never was developed. I know a prospectus was issued on it. Maybe we could check that later.

In 1957, an area of controversy on the Sequoia was the Kern Plateau. It lies between the north fork and the main fork of the Kern River. It was a large expanse of land of 560-some thousand acres that was undeveloped by roads, but held a lot of timber and had a lot of recreation potential, being just immediately above — the south end of it was right up above Kern Lake, or Kern Reservoir, so really pretty close to the population centers of southern California. Well, the Region was interested in putting access roads up

there, logging the timber and peoning up the recreation potential. And it was decided we should do a recreation survey of the potential. So there were two of us. Ed Carpenter from the Sierra, and myself, were designated to perform the survey. We hired two high school kids to go with us, just for safety sake, so we could operate separately in the back country as a two-man teams, on horseback. We spent the whole summer of 1957 working ten-on/four-off surveying the recreation potential up there. And then I finished up early in '58 by myself, some odds and ends that hadn't been finished. We produced a recreation plan for the Kern Plateau that — let's see here, I've got 1959, that designated all of the potential sites and how much capacity, and what water was available, and kinds of things that could be taken care of. And that was used, at least in part, to justify, I guess, the opening of the plateau. And of course, the way we were going to provide that opening was with timber access roads. And there was quite a raucous over that. A lot of the local people were up in arms about it and didn't want us to do that, and so it became a very political issue. That led to a multiple-use management plan for the Kern Plateau that was developed in 1960. We used a lot of the information from our recreation survey to go into putting together that plan. And of course, in it we discussed the other multiple uses that could take place on the plateau. The north end of the plateau went up into the Inyo Forest, on the Mt. Whitney District of the Inyo.

That recreation survey that we did was sort of a trial balloon, and provided the guidelines and the methodology that was used in the National Forest Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Survey that took place, gosh, in 1960, was it? You know, I'm a little fuzzy on that date.

KIRBY: Sounds close to me because Mt. Hood was into that about that time.

FEUCHTER: And so that was a nationwide thing, of course. But Sequoia had had a leg up on that survey with that early work that we had done on the plateau.

Also about that time, before leaving the Sequoia, there was — I think it was in 1960 — you recall that we had had fifty-year Federal Power Commission licenses issued for power companies to put in dams and reservoirs on rivers on National Forests for power purposes. Those early licenses — the first one came up for review in 1960. Now, it must have been issued about 1910. And of course, in 1910 when they issued those there were practically no restrictions put on the power companies.

But the idea of a fifty-year license was a little bit similar to the fifty-year timber sales in Alaska where theoretically the power company could amortize their investment over a fifty-year period. So theoretically, at the end of that fifty-year time, well, the investment had been amortized and it was all free and clear. Our reasoning, from a recreation standpoint, was that since the power company no longer had to amortize the investment, they should be able to put some money into recreation potentials of those rivers. Several of those rivers had actually been dried up. And so one of the ones that was — the first one was the Kern River, there on the Sequoia. And the question became — should they have some releases from those dams to provide for recreation, water borne, water base recreation below the dam, all the way from Kernville, down to the mouth of the canyon just outside of Bakersfield.

So the question became how much water should be released for recreation use? The power companies were arguing that, "Well, you certainly don't need the whole flow,

because sometimes it floods, and, you know, recreation can't have any use of it when it's flooding. So it was decided that we had to determine that. [laughs] We came up with the idea that it was only a subjective thing. So at that time, along with Earl Bachman in the regional office was a landscape architect, D'Arcy Bonnett, a man of tremendous ability and high moral character, and just a wonderful person. So it was decided that D'Arcy Bonnett should go down to the Kern River, and he would watch when they released the water. And the power company would release a certain amount of water from the dam, and D'Arcy would watch it and decide how good that was for recreation. And then the next time, a week later, they would release a different amount. And he did that all one summer. And we used to call that "D'Arcy's Water Watching." Because of that, he was able to determine an optimum flow for recreation. And that was one of the very early times that we — I think, the first time, if I'm not mistaken, that we were able to impose restrictions on the reissuance of an FPC license for recreation purposes.

D'Arcy Bonnett and R-5 were also leaders in developing landscape management within the Forest Service. In '61, well, by that time I was in the regional office as a recreation planner. And there was an administrative study conducted on collecting user fees in our recreation facilities, like campgrounds, picnic grounds, boat ramps, and so on. It was a small study and it only included four campgrounds and a picnic area and a swimming area and a boat ramp. But it was to look at the feasibility of using mechanical means to collect recreation fees, because we recognized that there was quite a bit of resistance to collecting fees, both inside the Forest Service and outside. And we recognized that if we had to take part of our budget to hire people to collect fees, that that simply wasn't going to fly. So Earl Bachman was instrumental in developing a mechanical means to collect fees at the entrance to the campgrounds and picnic grounds, and the study was to look at that. And the study proved that it was in fact feasible to do that. It was expanded the next year to twenty additional sites, as I recall. And the conclusion overall was that it was feasible and economical, and in fact acceptable, because we found that the public was accepting it quite well. They sort of liked the idea that once they paid for their site they had the use of that site as long as they kept paying their fee. Nobody's going to throw them out, you know. So they could leave for the day and not have somebody come and move their tent away, and that sort of thing. They also felt like it was going to lead to better conditions in the campground. And in truth, it probably did, because we made a special effort in those sites that were under charge to insure that they were up to our standards for care and policing. Region 5 was the first in the National Forest System to charge for use of recreation facilities. A few years later, R-5 was first to implement a permit system in Wilderness.

I guess one thing I overlooked while I was on the Sequoia was the 1960 Olympic Games at Squaw Valley. The IOC decided to have the games at Squaw Valley. And Squaw Valley was National Forest land under permit to Alex Cushing, C-u-s-h-i-n-g. He had developed a winter sports area there, had five chair lifts. The base of the operation was on a little bit of private land. But all of the ski terrain was on National Forest. So Cushing went to the Olympic committee, and had sold Squaw Valley as a perfect place to have the Olympic winter games. As it turned out, it probably wasn't one of the best sites in the world, but we were able to carry it off, and it was a satisfactory games. Slim Davis recognized early on that this was a wonderful opportunity for the Forest Service to provide some leadership in winter sports, and also get our name before the public as

being deeply involved in winter recreation. So it was decided that we should have an avalanche team at Squaw Valley. And it was made up of — let's see, there were five of us from the Forest Service and seven from private sector ski areas. And that was the team.

The team was led by Monty Atwater, who had been working for the Forest Service up at Alta Utah, on the Wasatch N.F. and was instrumental in the early days when they put out a publication called The Avalanche Studies, as I recall. They had done some pioneering work on the use of explosives at Alta on controlling avalanches. And Monty was an old-time showman, you know. He was really big on show, and he was perfect for the Olympic Games, because partially what we were trying to do was to put on a good show. And Monty was there in the forefront, you know, elbowing everybody out of the way and getting in front of the camera, or microphone. So we had a good time with that.

One unfortunate thing about it was that it didn't snow. In fact, it was questionable whether we'd have enough snow for the games to start. But there was just marginally enough snow. So we weren't able to demonstrate our avalanche control ability because there was no snow to control. So partway into the games, well, Monty decided that we had to get more attention than this. There was a large cornice that overhung the men's downhill course. And [laughs] he convinced everybody that we should blow off that cornice. And so we went up there and we laid out some of the old Bangalore Torpedoes, which were a military thing. It was a tube about, oh, two inches in diameter, and maybe about three, four feet long, and full of explosives. And you could connect them, one to the other. And they had their internal primer and primer cord in them. If you set the thing off at the one end, the whole thing went off almost instantaneously. So we laid this line of Bangalore Torpedoes across the top of this cornice [laughs] and we set it off, and we blew off the cornice.

But unfortunately, some huge chunks of the ice came rolling on down the hill and landed right in the middle of the men's downhill course. And the Olympic Committee was really upset, you know. [laughs] It had been spectacular, and they did get movie footage of it and all that. But then we realized that the men's downhill race course was in danger, I mean, they weren't going to be able to run... So there was a whole night of feverish work, you know, many people out there chipping up and removing those big chunks of ice in the middle of the downhill course.

Years later we had many, many troubles with [laughs] the Squaw Valley operation under Alex Cushing, who was an interesting fellow. Alex would — once he told you something, it became the truth as far as Alex was concerned, regardless of what the real facts of the matter were. So then if you ever questioned him, he'd refer to the fact that he had told you that back in 1960-so-and-so, and therefore it must be the truth. [laughter] We finally solved that problem by a land exchange with the state, and deeded the whole mess to the State of California, and it became a state park. The State of California probably never did forgive the Forest Service for that.

But speaking of land exchange, when I got to the Inyo as recreation staff I went from the regional office over there to recreation staff, actually at that time — the staff director's job had recreation and lands and fire control and something else. What? Oh, timber management, yeah. The timber program was pretty small on the Inyo. There had

only been one sawmill, the Inyo Lumber Company had their mill at Bishop. And one of the early problems where the public got involved in our timber management program was on the Inyo, on the Deadwood Creek Sale. That was an area up on the northern part of the Inyo Forest, a nice stand of Jeffrey Pine timber that we were about to log. And a fellow who had had his honeymoon in that area and was a local politician objected [laughs] and raised all sorts of Cain about it. So we were notorious for some time because of the Deadwood timber sale. We finally managed to push it on through, but that, of course, was before we had things like public involvement on timber sales, and there was no Environmental Policy Act or anything of that sort in those days. So that brought us some notoriety. But it probably was also the last sale of any significance that the Inyo Lumber Company operated. They shut down not too long after that, and there was no longer a logger available for the whole east side of the Sierras. I was starting to tell you something else.

Well, anyway, when I got there they were working on a land exchange plan for the Mammoth Lakes area. You recall that the Mammoth Lakes was just a very small town that had built up around a tiny little bit of private land, and then there had been a bunch of permits issued by the Forest Service for summer homes and organization camps, and a couple of resorts. And then, of course, Dave McCoy came along, and Slim Davis had issued the permit for the ski area. Up until that time it had only been used in the summer. You know, Mammoth was only a summer resort kind of place. Then it became winter also, and there was a lot more interest then in having all of the things that a town would normally provide; you know, service for vehicles, groceries, lodging and restaurants, and well, just anything that you would have in a town. And yet there wasn't any private land available for development. So it was decided that the way to go was to draw a square around the little center of the town there that would include a bunch of National Forest land, and that we would exchange out of that National Forest land and allow that to become private, and then it could develop for resorts and gas stations, stores and what have you. I don't know if that was one of the first land exchange plans, but I sort of think that it was. I think before that land exchanges had been a little bit more of a hit or miss operation without long range goals. We did this in conjunction with Lands in the regional office. And who was it? Everett Jensen was in charge of land exchanges in the RO. And Jens came up with the idea that this was such high value land, because Mammoth by this time was growing, due to Mammoth Ski Area, and the lands were becoming quite valuable. So he came up with the idea that we would exchange it for lands at Lake Tahoe, the south end of Lake Tahoe, where lands were also, of course, quite valuable. And it was hard to find timberlands that you could exchange for Tahoe. We could pick up all sorts of cut over timberland in those days, but you know, they weren't worth very much, and you had to have thousands of acres to make up for a few acres at Lake Tahoe. But we were doing almost an acre for acre from Mammoth to Tahoe. And so he came up with the idea of two corridors. Rather than just hit or miss, his idea was to have two corridors of public land that would run from the lake shore of Lake Tahoe up to the **Desolation Valley Wilderness Area**, which was in the high mountains to the west of Lake Tahoe. And so he started filling in those lands using lands out of the Mammoth Lakes Land Exchange Plan. And actually, it was pretty successful in both cases.

We did get the corridors developed to Tahoe. We also got a viable town created at Mammoth Lakes. And that solved a lot of problems for us on the forest, because we had been being besieged for permits for a gas station or for a grocery store, or just anything — you know, a baseball diamond, Elks Lodge, etc. Yeah, exceptions — everything you could think of. And we didn't want to issue any of those. So then suddenly we had private land available, and it was a matter of telling people, "Hey, go to the private land." And if they said, "Well, that costs us a lot of money," we said, "Well, that's right." [laughs] "But that's why we don't want you using the public land for private purposes. It's for public use." So it was pretty successful.

Just before I left the Inyo to go back to the regional office — I think it was in 1963 — well, that was in the days that the Lassie program was quite popular on TV. And it was decided by the writers that maybe it would be a good idea to have Lassie get lost and be adopted by a forest ranger. And so they thought, to test that idea they would make a five-part trial that they could run, you know, over a period of time to see if there was public acceptance. And it was decided they would shoot that up at Mammoth. They had two fellows picked out for ranger and the assistant ranger. But neither one of them skied. So they needed people to fill in. And it turned out that I was just about the same size as the guy that was playing the part of the ranger, and Bill Murphy, the ranger up there, who I'd met early on in my fire fighting days, he was about the same size as the assistant ranger. We were both expert skiers, and so we were enlisted to go up and do the skiing for the ranger and the assistant ranger.

We had a wonderful time doing that. And the crew was up there for several days. Lassie was there along with her trainer, who was a guy by the name of Rudd Weatherwax, a really interesting fellow. R-u-d-d, and then W-e-a-t-h-e-r-w-a-x. And he had trained Lassie. I think maybe by that time we were on perhaps the third Lassie. I'm not sure. You know, Lassie had died and had been replaced. And in later years, I know that after Rudd — I'm not sure if he died or just retired, but his son took over training Lassie, or future Lassies. But anyway, I've got a picture somewhere of a blanket spread on the snow and Lassie sitting on the blanket with my wife, Helen. [laughs] But one thing that came out of that was the way they'd written the script, well, there wasn't any real skiing to be done by the ranger and the assistant ranger. I mean, they'd be on skis and poling along like in cross-country skiing, but that really didn't amount to much, not flashy at all. And so Murphy and I kept complaining that you know, "You really ought to have some decent downhill skiing shots in this. And finally we made our point with the director, and he agreed to let Murphy and I do some skiing. So he and I selected a spot where there was a whole bunch of unbroken snow coming down through a fairly open stand of trees. And they got all set up at the bottom, and Murphy and I climbed up to the top out of sight of where the tracks would be, so we could ski down that thing. And when we got up to the top of it, we told ourselves, "Jeez, we may have made a big mistake here. What if we crash?" [|Laughter|] But as luck would have it, we pulled it off. And we linked our turns coming down, so it really did make a nice set of figure eights all the way down the hill and through the trees, and stopped with a big swoosh at the bottom, threw snow all over the cameraman. [laughs] So that was sort of a fun thing. And the whole crew applauded at the time. It was sort of funny. And the director said, "God, I never heard anything like that before," you know, a crew applauding something like that, you know, a bunch of actors — supposedly actors. [laughter]As it turned out,

the idea of Lassie going with the Forest Service Ranger was accepted. And we had a long period then where Lassie and the Forest Service were associated, and we got some really good publicity out of that.

In about 1962, we created the High Sierra Wilderness from the old High sierra Primitive Area. Guess it's now re-named the John Muir Wilderness. There was a stone lodge on a small lake in the southern end of the area which we removed to eliminate the man-made improvements. We dynamited the lodge into small fragments which we hoped over many years would appear natural. I wonder if that is now the case? Wood we burned, of course, and iron, too heavy to haul out, we sank in the lake.

Well, then, I guess I got back into the regional office. And about that time the demand for downhill skiing was growing rapidly and we decided that we needed to develop additional winter sports somewhere in the California region. And in looking around, well, it became clear that Mineral King was a really logical spot, on the north end of the Sequoia Forest. It was separate drainage, actually, totally separate from everything else on the Sequoia, and it drained down into the Kaweah River, and then that ran into the San Joaquin Valley into the head waters of the San Joaquin River.

In the old days there had been a mining town in Mineral King — I mean, way back. And there were also — an old lodge that had been built there, and a bunch of cabins. And in the early days when the Forest Service still looked favorably on having summer homes — because you probably remember, Steve, in the early days we were trying to get people to use the National Forests, because they had to come great distances over many times marginal roads to get there. And so we issued these permits to build private cabins on the National Forest. And of course, the logical place to build them was at the most desirable spots like streams and lakes, things like that. And so in those days we encouraged people to build cabins. And then those people became not only good friends of the Forest Service early on, but they also became our fire lookouts, and they helped with the fire control program— they reported fires, and all that sort of thing. It was only later on when we started getting heavier use that we began to realize that we had all these things taking up all the desirable spots for recreation, and they were conflicting with the public use, and we had to start removing them, and of course got into all the problems of summer home termination. But anyway, we had issued permits for summer homes in Mineral King using those old buildings, and then also another tract that was close to the bottom of the Mineral King Valley, was developed for a second summer home tract.

We had been making snow surveys in Mineral King for a number of years. One of the fellows that had a summer home up there owned a Weasel, you know, a track laying landing craft from the old military days. Joe Wallerman and I used to go up and make the snow surveys in Mineral King each winter a couple times a year. And since he was a skier as well, well, he and I, after we'd finish the snow surveys, we'd take his Weasel and drive up as high up the slopes as we could get and then ski down them.

So I knew from personal experience that there was outstanding skiing in Mineral King. So it really didn't take an awful lot of survey to determine that that was a good place. It was a relatively short road up into Mineral King. The road up there was dirt, but it would have taken a relatively small amount of money to improve it to a decent standard that could have been plowed during the wintertime. So the whole thing looked really pretty feasible. And it was decided that we should issue a prospectus.

Now, I can't say for sure that was our first prospectus on winter sports, but it had to be one of the very early ones, because at that time practically all the permits for winter sports had **not** been issued on a negotiated basis, like with Dave McCoy who came in to Slim Davis and said, "Hey, you know, I could do this," and no one else seemed to be interested, so they issued Dave a permit!

In Region Two there was a number of ski areas like Aspen, Berthoud Pass, Winter Park and Arapaho Basin. But those all had private land base, and the only way you could develop their particular mountains was off of that private land base. And so it really wasn't reasonable to issue a prospectus to somebody and tell them, "You've got to buy this private land," because who was going to sell it to them in that kind of a situation? So those were all negotiated permits. And as I think I mentioned before, they were negotiated at the minimum rate that was in the Forest Service Manual of one and a half percent of gross.

Slim and Earl Bachman were very interested in issuing a prospectus because they thought that they could probably get not only a lot of big money involved, but they were also very interested to find out what a person with good business sense and good money behind them would be willing to bid for the right to develop winter sports on the National Forest. And so this was a grand opportunity. We controlled the whole thing, and we went ahead and issued the prospectus. And of course, the thing just really blew up in our face. The environmentalists were up in arms. There was all sorts of wild stories told, and most of them not true, about how dangerous the avalanche conditions were, and how we were destroying the back country and wilderness experience. And it just — it went on and on. But anyway, even in the face of all that, we got two really significant bids. One of them was from the Walt Disney Corporation, and the other was from a fellow by the name of Bob Brandt, B-r-a-n-d-t, as I recall. And he was married to a movie star. I think it was Janet Leigh, I'm pretty sure it was Janet Leigh. And so he had money behind him as well. He was very well financed. And so we had two very well financed people.

Brandt hired Ed LaChappelle, who was a Forest Service avalanche expert from Alta, Utah, who had trained, initially, under Monty Atwater, and then had gone on into research himself on snow studies. Ed, at that time, was probably one of the foremost avalanche people in the United States, and had been working for us in the wintertime. I think he taught at the University of Washington in the summertime. So Brandt hired him.

Disney, hired Monty Atwater. So we had these two big entities, you know, both of them well qualified financially, both of them with tons of ability to hire all sorts of planners. And then they both bid considerably above our minimum one and a half percent. And as it turned out, Bob Brandt bid the most. But after we had looked at it for some time, Slim and Earl, and I to some extent, were involved in that process, well, we determined that, really, the better deal for the government was to go with the Walt Disney Corporation, even though it wasn't the highest bid. And so then we had to go through quite an exercise to justify accepting a bid that wasn't the highest return to the public in terms of money. But we were able to do that on the basis of the plans that they had submitted, and what we felt were the more outstanding recreation opportunities that would be provided. We went down — Slim and I — a couple of times to Walt Disney Studios in southern California in LA. And they had made a huge mock-up to scale, of

Mineral King Valley and it was inside a great big building like an airplane hangar of Mineral King Valley. It was unbelievable. [laughs] They had everything laid out there — very, very impressive. So we issued the permit to Disney.

But as it turned out, the environmentalists, by that time, had really gained a lot of strength. And Disney began to waiver a little bit because of the public image. And so he delayed. Unfortunately, that was the kiss of death. If he had proceeded, we probably would have gotten Mineral King developed, and it would have been an outstanding ski area, and it would have provided, you know, for thousands of people from southern California, because it was really as close to southern California as Mammoth was, and that was drawing thousands of people a year. So anyway, they delayed, and that gave the environmentalists time to develop political support. And legislation was introduced to exchange — or to put Mineral King into the National Park System. And it was passed, and so that of course killed the whole project. And it's now part of the National Park System.

KIRBY: Well, that was an early environmental effort and activity.

FEUCHTER: Yeah, it was. It actually was.

We had the early one on the Kern Plateau, that I guess you'd say we won, if you will. We had the Mineral King one, which was an early one, and we lost that. And the unfortunate thing about Mineral King was that it really wasn't wilderness. You know, there was a road already. There were houses there already. There were summer homes there already. It really wasn't wilderness. And there really wasn't much of a wilderness experience to be had because the valley was quite small, really. You had to go up over the ridge, which took you into the National Park, to actually get into what we know as a wilderness experience. But the fact that it was immediately adjacent to the Park, you know, made a big difference. And the fact that we would have had to have at least one upper terminal of one chair lift on the ridge that would have looked right down into the National Park, but also been visible from it, those things, you know, operated against us. But I always felt that it was really a shame— that the public lost on that, you know, because we lost a lot of possible outstanding recreation there.

I can't remember exactly what the percentages of gross that were bid by Bob Brandt and Walt Disney, but they were significantly above our one and a half percent. It seems to me, though, that they were around three percent. I'm not sure of that. But then we issued a permit to develop Mt. Reba, on the Stanislaus, which was near Dodge Ridge. But that was bid in at roughly five percent, which was mind boggling to everybody. But it was really good news to Earl Bachman, [laughs] who had been arguing for years that we weren't collecting enough money from the ski area operators and that they were getting a semi-free ride. And of course, we used that for years to talk to the ski industry about, "Well, look, here was a guy that bid this on his own, you know, in the prospectus. We didn't force him to do it at all." And he was successful. Now, after the first ten years, he applied for a reduction in fee, I'd have to admit, and claimed that, you know, he was losing money and all that sort of thing. But it still was a major turning point in the whole process of trying to establish reasonable user fees.

One other thing that took place about that time was the Marshall Lindh study commissioned by the Washington office. That was two fellows that were Forest Service

retirees, Howard Marshall, who had been, I think, chief accountant, and Axel Lindh, who had been in personnel, I believe.

KIRBY: I'm not sure about that, but I remember the names.

FEUCHTER: Yeah, L-i-n-d-h. Well, they commissioned them to make a study of all of the special use operations on the National Forest System, and come up with a proposed fee system, you know, for those kinds of private semi-exclusive uses. And of course, the majority of the study took place in Region Five because we had the majority of the commercial permits. Some of the larger ones were in places like Region Two and Region Four at Alta, and Region Six, but they only had a few compared to Region Five. They did a very good study. They used all sorts of exterior information, you know, from other kinds of businesses, such as the rate of return on grocery stores, motels, gas stations, and all that sort of thing, and really came up with a mighty good system. It was then tweaked a bit by the Forest Service. And out of that came what we called the "Graduated Rate Fee System."

The system was special because, for the first time, it was able to recognize:

1) Land productivity - by the amount of investment a permittee was willing to put on it;

2) Relation of sales to assets by incorporating assets (called GFA, or Gross Fixed Assets) into the formula;

3) Increase in fee percentage as the ratio of sales to assets increase; and

4) Good management vs. poor management

By that time, it was sometime in late '71. I remember that because I transferred at that time to the Washington office [laughs] as an assistant director in recreation. And the winter sports program was part of my bailiwick. And one of my first assignments was to go to the National Ski Area Operators Association Annual Meeting, and introduce and explain the Graduated Rate Fee System to them [laughs] which, you know, was about like going out and asking for your head to be chopped off. [|Laughter|] I mean, oh, jeez. Initially they were friendly — they knew me from my Region Two days and Region five, and I was pretty well liked. But boy, I came in with a subject that was not well liked at all.

Unfortunately, another one of our permitee groups, the National Forest Recreation Association, which had our other kinds of permitees in it, summer homes and organization sites, a few winter sports, before we were able to contact them about Graduated Rate Fee System, or GRFS [pronounced Grufus] as we called it, well, they heard about it through the winter sports operation. And they were really mad. They felt like they had really been done in. And of course, the Graduated Rate Fee System did raise fees for a lot of people, and of course, that's all they saw was the fee was going up, nothing else good about it, how it was done or anything. And yet the two men, Marshall and Lindh, who had done the initial work, were really outstanding people and had done an excellent job.

What else should we talk about? Well, there was one other thing I thought maybe might be of interest, relating to fees, and that was things like electronic sites. You know, we had always had trouble trying to establish the fee for use of National Forest land

regardless of what the use was, because it's hard to find comparables. And electronic sites became a really difficult one, — and this was centered pretty much on the Angeles early on, because there were so many electronic sites put in on the Angeles Forest that beamed right in to the LA Basin. And the electronic site would take up maybe a quarter of an acre. They'd have a tower and a building, and that was about it. And yet, without that electronic site, well, the radio station or the TV station or the radio repeater station or whatever it was, was useless. I mean, you know, the TV couldn't be broadcast if you didn't have that site up there. And so one way of looking at it was that those things had immeasurable value. So it wasn't feasible, really, to charge on the basis of the land that they occupied — I mean, the land that they occupied under permit, because that wasn't close to what the value was that they were receiving. So Region 5 finally developed, a system of trying to relate to the value, not of the improvements that they put on the site, but of the operation that they performed. And of course, that led to all sorts of arguments. But I think it was a very significant thing, particularly there because of those sites on the Angeles, and of course later on, other places. But probably still there are more electronic sites on the Angeles than any other forest, I suspect.

Another thing that happened in Southern California in the early days was the Rim of the World Drive. Do you remember that? It led from San Bernardino up to Lake Arrowhead, and then on up to Big Bear Lake.

KIRBY: I don't remember that name.

FEUCHTER: Yeah. Well, I think it was State Highway 18. And it was — I don't remember the date, but it had to be fairly early. They wanted to widen the road because of the heavy use, but it ran along the side of those very steep mountains. It was very twisty and turny and needed to be straightened out and widened. So I suppose it must have been in, what, 1960s, probably? Somebody in engineering might remember that.

But they came up with the idea of what they called "side hill viaducts." And they actually, instead of cutting into the hillside, because some of those slopes were so steep that the fill would never catch. You know, it would just keep running all the way down the slope. You couldn't make a cut and fill situation, all you could have was cut. So when they came to the areas where they needed fill, they built concrete piers into the side of the mountain, and then built on top of that, sort of like a freeway structure would be now. And of course, nowadays it wouldn't be anything compared to the freeways that we have built. But in those days it was rather spectacular to have these chunks of freeway, if you will, that stuck out of the side of the mountain that had this highway on it. It eliminated all sorts of twists and turns on that Highway 18.

KIRBY: Like a cantilever.

FEUCHTER: Exactly, yeah. Exactly.

One other thing that involved land exchange and fees, on the north end of the Inyo was the town of Lee Vining, up by Mono Lake. Mono Lake at that time was considered just sort of a desolate area that was very saline, pretty much like the Great Salt Lake, and no one thought much about it. Since then it's been made into a scenic area. But anyway,

Lee Vining was on the borders of Mono Lake. It was named after a guy, an early settler there by the name of Vining. His first name was Lee, Lee Vining.

Half of the town of Lee Vining was on private land and half was on National Forest. The boundary line ran at an angle through the town. [laughs] And so it turned out that roughly half the town was under commercial permit from the Forest Service, and a couple of the businesses, half of their business was under permit and the other half wasn't. It was a terrible mess. And of course, we were forever having battles about signs and fees, etc. One part of town would put up a sign, but we wouldn't allow them to put that kind of sign up on our part of town; and the fee that the private charged was different than ours. And it just went on and on.

And so our final solution to that was to exchange out of the town. The idea sounded glorious, we'd get out from under all the problems. But it became a very difficult task, because everybody that was going to give up something, you know, had an inflated idea of what it was worth, of course. The guy that finally solved that was the same Everett Jensen in the regional office. He came and spent days negotiating with those people down there. He was assisted by Earl Bachman, who had been the one struggling with the fee system for the town of Lee Vining for years and years, and had always maintained that those people weren't paying anywhere near enough. And he had all sorts of data. We had a gas station there, you know, that was under permit. And Earl had gone out and he'd gotten all sorts of data from the petroleum industry on how much money a gas station normally would pay for the right to have a gas station, and used that to try to demonstrate that our fees were way too low. But anyway, our final solution was we did finally exchange out of Lee Vining.

Just a couple things about winter sports, now that I think about it, and that was that the winter sports didn't really get started in any significant way until after World War II, so it was only about '47, '48 that it really got started. And it was a result of, for the most extent, people from the Tenth Mountain, skiers, I mean, guys that had been skiers in the Tenth Mountain coming back and wanting to start ski areas. Slim Davis was one of those. Snow Valley, down on the San Bernardino was created by Johnny Elbrum, I believe his name was, who was a Tenth Mountain guy. Vail was initially developed by a Tenth Mountain person by the name of Pete Siebert. But you know, the Tenth Mountain folks did feature prominently in early winter sports development. I'm sure there's several others around I've forgotten. Oh, I think Steve Bradley at Winter Park in Colorado was another one. And also Table Mountain, at Wrightwood, on the San Berdu. But anyway, you know that that was a thing that gave emphasis to it. And there was a fairly tight clique of people early on.: I'll bet.: It wasn't until years later, really, that we went beyond the individual personalities and got corporations involved in it.

I was going to say something about the California Water Plan, which you remember, started with the need to move water from northern California to southern California, basically, and the construction of major reservoirs on the National Forest, like what originally was called Trinity Reservoir and Shasta Reservoir, and then Whiskeytown, which was a much smaller reservoir near Shasta. And it later became the Shasta-Trinity National Recreation area. And I guess Trinity Reservoir, I think, became renamed, if I remember right, for a congressman that was very helpful to the Forest Service over the years, Bizz Johnson. Harold P. Bizz Johnson, wasn't that his name?

KIRBY: I think you're right.

FEUCHTER: Yeah, I think that was it. He was from Roseville. He had a large, large district because it was sparsely populated, for the most part. [laughs] And a good share of it had National Forest land in it. So he was heavily involved in a lot of our fee issues and developments like the California Water Plan, and permits for that.

The water plan brought the aqueduct down the San Joaquin valley. It was necessary to put in some pumping stations. One of those was at Pyramid Lake on the north side of the Angeles, that we initially thought would have great recreation potential. But the problem was that it was put in with the idea of providing for peak power demands. When the need for power was great, they would draw Pyramid Reservoir down rapidly causing a 10 or 12 foot drop in the level of the lake. Then, at off peak times the water would be pumped back.

So it really wasn't the grand recreation opportunity as we had initially thought it would be. Then they also pumped water over to the backside of the San Bernardino N.F. into Cedar Springs Reservoir. And that was a pretty good size manmade reservoir that was filled totally by pumping, which I always thought was a rather outstanding thing. So as far as I know, that's still functioning that way. I think the level on that is maintained fairly constant, and has become a pretty good recreation opportunity.

I guess there's a lot that could be said about the snow avalanche control program, but probably since that doesn't really involve Region Five that much, well, it probably isn't something we need to talk about. We did do a task force report on winter sports training. But that was along about '62 or '3. But I was in Region Two by that time.

KIRBY: Avalanche activity was centered in Region Two, so it reached over to California, I guess, at some point.

FEUCHTER: Well, it sort of started in Region Four, at Alta, early on. And that was in the days of Monty Atwater and Ed LaChappelle. They would put on an avalanche school. They pioneered the use of explosives, and they got approval to use cannons from the military, first field howitzers and then recoilless rifles to shoot at the avalanches and cause them to either slide or stabilize.

The issue became, over time, as the ski areas became bigger and more well financed whether or not the Forest Service, and the government in the form of the Forest Service, should be performing avalanche control for the ski area permitee. I mean, after all, we didn't do his ski patrol for him, we didn't run his ski shop, we didn't run his ski lessons for him. We didn't do anything for him, except we collected a fee from him, and then we did avalanche control. So there were those of us, and I was in the lead of that group, that believed that the avalanche control program should be taken over by the ski area operator.

One of the things that prevented that from happening was the fact that they were using these military weapons that were still actual weapons, and on the inventory of the military. And the only reason they were using it was because the military loaned it to another government agency, namely, the Forest Service, and that they were being operated by government employees. Well, we tried having the ski area operator become a government employee for the moment that he was pulling the trigger and things like

that. But one of the big problems we had was that in truth, the folks that were involved in doing that had so much pride of accomplishment in what they were doing that they didn't really want to give it up. And so we were sort of like pushing a string, or trying to punch a cloud. It wasn't a very easy target, as it were, and we had a hard time overcoming that.

The way we finally came around to doing it — and it isn't totally overcome even to this day — but we made great inroads by promoting the idea of the Forest Service taking the lead in avalanche control by being the one that provided the training for people that did avalanche control, rather than being the ones that actually did the control. And our point was that the trainer is the guy that knows, the guy that's doing it is just a technician that's been trained by the trainer. And so we started putting on a National Avalanche School. And about that time, the Forest Service Research had started a snow research program at Fort Collins, Colorado, in Region Two, at the experiment station there. Pete Martinelli was in charge of that, a wonderful guy, really, practical researcher, you know, if you can believe such a thing. [laughs]

They (research)had a lot of expertise. They had done a lot of research on what caused avalanches, and so on. They'd built on the early work done by LaChappelle and Atwater at Alta, but carried it further. Martinelli became one of the principal instructors for us at the Avalanche School. And so we started doing that, and we encouraged ski area operators to send their people to our Forest Service Avalanche School. We also did send Forest Service people, but we tried to have a majority of the people, the students, be private sector. And that helped a lot, because over the years, then, the private sector guys did start taking over.

Other things were developed — a compressed air gun that would fire projectiles, but never was as successful as the recoilless rifle, unfortunately. But for the most part, most of the areas were developed where we worked out ways that the avalanche work could be controlled without the use of the military weapons. So there was only a very few places like Alta, where it was necessary to continue use of military weapons. And frankly, I don't know what they're doing there nowadays. There was a lot of glory, you know, in that. You know, firing that cannon, boy, the public could line up and watch. And there everybody was in their uniform, and all that. So it was pretty spectacular, all right.

Most of the ski areas in Colorado never did require weapons. They needed it on the State Highway over Arapaho Basin, and they needed it on Arapaho Pass. But that wasn't a ski area. And the need for that was eliminated when they built the Eisenhower Tunnel, because that went underneath the Continental Divide and eliminated the need to keep the pass open. So most of the Region Two areas never did really need to have military weapons to control their avalanche problems.

I should mention Slim Davis just once more, because Slim was so important to the ski area development on National Forest land. He was just really well thought of by the ski industry as well as the Forest Service. He was a leader in the use of National Forest lands for skiing, but at the same time he was a strong proponent of making them pay a reasonable fee, which is pretty good. He was honored in 1987, at the Governor's Cup Races in Colorado as one of the pioneers of skiing. He was one of the first ones honored. I was honored to be able to speak in his behalf because he had died by that time. But I always thought that was a really fine thing that they did for him.

I'm trying to think of southern California things you mentioned yet, but what else we need to talk about.

KIRBY: It looks like you've touched on those things that I mentioned.

FEUCHTER: There's one other group that I wanted to talk about — or actually, two groups, that made use of the National Forest. And [laughs] it happened all over, but we got some of the early use of it in Region Five, maybe the first use. And that was the Hells Angels Motorcycle group, and also the Rainbow Family.

The Hells Angels descended on the Stanislaus Forest and took over one of our major campgrounds there for their annual get-together. And of course, they were a pretty lawless bunch, when you got right down to it. We finally decided that what we would do is issue them a permit, although they could care less whether they had a permit or not. But we felt that we had to give them a permit, you know, so there would be something in writing and as a way to start establishing some control. So we issued them a permit, which they accepted. We didn't have a lot of restrictions [laughs] in the permit, other than sort of health and safety kind of things that even the Hells Angels were able to grudgingly agree to, I guess you'd say. And then we asked that they appoint a person that could meet with our appointed person to negotiate any kind of problems. And that was probably the smartest thing we ever did, because that kept our people out of their meeting, and it kept them from roaming all over, and we did have one person we could talk to. But I know of an occasion or two where our representative would be invited in, and the stories he would tell when he came back out of the campground, you know, of the goings-on there were just sort of scary, really. But over the years, well, with the permit, we finally did manage to get some degree of control over the Hells Angels. The first step was the idea of establishing the permit.

The more difficult group, actually, although they weren't as dangerous, I mean, physically dangerous to human life, I guess, was the Rainbow Family. And that was, you know, the '60s kind of group, the flower children kind of thing. So many of them came from good families, but they forsook everything they needed or knew for the period of time that they would spend in the Rainbow Family encampment on National Forest. And of course, they gravitated to the National Forest because that was free public land. I mean, they could be pretty easily thrown off of private land. And a lot of the other public lands weren't as hospitable, you know, like the desert, and places like that. So the National Forests were really pretty nice spots for them to go to. And the problem with them — we tried to follow the same pattern and get them under permit. But the Rainbow Family maintained that there wasn't any hierarchy. So there was no one that was a leader. And they wouldn't even admit to anybody being a leader. And the notices that were sent out were many times even printed by persons unknown, according to them. [laughs] It was just one person talking to another. And they did manage to spread the word quite effectively for over the whole western part of the United States, at least.

And then later on, the Rainbow Family showed up, as I recall, in Region Nine. And their problems were the same, it was overuse of an area. And of course, early on, we did force them to stay away from our developed sites, which is the same thing we did with the Hells Angels after they first took over a campground; the next year when they came back, we directed them to a site where we wanted them. And it was a site that

wasn't developed, but it was a nice place. We put in Don's Johns, at government expense, and garbage cans, and tried to provide for health and safety in that respect. And we did the same thing with the Rainbow Family. We required them to be outside of a developed site. But we couldn't issue a permit, because there wasn't anybody that would sign the permit as a representative, so that always was a very difficult operation to manage. And frankly, I don't know if they still exist or not. Probably the times have changed enough that the Rainbows aren't doing that anymore, I don't know. Well, at least for the time that they were in the encampment, it was free love, you know, anything goes, nudity, whatever. And yet after maybe two weeks they'd go back, and they may be going to school at the university someplace, or wherever — you know, a nice job in the department store. [laughter] And they weren't just a lot of just young kids. There were educated people. There were attorneys, some doctors in the group. So it was an amazing, amazing thing. But they just wanted to go out there and do their thing for a certain period of time. [laughs But that was a major problem for Forest Service Special Use permitting operations, to handle that kind of thing.

Oh, I had an interesting thing happen. I don't know if this would be of interest or not. But a couple of employee suggestions early on that were rejected that had to do with fire control. And I don't know if that'd be interesting for this or not. Well, one of them was that after going to some of these big fires, as I told you, as a sector boss, and being picked up in the airplane and all that. Well, when you'd get down there to the fire, they were bringing in all these Indian crews and all manner of other crews. And there was always a long time involved in getting them all signed up at the fire timekeeper's table.

So I proposed as an employee suggestion that the Forest Service produce a card, like credit cards. Now, in those days we didn't have Visa and MasterCard and all that, but we did have credit cards from the gas stations. And so the idea was the same. And the credit card would simply have their name and address, and perhaps what they were rated in the way of pay or experience level, something like that, so that when they checked in at fire camp they would just hand the card, they would imprint it, and you immediately had a record of who was there and all that sort of thing. That was turned down on the basis that it was going to be too hard to police, and people might sell the cards and all manner of problems like that. [laughs] But an interesting note on that was that when I submitted it, the administrative officer on the forest wrote a little note saying, "This'll probably be rejected, but I'll wager that in ten years they'll be doing this under some other name." [laughter]

Then I had another one that I noticed that — again, we were on a big fire. And there was a problem for the service chief — I guess I was service chief at one time and this probably came up to me, that trying to determine who and what kinds of equipment were under contract on that forest so you can immediately call on Joe Doe for a dozer, or whatever, what have you. And so I proposed that in the fire camp kits, that that information be put into service chief kits. And that was rejected on the basis that they had just set up a new finance officer position for major fires that would be able to handle that function. But those were a couple of things in fire control that—

KIRBY: About what time period was that, Roy?

FEUCHTER: Well, let's see - The credit card was in June of '60. And the other one was September of '60.

At that time, well, Norm Farrell was the chairman of the Management Improvement Committee, because he signed the memos. [laughs] I don't know, probably — was Norm chief of fire control at that time? Maybe.

KIRBY: I'm not sure of the time, but he was chief of fire control (ARF, Fire Control).

FEUCHTER: Yeah, so it may have been at that time. And then I had one other experience that people will probably be able to appreciate. But back in 1955, in August — I guess a little before August — July, well, there was a change in the law as far as paying firefighters. And I need to reread this. Okay. Well, this had to do with differential pay. And my recollection is that under certain situations or after a certain amount of time, your differential pay could be less than your regular pay. And so what that was resulting in was that people that went on fire call and put in overtime would get paid less for their overtime than they did on their regular pay rather than more, as is usually the case. And that just didn't seem right to me. I was an FCA at the time, and gung ho. So after griping about it and being told by the supervisor's office that nothing could be done, well, I was of course pretty young and inexperienced, and didn't know about politics. So I wrote to my senator, who at that time was Thomas Kuchel. Do you remember him? It was K-u-c-h-e-l.

KIRBY: I remember the name.

FEUCHTER: Yeah. Well, he was one of our two senators in California. And I wrote to Senator Kuchel. I don't have a copy of my letter that I can find, but I have a copy of the response from the senator. And I outlined this whole situation and told him how bad it was. [laughs] And of course, as I learned in later years, you know what happens on that kind of thing, well the senator gets it, and he ships it to the Washington Office who sends it to the regional office. And the regional office sends it to the forest, and forest has to draft a response, and so on. It comes all the way back up the line, and you get a copy of the response from the Forest Service, which of course, I did. This one actually came from the chief's office. And it was Richard McArdle, Chief by Vern Harper. So of course they explained that I didn't really understand, and that the law required this, and they didn't intend to have anybody work without compensation, as established by law, but that this is what the law said.

So that was my first experience with a congressional letter. And I've laughed about it many times, because over the years, in my career — and particularly after getting into the Washington office, well, we were involved with so many congressionals. You know, I could just see these poor guys out there writing their heart out to some congressman or senator, and getting all this stuff back from the chain of command, as it were. On this particular instance, [laughs], I remember when I got the response, well, the forest supervisor was Eldon Ball, who was a grand old fellow. And he made a trip out to the district to talk to me about it. [laughs] He did his best to explain the Forest Service's position, which was not real easy. Then he also went on to explain the political situation of writing to your congressman. [laughter] And he didn't tell me not to do it, but it was

pretty clear by the time he got through that that wasn't the wise thing for a young upcoming guy in the Forest Service to be doing.

KIRBY: That was "101 congressional letters."

FEUCHTER: [laughs] Yeah, that's right.

One little thing I wanted to mention about the McGee Fire. It burned over, as I mentioned, a lot of area that had been old redwood logging in the old days. And when it burned over, it cleared out a lot of undergrowth that had obscured all sorts of things from us we didn't even realize were there, like old railroads. And the remains of old logging camps, parts of old flumes, steam donkey engines that were used for high lead logging the big old redwood logs. Ox shoes, where oxen were used for — served as early day tractors, as it were. An ox shoe is different than a regular horse shoe. So we found all sorts of relics there that we gathered up and made a museum up at Hume Lake on the Hume Lake District of the Sequoia. I presume that's still there. But from that there was a lot of interest generated in that old redwood logging. It was quite a major thing. They probably never made very much money out of it because it cost so much to do it, but they had these huge logs to handle, and so they would drag them down to a flume, and the flume they built — Hume Lake itself was a manmade lake that was as a reservoir to provide water for the flume to run the logs from Indian Basin and around the Hume Lake area all the way down to the upper reaches of the Kings River.

Then at the King's River there was a flume built that paralleled the river, all the way down river until it came out way down in the San Joaquin Valley. So it was a major job. They had to have flume caretakers on these flumes that each one patrolled like a mile-long section, because the logs were always breaking up the flume, and sometimes there'd be a leak, and all sorts of things went wrong. So it was tremendously labor intensive to operate that way.: I'll bet.: But that's how they got the material out of the mountains. And within the mountains they built railroads, narrow gauge railroads to move it around, but they didn't have a railroad for taking it out of the mountains because of the steep grades that would have been involved. So that was really an interesting thing, that as a result of the McGee Fire, I suppose it would have been years before we discovered a lot of that stuff, because it was covered by underbrush, and there wouldn't have been any reason anybody'd be out there roaming around looking for it, even. One other thought relating to the Redwoods on the Sequoia. In 1956, (Sept. 12), we used the Secretary of Agriculture Regulation U-3a to classify two small redwood groves - LB-1 and LB-2. I wonder how they made it through the RARE-I, RARE-II and Land Management Planning processes?

I guess that's all that I know, Steve.

KIRBY: Well, that's a lot and I just want to conclude with saying how much I appreciate your time, and all this contribution of information. I think it's very interesting.

FEUCHTER: Let me ask you a question. After I retired, I guess it was, well, I was in touch with Harvey Mack down on the Cleveland. And Harvey had started a Forest Service Historical Center on the Cleveland. I think the Cleveland had actually given him a room for it, and maybe even put some money into it, small amount, a few thousand

dollars. And at one time I know I sent him some patches, Forest Service patches. And then after I retired, I sent him an entire Forest Service uniform. And now I know we've got the Forest Service museum up in Montana — Missoula, I guess. And I don't know if Harvey's work on the Cleveland got transferred up to that. I think it did, but I don't know that. But I just thought I'd mention it, because it seems like part of a history thing, you know, that R-5 could be proud of. And at the same time, might want to follow up and see if there's something there that Harvey is aware of, if he's still around.

KIRBY: Good point. I don't know, but putting it here in our record should help.

KIRBY: Again, Roy, many thanks for your time and effort here.

FEUCHTER: Yeah, you bet. My pleasure. Always fun talking about yourself. [laughter]

[End of interview.]