ODELL, Susan FS 1973? - 2007
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**Region Five History Project**

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| **Interview with:** | **Susan Odell** |
| **Interviewed by:** | **Aaron Shapiro** |
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[Begin CD File 1.]

[Transcriber's note: Mr. Shapiro is not sitting near the microphone.]

AARON SHAPIRO: Good morning. I'm here with Susan Odell on Tuesday, May 7th [sic; May 8th], in Washington, D.C., in the Washington office of the U.S. Forest Service, and we're going to be having a discussion, a bit of an oral history around the changing workforce [unintelligible] for Region Five. Welcome, Susan.

SUSAN ODELL: Thank you.

WARNER: I just want to give you the chance, at least initially, to provide some brief background. If you want to spell out your name so they have it for the record, a bit about—if you want to talk a little bit about your youth, your background, your education, your entrance into the Forest Service, and then we'll get a little bit more into your experience in Region Five.

ODELL: Okay. Well, my name is Susan Odell, and Odell is spelled Capital O-small d-e-l-l, without an apostrophe. And that has occasionally caused problems with people not understanding that there are different family backgrounds. But getting the spelling right once is usually good enough.

SHAPIRO: [unintelligible].

ODELL: That's right. Most people think the apostrophe belongs in there and the capital D. Again, over the years—for me, it's mostly the fact that it shows up in legal situations where it shouldn't be. You know, it's like on my Red Cross ID card or in the telephone book, where people use it for billing and stuff like that. So anyway.

A little bit on my background is that I grew up in western Oregon and was basically surrounded by forests, lived in the coastal range mountains in Lane County, Oregon, and really enjoyed being outdoors. Even though that's known as the wet side or the rainy side of the Oregon, just spent a lot of time outdoors. I lived there from when I was an infant all the way through the time I turned thirteen, although I was not born there; I was born in a small rural area in Virginia. But throughout my growing-up years, I always lived in places with forests and mountains, and I think it was a very strong influence on what I eventually decided to do with college and a career.

My father worked as a logger when we lived in Oregon, and there's [sic; there are] a lot of perceptions and stereotypes about loggers that I know to not be true because I actually saw him and many of the people he worked with, his friends and saw how much they actually cared for the forests and the mountains in which they worked. And in fact, I've done some written work in my biography material here to expand a little bit more about that. But he definitely was a very strong influence on me and my siblings with regard to conservation and expectations that people really treat nature carefully and not abuse it. And I do believe that that was also from a very early age a strong influence on what I finally chose to do.

His background was primarily in farming and logging and those kinds of things in the mountains of southwestern Virginia, where he grew up. He also saw the challenges that people

have, whether or not there are people trying to make their living from the land or people with small businesses in a community, trying to make the community work. And so I think he really understood very well what it took how much energy it took to make a difference, to take care with the land and not mess something up.

He taught us all sorts of things, including how to shoot, how to garden—I mean, just a variety of things. And he also let me pick out my first real fishing pole for my birthday present for my sixth birthday, and I still remember that. I mean, I loved to fish when I was a kid, and that was one of the other things that I can really appreciate as I look back, is that just because I was a girl, he didn't keep me from doing things or trying things, nor did he have expectations that I had to stay within certain norms or bounds for little girls.

And it's a good thing because I really didn't like frilly dresses and the color pink very much, and so it was I think a really good upbringing in the sense that I had his support as well as my mother's support for doing well in school but also taking on different kinds of activities and challenges as I was growing up.

We all loved to go camping as a family, and so that meant that we all learned about starting a campfire but also how to make sure it was a safe one so that we weren't the potential cause of a wildfire. And just a variety of things that even though he had three daughters before my brother was born, he always was very happy to have us with him in the out-of-doors and doing activities and not expecting us to sit quietly somewhere and take care of girlie kinds of things. But if we wanted to be girlie at times, that was okay too. It wasn't an expectation for all of us to be tomboys, either.

So I think just the place that I grew up and the influences that I had were really important. And one of the things I also wrote about is that in the sixth grade my school joined a program

that the state of Oregon I believe started in the sixties, and the little school that I was part of was not involved the first few years, but it became one of the schools in a coalition doing outdoor education. I was thrilled because only sixth graders were allowed to go, and that was the first year our school participated in the program.

SHAPIRO: [unintelligible] the history of outdoor education.

ODELL: Oh, yes, yes. I already—but I was truly impressed by the people who taught the classes and took us on the nature hikes and really went into more depth. And I know, looking back, it was a combination of, like, science teachers and state employees, and I suspect there could have been Forest Service employees involved. I mean, it might have all been, say, state Division of Forestry people, but the camp that we spent our week-long overnight event at was not that far from the Forest Service district office, and so I think it's very possible that employees from the Siuslaw National Forest or the Mapleton District specifically could have been in that team of people that really gave a lot of themselves.

They showed how much they loved the out-of-doors, but they really put science very clearly in the center, in that just because you're interested in wild animals and think wildlife is cute or something like that, that's not enough. You really need to learn about their habitat. You really need to learn about what it takes for this water to stay clean and what different kinds of critters depend on it. You know, it's not just the ones you might think of fishing for or the ones that float on top and fly away, like the ducks and the geese, but got us down into looking at the really small aquatic insects and so forth, to say, "This is where you have to look sometimes to find out how clean the water is or where the water problems might be."

I can remember specific things during that week that really clicked for me because I loved school. I'd always enjoyed learning, and science was always one of my most favorite

subjects. And so here was, like, how you put science and the outdoors together. There were at least some women teachers involved in that, although I think most of the cadre there were men.

SHAPIRO: Teachers from the school or teachers from the other [unintelligible]?

ODELL: Teachers—

SHAPIRO: [unintelligible] agencies [unintelligible]?

ODELL: Yes, I think possibly—I think it must have been teachers that volunteered as staff, but they weren't necessarily from my school. I went to a very small elementary school. From the time I was there, first grade through seventh grade—I went to Triangle Lake Elementary School. This is, again, in Lane County, Oregon. That school was so small that we had one class per grade, and the number of students in my class ranged—years when we had a lot, there were, like, twenty-one, twenty-two kids, and that was it; years when families had moved or whatever, we went down to as low as, like, fifteen kids in the class.

The ratio of boys to girls stayed fairly constant. It was always about—like, if there were fifteen kids, it was, like, ten boys, five girls. And if there were twenty kids, it was, like, six girls and the rest boys. So that was always kind of the ratio in that particular class. That also meant that growing up, I had boys as friends as often as I had, say, a close girlfriend or two. And I think later on that probably served well when I did eventually get into forestry school. The ratio was a lot higher [laughter] of, quote, "boys to girls." So it was something that did not make me uncomfortable to be in situations where there was a lot higher ratio versus maybe being in a classroom that had a lot more female students in it. That was maybe more unusual as time went on.

Anyway, the outdoor education experience I think was really a plus. The other part that I enjoyed—again, to put kind of different things in perspective—is through being a 4-H Club

member, I did a lot of activities as part of the club during the school year. But we also got a chance to go to camp every summer, and it turned out it was the same organizational camp that we went to for the outdoor ed program.

So that particular place was, again, very special because, whether it was 4-H or outdoor ed or some of the Girl Scout activities and so forth, whenever we were out in the woods, there were just people around who cared about nature, who cared about conservation, who understood—most of these people lived in areas where resources were being used, not just preserved. And so I think I ended up with a very strong wise-use ethic even before I knew to call it that.

And so that's something that I think is different than [sic; from] perhaps some of the people that get involved in, say, forestry or other natural resource careers, maybe in more current times, is that I actually lived in a situation where I saw the value of what a tree could do from a standpoint of being beautiful or contributing to clean water in a watershed, but also the importance of it being cut into lumber and being used by families for their homes, understanding that paper had to come from somewhere. You know, I mean, just really understanding how the pieces fit and that it didn't have to mean that everything was trashed after a timber sale or that everything had to be sacrificed because some new development was going in somewhere.

I think I was very fortunate that we had neighbors and friends who really cared and tried to do right by the land and the water. So I think that was just a very strong, supporting kind of base for me to grow from and learn from.

SHAPIRO: Generally, just so [that] I have some sense for the record, [so that] we have some sense of when this is taking place, [please tell us whether it was] late sixties, seventies?

ODELL: Well, let's see, I was in—

SHAPIRO: I don't want to force you to—[Laughs.].

ODELL: No, no. I started first grade—let's see, that would be in '57, 1957, and so sixth grade would have been in '63. And then going on to, like, seventh grade—that's when we left Oregon, the fall of 1964. So, yes. Is that right? I think so. I think that's what I've got written down.

But anyway, the information that I gained through this kind of stuff I don't think was even as important, though, as the experiential aspect of it. In relating kind of this oral history purpose, that's one of the things I think that has changed over time with regard to the people who were choosing to come work for the Forest Service. The different experiences they were having as they were growing up, whether it was the fact that more of them came from urban backgrounds instead of rural or more came from an experience of really getting concerned about the environment but to the point of saying, "Oh, everything that happens out here has the potential of being bad, and so we have to really protect everything." So a real different kind of upbringing and experience.

So if I were to look at what my son has learned through school, he came through elementary and junior high school in the nineties. I guess you could say the general way of looking at that, the nineties. And there were times he would come home from school, and this is in Silver Spring, Maryland, a fairly urban area. And he would talk about something. I'd go, *Oh, boy, so that's what they're teaching.*

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: *Ohh-kay.*

SHAPIRO: [unintelligible] a lot different. [Laughs.]

ODELL: And they had outdoor education. It was also sixth grade. They got to spend a week at [unintelligible] camp, and actually they looked for parents to volunteer. They needed chaperones

in the evenings. They needed help for certain activities. So I volunteered for that. You know, I was very curious. And in general, a lot of what they did, again, was focused on the science. But there were times that there were certain philosophies presented and certain belief systems that obviously influenced the teachers and the staff at the outdoor ed—and so it was a challenge to figure out how to approach those people and talk to them more about that. It was a challenge to talk to my son and say, "Okay, here's what the teacher says, and here's what you have to learn for class. However, here's what else you might need to be learning." And luckily he's very bright and was always curious about those kinds of things and was open to thinking about the fact that, oh, different people can have different opinions.

There were, again, different times when I had opportunities to do something more than just for my son, and so I think it was, like, fourth grade. He came home and they had a little paper about parents could come in and talk about their careers. And he says, "Oh," he says, "I think it would be really great if you could do this." And so there was some PTA meeting or whatever soon after that, and I talked to the teacher. I said, "How much would you like this to take of the day?" I said, "Because I could not only talk about my career but I could potentially do some environmental education that relates to the different things I've done."

And the teacher was very open to that, and so I got to spend a good part of one day interacting with my son's whole fourth grade class, including doing some little role playing kinds of things with regard to natural resources and where things like spotted owl issues came—because at the time, this stuff was in the papers, and they were hearing about it from their parents or they were seeing about it on TV. And it was really exciting because I also got to bring little girls forward and talk to them about, you know, in my career I've done these kinds of things, and would ask different girls in the class to come forward and do something with me around that.

So it was a real different kind of event, but it was a lot of fun, and the teacher was, like, "Oh, wow! This is better than just some mom or dad coming in and saying, 'I go to the office, and here's the kind of paperwork I do.'" But I do think that the kinds of things that kids are taught in school can be fairly different than what I was taught, and yes, outdoor ed can still focus on science, but just so many more kids are living in urban environments or suburban environments, and have certain limitations on their exposure. So many fewer kids go camping or understand that, yes, that stinky paper mill actually is what produces your toilet paper or the books that you read or whatever. I mean, there's [sic; there are] just some real differences in the overall life experience and the context.

So that's something that I think is a challenge, not just to say how the Forest Service looks at its publics but what are we really going to see in policy decision making and how voters vote over time, with taking care of the land, because sometimes we know that preserving something or protecting something is in fact not the healthiest way to go for the long run.

So, again, those kinds of things I can really appreciate now, looking back, the people and the context in which I grew up and what it really did to kind of shape my interests. I think if we had stayed in Oregon, there's still a good chance that I would have gone to college and gone to forestry school there.

But when we moved to Virginia, the small rural town in the mountains of southwestern Virginia, there was in some ways an additional motivating force for wanting to go to college, which is I literally felt like I had gone back in time or gone into a place where small minds and prejudice really ruled the roost.

SHAPIRO: And this was different and very different from [unintelligible] in Oregon.

ODELL: Very different, yes, even though where I lived, we didn't have very many people with different racial or ethnic backgrounds; we were mostly white Protestant families, maybe a few Catholic families. But occasionally there would be Native American families that were somewhere in the community or near where I lived. We would see blacks when we went to town, and "to town" meant driving forty-five to fifty miles, one direction, to the city of Eugene, Oregon, for example. And so riding around or shopping or whatever, we might see some Hispanics or blacks or whatever, but [there was] not a whole lot of interaction.

But I'm also very thankful my parents did not—if they had any prejudices or fears or whatever they did not communicate those to us. Everybody was treated very well, and I think we essentially were expected to treat people with respect, regardless of ethnic background, skin color, whatever.

And then coming back to this small rural place in Virginia, where I heard kids my age and younger say awful remarks about black people—and I was thinking, *What is wrong with these people?* And then I would see and hear other things just in the community. And it was obvious that what might have been happening in the larger United States about changes in ideas about race, well, and gender and a lot of other things—

SHAPIRO: And this is during the sort of heyday and so on.

ODELL: Yes, this is in the mid to late sixties, when I was—you know, eighth grade through high school. And so for me it was just like, *Uch, I definitely have to get out of <u>this</u> place*. Plus I wanted to do something more with my life. But that was a real awakening about just how different small-world communities could be regarding race and prejudice. So, again, in terms of change, I'm glad in one sense that I had that experience because it made me much more sensitive

and much more aware that there were lots of people out there who weren't as open-minded or as accepting or whatever the word might be, as I was or as my family had been.

And the way that people treated each other was much more hierarchical. It wasn't just about race, it was the status of your family in the community made more difference to kids, and they wanted to know which church you went to. They didn't care whether or not you were Christian or whatever, but it got down to, you know, which church. Hearing kids my age use those as ways of kind of dividing up people and putting them in different classes, again, was not all that pleasant to me. I realized this is not how I wanted to live.

And yet there were plenty of really wonderful, caring people. And, again, most of the people there cared about the land. Most of them were farmers or small business people. But, on the other hand, [I] saw just a lot more just overall disregard for things like litter. Or in the Jefferson National Forest, the national forest closest [sic; closest national forest], and part of that county is national forest—that's Bland County, B-l-a-n-d, County, Virginia. People were used to dumping all kinds of garbage, everything from old appliances to just household kitchen garbage, old papers, whatever. Just some mountain road up on the forest, and there would be some curve with a turnout, and off the side of that curve would just be all—

SHAPIRO: [unintelligible].

ODELL: —I mean, a dump, a dump. I mean, it wasn't like there weren't official county dumps to take your trash to. And I had just never seen that before. I thought—you know, it would be one thing if they said, "Well, I've got this place on my own property; I'm going to dump it and cover it up" or whatever. But, no, they would take the time to haul it up some mountain road and dump it across public lands. And some of the stuff that they would allow to get into the streams. I mean, it was a real [sic; really] interesting contrast.

As I mentioned earlier, I was really involved in 4-H when I was growing up in Oregon, and when we moved back to Virginia, I found out that there really weren't any 4-H Clubs active at that time in that immediate area. And so I contacted the cooperative extension service, and I said, "I've been an active 4-H'er. I really don't want to stop. What are the options for me to stay involved in some way?" And they said, "We can look for some leaders and try to get a club going here, but until then, we can have you kind of signed up, and you can participate in district-level competitions." I found out that there were lots of things going on with regard to demonstrating things—you know, doing public speaking and so forth.

And so the spring after we moved there, I participated in a district-level competition for public speaking. And my speech and poster were about water pollution and the concerns that I had started to raise. And I had done some research and so forth. To me, this was a perfectly good topic. Well, everybody else at the public speaking competition was talking about things like "How do you make a rope holder for your new heifer?"

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: You know, "What's the best way to do X, Y, Z?" I could tell from the look in the eyes of the judges for this that they were kind of like, "Oh, what do we do with this one?" You know? [Laughter.] I got very good comments on my speaking, on the presentation and so forth, but the topic really didn't hit them all that great. It was a learning incident in the sense that it didn't turn out quite the way I had hoped, but on the other hand, I realized that, *Well, things really are in flux*. Because one of the judges actually did ask a question. He didn't just give me feedback but asked a question, because I was using words that weren't all that popular even in the media at that time, having to do with ecosystems and environment. It's hard to think back now, but those were really kind of—

SHAPIRO: You were ahead of your time.

ODELL: —yes, new words, and so here's this adult who was asking me a question, and I think part of it was to see did I really know [sic; whether I really knew] what I was talking about, but the other [part is] I think he was actually curious. You know, he wasn't really familiar with these words, and so he was actually—I'd gotten some curiosity built up. I thought, *That's good*, you know. I realized that.

And it was during that time, and even after that, kind of the following summer, when I was really trying to think about what courses I would want to take in high school and, again, really thinking about going on to college, that I first started thinking more concretely that what I wanted to do with an education really needed to be about natural resources. I wasn't sure what that meant yet, but that people really had to be part of the equation. It couldn't just be "the science" around water or around wildlife, that seeing this person who was trying to do his job, as this judge for public speaking, and realizing that *Hey, here are adults that aren't tuned into things that I'm already seeing as really future issues if we don't take them on soon*. Made me realize people have to be part of the overall factor.

SHAPIRO: Right.

ODELL: And so that's probably one of the things also that eventually influenced what I did in some of my college studies and then eventually what I did in the Forest Service. There are little things that stand out as you look back over time.

SHAPIRO: Do you think that—I mean—and we'll get into some of the slated questions, but do you think that the experience of moving from Oregon, where you sort of suggested there *was* this real sense of understanding the resource and understanding the meaning of conservation and the environment around you, and then the move to Virginia, where it's not only in the community

but at 4-H competitions and elsewhere, where there's this sort of—I don't know, I wouldn't say—I don't want to say disrespect but maybe at some level it is that—I mean, where you see just dumping on the roadside—

ODELL: Taking things for granted.

SHAPIRO: Taking things for granted, yes. And not really understanding that without that experience, that would have somehow changed your path in some ways, do you think? I mean, if you had stayed in Oregon, in the sense that there *was* this sort of—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: I don't know [unintelligible] go back in time, but in the sense that there *was* this sort of understanding there, and what seems to have frustrated you a bit about the time in Virginia was, well, there was a total lack of understanding—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —and a lack of knowledge and maybe a lack of willingness to engage in some of this—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —discussion as well.

ODELL: Yes, I do believe that those kinds of things would have changed kind of the course of events. Again, I think I still probably would have gone to forestry school, but I might have had much more of a traditional forestry education instead of what I was actually able to do when I went to forestry school at Virginia Tech [Virginia Polytechnic Institute]. Again, I write some about that in the biographical information.

But at the time I was trying to figure out, *What does this interest in natural science add up to?* Yes, I think that's different than if I'd stayed in Oregon, because there, I think, I would

have stayed much more on the natural sciences side of things, and I probably would have spent the interest or the energy that way more than looking at *Where does this people factor come in, and how do I make sure that if I do something, it takes people into account or it reaches people or educates or whatever it is? How does it impact that as much as caring for the land would?*

So yes, I think that there would have been something very different come from that.

SHAPIRO: So it gave you the chance to sort of meld the natural resource with the sort of social and cultural side of things.

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: And that's where the experience begins [unintelligible] for you.

ODELL: Right, right. My first real experience in thinking about forestry as kind of a source of study, a possible degree, happened because I managed to get into a program in Virginia that was aimed at high school students from what we would now call underserved areas, and very definitely the community that I was in had a lot of lower-income families and just the small size of the school and some of probably the challenges of even offering some of the kinds of courses that bigger schools and urban schools would have offered—

So this program—I'm not sure what year it started, but it was only within its first couple of years when I was applied [sic; applied and was] accepted into it. It was called Upward Bound. It happened on—at least the program I was in happened on the campus of Virginia Tech. Upcoming juniors and seniors was the age group it was focused on. I was able to go two summers, and it was a six-week program. In addition to all kinds of different classes that we had, and experiences that we were exposed to to kind of give us a chance to see what the bigger world had to offer and what college could be like, every week we had one or two on-campus trips to different departments or parts of colleges.

And so we might be in the College of Arts and Sciences one time, listening to an English professor talk about creative writing or things like that. But one of the groups that I went with was hosted by the School of Forestry. We went to laboratories, and we had different people speak to us, like, out on the grounds, talking about studying about trees and the importance of that.

One of the professors who hosted this spoke about forest mensuration and really showed us all this kind of math stuff and everything else. Well, that clicked. I said, *Oh, I'm really good at math, and I like trees. Maybe that's*—and so that was my first thing, was actually thinking [that it would be] a way of putting math into the picture.

After a while and before I actual went into college, I realized that *Mmm, I like math, but not that well,* not so well that I wanted to devote my life to math and trees. [Chuckles.] But that was my first real exposure to forestry as a profession. I hadn't even realized—I mean, I knew that there were park rangers from the recreational management kind of situations, and I knew that there were people who managed the forest so that the loggers had certain direction when they went out to log, and I knew that, again, from experience through my dad. But I had never really thought in the terms of forestry as a profession.

That would have been the summer before my junior year in high school that that kind of came into the mix. And so when I was applying to various colleges, I applied for several and made sure that at least part of them had forestry schools. But I was also interested in things like oceanography, and so I applied to a couple of schools that had those kinds of programs, which were much more limited and much more expensive.

But because my family didn't really have a whole lot of money for college education, what I ended up doing was making sure I applied at state schools, and was very fortunate that

Virginia Tech offered me a scholarship and grant package where I could afford to go there, and because it was a big state school it offered choices so that even though I didn't start out as a forestry major, I wouldn't have to go very far to pick that and transfer into that.

One of the bigger influences at that time about what I was doing with college came from people like high school teachers or the high school guidance counselor, because my parents—neither one had gone to college. In fact, I was the first one in my immediate family who went to college. But my high school guidance counselor really discouraged me from pursuing forestry because "girls don't get jobs in forestry."

And so I was hesitant just to go ahead and start in the forestry field because I felt, *Well, no, I do like other kinds of things, so I should check things out*. And I was fortunate enough to have a couple of professors who [sic; whom] I'd been involved with through the Upward Bound program, who [sic; whom] I had stayed in contact with, and one of them said, "Hey, just come in as a general arts and science major. I will become your advisor. I can do that." And he said, "And then you can try out various kinds of sciences and just different things and see if there's something else that catches your interest and find out whether some other path, say, taking a biology approach, would satisfy your interests."

And so I did that. Basically by the spring quarter—Virginia Tech was on the quarter system at that time—I had figured out that nothing else really quite was doing it for me. And so he helped me arrange an appointment over in the School of Forestry, and I went and spoke with one of the professors there, who served as advisors, and basically found what I'd been looking for. You know, the interview kind of followed the lines of—I was talking about the different kinds of things that I cared about and was interested in learning about and, again, some of this interest of [sic; in] putting natural resources and people together, but having this felt need for a

real education in the sciences, of what it takes, and basically was encouraged to come on in and join the forestry program.

SHAPIRO: Do you think—I mean—and this maybe leads us somewhat into the changing workforce theme more explicitly—you talked a little bit about, you know, as a kid the ratio of boys and girls in your school and then when you get to forestry school the ratio of men to women is, I assume, at this point quite dramatic.

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: And how that might have then influenced—you know, your experience there as a female forestry student in a school probably of mostly males at the time

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: How that influenced you at that point, how it might have led to certain other—how you dealt with other situations throughout the course of your career.

ODELL: Yes, I think there are definite connections, because when I talk with the professor at that time, [Richard] "Dick" [Vesey?], there was one other female in the freshman class, and there was one more female that was going to be transferring in, would be there in the fall for sophomore year, which is when I would start, and there was one female in the graduate school. So in the whole School of Forestry, that was it.

So the size of the class that I went through was basically seventy-five students, and there were three females. But by the time I was a senior, the freshman class was also about the size same [sic; same size], say, seventy-five, eighty students, but 25 percent of it—

SHAPIRO: Were women.

ODELL: —were women. So we were truly in that point of change where the number of women going in—and it wasn't just forestry, because it included [unintelligible] in wildlife; it included

outdoor recreation, so I mean there were other components, but it was under the School of Forestry and Natural Resources.

So there were a fair number of the women who were going into wildlife biology degrees or there were going after an outdoor recreation degree. Not everybody was going into forestry. But even what I did was—I feel very fortunate. It was during a time when the School of Forestry looked at the fact that students did have some different interests, and they wanted to produce more than just dirt foresters; they wanted to be able to help people move into maybe slightly different variations on the theme.

And so they had the beginnings of a forest engineering program that really grew and has become quite well known. They were calling these things options rather than, like, a minor or something. What I got really excited about is [sic; was] that they had an option called environmental conservation, and so I actually got a full forestry education, all the core courses for forestry, and then some of the credits could be truly elective, where you didn't have to meet any kind of criteria. But under this option, there was this whole other group of requirements. They weren't specific courses like [sic; as they were] under the forestry program; they were, like, required electives. It's kind of an odd—I'm not even sure anymore what we called them.

But if you wanted to do environmental conservation, then you were expected to get this other kind of education along with your forestry education. It included categories like getting more economics courses or more courses in urban planning, urban and community planning. I took courses through the College of Engineering. One of them was on air pollution. Another one was on "Mining, Man and the Environment." And so you were able to kind of put together your own set—they had to be approved, but it was really a different way of, again, putting

forestry into perspective, from my standpoint in terms of: What else do you need to know if you're going to be a forester for the future?

And so I think the combination of doing this in a situation where it was mostly male and figuring out how to work well with them because, you know, we'd work on teams in different courses. You know, if you were out doing survey work, you all had to take your turn doing different parts of that. If you were working in a lab, there were times you worked as teams on research and papers.

But also I realized that why I was even in forestry school was different than [sic; from] why some of these guys were in forestry school. You know, you start at the new quarter, and you're sitting in on some class, and they'd say, "So what are you take"—you know, and I would say something like—

SHAPIRO: [unintelligible].

ODELL: Yes, or environmental economics, and they would go, "Oh, you're taking another economics course?" And just the reaction. And yet, again, at least some of them would say, "So why *are* you doing that?" They'd get beyond just the reaction and go, "Ooh, yuk." Some of them would get beyond that and say [sic; ask], "Why?" And "Why do you think *that's* important?" Or "Why would you spend your time doing that?" And so I think that experience also was good preparation for realizing that my approach to the degree that I was getting, my approach to what I wanted to do as a career didn't fit some cookie-cutter forestry pattern, although I will say that one of the things it really didn't prepare me for was some of the reactions I got from male coworkers once I got out of college. I actually was treated very well in college by my fellow students and by the vast number of professors I had who taught me with the same level of respect or expectation that they did the guys.

One professor in particular didn't, and every female that took this particular soils course was warned. It was a course that you took whether you were a forestry major or some of the other ag majors. It was kind of a basic soils course. And every female was warned by other students who'd been through it, "This guy hates girls." And he was an older professor, and I experienced it. We'd have a test and have written answers or whatever, and my answers looked very similar to the guy's sitting next to me when we'd get our tests back, and he might get an A and I'd get a B or even a B-plus. But the point was it was hard to tell what was different between what he answered and what I answered.

And there were even a couple of times that a friend of mine and I swapped papers after the end, and he, my friend, would take my paper up, kind of holding his thumb over my name at the top and say, "You know, Professor So-and-so, why did you take points off of this?" And the professor always says [sic; said], "Oh, gosh, you know, I must have been tired" or "You're right." And he says [sic; said], "Here, I'll change your grade." And he says [sic; said], "No, no, you're going to have to change Susan's grade."

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: And we only did that a couple of times because we figured he would start downgrading my friend's grade. We all cheered a couple of years later—I guess it must have been my senior year because I think I took that maybe my sophomore year. He retired. But that's really the only blatant discrimination that I ever saw in college.

But I had some really good discussions with my personal advisor and stuff like that, asking for a perception: "How do *you* think people perceive me?" or "What's going on here?" Because of that early discussion I'd had with him before I ever came into the forestry school about how I'd been recommended to stay away from this kind of thing.

So the overall experience in college was extremely positive, and so in one sense it law enforcement me to believe that any situation could be that egalitarian, and that was not true.

SHAPIRO: Right. So in a sense, the university setting, despite some holdouts—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —I mean, for the most part was increasingly adjusting to the idea of a changing workforce in forestry and natural resources, and when you got the Forest Service that wasn't totally the case—

ODELL: Right. Right, right.

SHAPIRO: —[unintelligible] experience.

ODELL: And some of it was I think probably also what was going on, again, during the time. I graduated from high school in 1969, and so I was going to college '69 through '73, so there was a lot of change going on, whether it was war protests or bra burning or people doing things for civil rights. I mean, there was a just a lot of real change in kinds of people out there and lots of issues. Yes, there were students that I went to school with that were pretty apathetic about all those things and just were into partying and football and whatever, but at the time, I was very definitely part of that female contingent at Virginia Tech that was also changing that university.

The first year I was there, it was still a requirement that coeds wear skirts to football games and other sporting events. You could not wear slacks or jeans, which to me was, like, if you're talking about modesty and propriety, what do you mean wear a skirt to climb up into Lane Stadium?

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: You know? That was the last year that that as the rule, but it was the rule. And so there was still a lot of—like, at homecoming, all the girls dressed up in wool suits with the

boyfriend, if they had a boyfriend, with the corsage, the big chrysanthemum—I mean, this whole big formal—more what I think of as more southern culture in terms of what a lady was like. And so coeds were expected to be ladies 110 percent of the time. There were other changes going on, and I think that also was evident that in classrooms, in other situations people needed to deal with that. They weren't going to get a whole lot of support if they were trying to hold some old line.

SHAPIRO: And so campus life was changing in vast ways. It was not just at Virginia Tech.

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: It's [sic; It was] at campuses across the country during that period.

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: And so you see that playing out—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: I mean, you talk about the reception you received from your fellow students as very collegial—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —and so on, but that had sort of happened.

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: And so it was in the process [cross-talk; unintelligible].

ODELL: Yes. Well, at the time too, the ratio on the campus was still very high, male to female, because it had been for so long a military-based school and so forth. The ratio when I first started there was still, like, eight or nine guys to girls [sic; eight or nine guys to each girl]. The guys hated it because it was harder to get dates, but the girls thought it was pretty great. You know, I mean, there was still that kind of stuff going on, too, you know.

But there was enough change, yes, I think in general—and it was kind of funny because when I had to take a public speaking class—by the time I worked that into my schedule, I had been in the forestry school for at least a year or so, and one of the things that the professor did was at some point during each quarter, [he] would set times when the class could pick the topic that the student had to speak on extemporaneously that day. The professor would come in, and she would say, "Okay, here are the five kids that are going to do extemporaneous speeches today. Be thinking about what topic you want."

And then she would ask for suggestions from the class. Well, it turns out—see, this was a class where—it was an early-morning class, and I was the only female in this class of guys. There were a lot of jocks who had to take it. Like, football players and all this kind of stuff. Because of the rest of their classes and their training times and stuff. So they were taking these early-morning classes. So they thought they were asking me a really tough question when they said, "What's it"—and the professor thought it was going to be tough, too. "What's it like being the only female in a class of guys?" And I said, "Hey, you forget. I'm a forestry student. I'm in classroom settings like this all the time." And they're all kind of like, "Oh."

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: "This is not such a big deal. This not a tough thing." But I did—I talked whatever the two-minute, three-minute time thing was. They, though, were still experiencing this as a new thing. They were used to classes of being all guys, and so to have one coed come in to them was still a new thing. And yet I was already, again, kind of on the front edge of that. It was just like, *This is what I've got to do to get the education that I want.*

But it was fun, too, because sometimes it means that you do get a little bit extra time to interact then because people want to find out: What is this experience like? And so you get to

know some people maybe that if you were just part of the bigger, mixed group, you wouldn't get a chance to meet some of these people. So that was a real bonus sometimes.

Or getting a chance to meet another woman on campus because you're one of two or three in a class and live in different dorms. You only have this one class together and you might find out, *Wow, here's somebody here that I might actually want to build some friendship with.*

So there were [more] benefits to that than just being a total, even mix, kind of heterogeneous mix of people. Yes, definitely—again, the context was a good place for doing some learning and did have some influence later on.

SHAPIRO: Did you go straight from Tech to the Forest Service?

ODELL: Yes, I did. I didn't go into a permanent job. In fact, the opportunities I had were a summer in Georgia at what's called Brasstown Bald. They had, like, a GS-7 job for the summer there at the center. And then another one was what's called a 180-day appointment, and I don't think anybody calls them that anymore, at actually a lower grade as a technician, but it was guaranteed for not just the summer but on into the following fall. And it was in Virginia at the Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area.

It was the one that actually had some potential—even though it was a technician job—some potential for additional work and the possibility of getting some kind of permanent employment. But I didn't start out in forestry school thinking about the Forest Service, nor did I necessarily focus on the Forest Service as I got further along in education. Part of what happened is that as I started interviewing with different companies and agencies and so forth that came to campus—we were advised to start interviewing, like, during our junior year, and so most of us did.

What I found is that a lot of these other entities weren't really excited about hiring a woman forester. If I knew then—

SHAPIRO: You mean private companies?

ODELL: Oh, it wasn't just private companies. It was—well, the Boy Scouts of America were there. They were looking to hire somebody for their national office in forestry and forestry education in their Boy Scout program. There was the Federal Land Bank, which hires, like, field—and I don't even know the right phrase or the name for the positions now, but people who work out in the field, so it would be, like, a district office or whatever. They often hired foresters for those jobs. And then it was some private timber companies. Although I really wasn't very serious about wanting to work for a timber company, I was looking for something that put a different mix with people and natural resources.

But I had things like Federal Land Bank folks—I think there was [sic; were] two guys there—near the end of the interview, they said [sic; asked], "Well, how would you handle an assignment where there is a wildfire nearby?" And he says [sic; said], "We expect our"—and I'll call them district managers—"to pull together fire crews from the local community and go out there and be part of the firefighting force. And they have to spend the night out there. They're on duty more than just [a] eight-hour day. How would you handle something like that?"

I mean, they were really concerned about this. And I said [sic; asked], "Well," I said [sic; asked], "do you offer additional fire training?" I said, "I've done X, Y, Z, which was part of a volunteer fire training process we did on campus so that we could help locally with things." I said, "I've done some of this. Do you offer more training to your employees? I'd take additional training. Do you have equipment, or do people have to bring their equipment?" I said, "I'd probably do some pre-planning to figure out what would it take [sic; what it would take] to do

this. And then," I said, "I'd have my bag with water, whatever I needed." I said "I'd go out and do the job."

And they were, like, "You'd spend the night in the woods on a fireline with a bunch of men?" I mean, they were really very concerned about—"Well, we're not sure how appropriate that would be." I mean, they weren't hiding what their concerns were. To them, you know, that became a higher level concern, whether or not I was trained or could be trained, whether or not I could be prepared and supervised, and whether or not—and eventually it was, like, well, they didn't know whether these guys would be willing to go out and, quote-unquote, "follow me" on a fire crew.

The Boy Scouts of America? It was, like, "Well, you know, we saw your name on the list, and we wondered about interviewing a girl, but we appreciate you [sic; your] spending the time and going through this, but, you know, we're just not sure how appropriate it would be for a female to have a job like this in the *Boy* Scouts of America." I knew right then there was no chance, and I said, "That's very interesting. How do you think all the women who are den leaders, all the mothers who have spent time with Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts would feel, knowing that you think it's inappropriate to have a woman helping lead nationally in your program?" And they had no answer for that.

Well, at the time I was doing this, there really wasn't a real strong set of laws or rules or anything else to go by for job discrimination or hiring discrimination or whatever. And in some of these, I hardly knew how to respond. To me, it was, like, *These people are not going to change their mind. It won't matter what I say.* So that was the first inkling that there was [sic; were] still quite a few barriers to be dealt with.

But the Forest Service didn't ask questions like that. They had sent, oh, I think someone there in the spring of my junior year and then someone in the fall of my senior year, and I don't think I met with the person there in the spring; I think it was my senior year. And asked very open-ended questions, was very professional, but also told everybody the same thing, because we always compared notes afterwards, which is the Forest Service really doesn't have any jobs.

SHAPIRO: They were interviewing [unintelligible].

ODELL: But they really didn't have—and it's true: They really didn't have many jobs. And it was mostly Region Eight that was doing the contact. And they acknowledged that primarily what they were going to be able to offer were positions to co-op ed students, the students that had already had some of that experience and had been promised a placement but that they were no longer signing up any co-op ed students in the Forest Service.

We had also been told by our advisers that it wouldn't do us any good to try to go after federal jobs through OPM [Office of Personnel Management] because at the time, the OPM roster for professional forestry had been closed. It didn't matter whether you had a degree or had a degree and previous jobs or whatever. Nobody was getting onto the roster.

But during my senior year we found out that the technician roster was open, the forestry technician roster, and even though it had some fairly new vets from Vietnam and so forth getting on that one, that [sic; delete "that"] if we took the test we would automatically, because of a degree, get a very high score, and so we would be near the top of any list that got pulled from that. There were a few of us that did that, went ahead and took the civil service test and essentially aced that as far as scores were [concerned].

It was because of that willingness, I think, to say, you know, *I'd be willing to take a technician assignment in order to get some job experience*—the Forest Service was one of the

few agencies that seemed to look at that fairly open-mindedly. My first contact was from the Jefferson National Forest. The recreation officer at the time, a fellow named [Charles] "Charlie" Blankenship—he did, like, a follow-up after the first person who did this interview with everybody. He did a follow-up because the fellow doing the interview had noted that I had these other interests when asked, you know, "What"—Charlie was looking at what opportunities there might be across Region Eight. And it was through him that I found out about the Brasstown Bald interpretive summer job.

That was looking like, *Okay, that's a GS-7 for the summer. At least it's money*. I wasn't real [sic; really] enthused because I was also looking at getting married that spring after I graduated, and my husband was still going to be finishing up some time at Virginia Tech, but, again, we were fairly atypical. That's a whole 'nother story. Non-traditional on how we approached some of that, too.

And then, at the annual spring forestry convocation, which is a big convention that Tech olds with scientists, other schools, agency people—you know, lots of speakers, professional papers presented—we were always encouraged to attend the spring convocation and meet people. I was there one day between classes, and my adviser came up to me and he says [sic; said], "Hey, there's somebody I want you to meet. He's got a job. He's a district ranger." And he said, "I think you'd be perfect for it." And he said, "It's a job that in the summertime you'd get the chance to work with visitors; you'd get a chance to do some communications, public information work, but you'd actually get a blend of work, it sounds like, with forestry crews. I mean, just a whole variety of things."

I was, like, "Wow! Great!" Well, it turns out [he was] actually the district ranger for the Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area, and it just was one of those things where he and my

advisor had gotten to talking during one of the breaks. The Forest Service person was Keith [Argo?], who no longer works for the Forest Service, but was on the Mt. Rogers NRA for several years. Basically [it was] Keith saying, "Hey, I'm looking to fill this job." And it was a technician job. And my advisor started saying, "Hey, I think I've got the forester that would be willing to take that and would do a good job." Never mentioned I was a female. Never used my name.

And so when Keith asked me to meet this guy, Dick Vesey said, "Well, actually, it's a girl, and she's right over there." And so he couldn't back out. [Laughter.] But I did get a chance to talk some with him, and then when he found out that my family was just a couple of counties away, you might say, and that I really did have a feel for that part of Virginia, too—I wasn't just from someplace in the country just looking for a job—

And so I applied. I had to compete for it. It wasn't offer me [sic; wasn't that he offered me] the job right there; it was through the regular process. But I did get a chance then to do that. But it was only a GS-4, but it was a GS-4 for 180 days with the chance for real experience and the real possibility that it could lead to a job rather than just a summer stopgap. Because as soon as the Brasstown Bald summer job was over, I knew I'd be back looking for work again.

I talked it over with my fiancé at the time and decided that probably going [sic; decided that I would probably go] for the lower grade but the longer term, the better chance. I really just saw the Forest Service as an agency that seemed to have, in general, a pretty open attitude about hiring women, and also an agency that had all different kinds of jobs within it, and so it would be a good place to kind of come in and survey the field and find out what might a forester do [sic; what a forester might do]. And because the Forest Service also worked with lots of other

companies and agencies and so forth, it would be a chance to just keep learning, like, what are the other possibilities [sic; what the other possibilities were] out there.

So unlike some other forestry graduates, who were really targeting the Forest Service because they wanted to work for the U.S. Forest Service, they wanted to be a district ranger, they wanted—I mean, because of some very specific things—mine was much more: *Here's a great opportunity to get some experience and to take a look at the bigger field and figure out what I want to do*.

SHAPIRO: It was about opening doors, surveying the landscape.

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: Knowing that there were a whole sort of plethora of possibilities that were potentially down the road.

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: This was a step in that direction somewhat.

ODELL: Right. And also seeing that there weren't that many people getting offered jobs by either state of federal agencies right out of college. There was the big joke on campus, in our classes, that if you were a wildlife biologist in terms of what your degree was, you'd get a chance maybe to see wildlife as you were digging ditches alongside some rural road somewhere. I mean, there was really this whole thing about what people really could expect, and it wasn't that they would get a job immediately in their field, or maybe never in their field.

In fact, some time after I graduated, optional programs like the one I was in for environmental conservation went away, and a lot of the other special programs that really had some strengths, say, in outdoor recreation or whatever kind of were backed off. Tech was really trying to work at figuring out: How do we help place these graduates? And so they focused for

many years on getting just pulp and paper, commercial foresters out the door. I mean, that really became a focus. So I'm really thankful I was there when I was.

Like I said, without some of that other experience, realizing how much people needed to be part of the formula, I might not have cared. But I did care by that time. It did make a difference. I was kind of disappointed when they narrowed everything down so much, but that's part of what they were trying to do, was make sure that these kids that were spending their time and their money to get a degree could in fact get a job in their field. So it was—at the time, it seemed like a good decision for the college.

I think the other piece that was going on when I was trying to decide what to do about going with the Forest Service or keep [sic; keeping] on looking for work was the fact that I was soon to be married. We had met at college. It wasn't like: "Surprise! I'm going to be a forester! I'm going to be doing these different things." I mean, that was just part of who I already was.

SHAPIRO: Yes.

ODELL: And yet who I was was something that—I wanted to have a family. I didn't know how all that would figure into things. My fiancé, now husband, didn't have quite the focused career goal or at least life goal. He was interested in a lot of different things. He was pretty much looking forward to letting my job or career or whatever figure out where we were going to start our life together and even have a primary role in where we might go or what we might do. But still, in those early days, it was, like: Yeah, but if I want to have kids, I may have to give up a career or stop a career or change careers or whatever in order to have both.

There definitely wasn't any way I was going to figure that out until the time came. There wasn't any role model out there in, like, the natural resources field in general, let alone the Forest

Service specifically that could say, "Here's how a young woman, married, wanting to have a family—how to handle this situation." That's also something that I ended up helping pioneer.

SHAPIRO: So initially, when you started, was [sic; you had] the thought that—were you thinking, *Well, I either*—you [unintelligible] figure out how to do both. It'll work itself out somehow.

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: Or that *the reality is, is that [sic; the reality is that] I might do this for a while, but I want to have a family and I want to have children, and that's going to force me to leave this. I don't know what the result will be.*

ODELL: Right.

SHAPIRO: I mean, was it really a sense of, when you first started, *I don't know what that's going to hold*?

ODELL: Yes, that's actually more how it was, not that *I'm really going to try to work it out, how to have both*, because I didn't know how realistic it was to think that way, so it was much more realistic to say, *This is something that really probably hasn't been done before, and so I don't know how it's going to work out*. And it's funny because when I was working on the Mt. Rogers NRA, after a year or so I would meet somebody from someplace else in Region Eight, and they would say, "Oh, there's another one of you down in Georgia" or wherever, and I'm going, "Another one of me what?" "Well, there's another woman in a technician job in the Forest Service." [Laughs.] And I'd go, "Oh, what's her name?" "Oh, I don't know her name. I just heard that there's another one." [Laughs.] It was new enough—

SHAPIRO: The same thing happens for historians.

ODELL: Yes. [Laughter.] Well, again, I'm looking in terms of the change in the Forest Service. One of the things that happened—yes, we had a lot more "-ologists" come in over time, but not that many sociologists or rural sociologists, which in some ways, to me, when we started figuring out, "Things are changing in the United States, and the Forest Service needs some help figuring out how to deal with our publics differently and these issues differently." We didn't turn back and say, "Who else out there might have also been dealing with these kinds of change issues or whatever and could help us look at it differently?" We never really went after a sociologist that much.

And historians—if we were kind of adding up the kinds of disciplines that have gone into our increased understanding and management of, like, cultural and heritage resources, I still figure we have more, like, archaeologists and anthropologists than we have actual historians. And having had friends across those disciplines over the years and realizing what they can teach us as professionals in other disciplines—sometimes I keep looking at this, going, *What's wrong with this picture?*

Historians and anthropologists can help us learn more than just from history. I mean, I think there's a different kind of a proactive role there rather than a looking back. And people will use the words, "Oh, yeah, we're gonna celebrate this not just historically but it's going to help us look to the future." I still think we're pretty challenged in this agency with doing that very well.

But looking at who's out there, yes, we have a few more, but it's still--[Laughs.] "Oh, there's another one of you!" [Laughter.] So that was one of the things that—I never did find out who this other woman was at the time. But I did wonder, *Well, did she come in the same way I did? I wonder if she's got a forestry degree or if she's a technician without a four-year degree.*

I mean, it made me wonder. I was, like, *I wonder, is she single? Is she married?* At that time, even though—the people that I worked with on the NRA actually really did treat me very much as a full-on professional—very much a learning professional; they knew that I was young and had a lot to learn, but that experience was extremely positive, but still somewhat isolating in that anybody else close to my age, from the standpoint of being a peer, was male, usually single and so still maybe a little bit more in the college mode of, *Well, when I'm not working I'm partying or sleeping*, whereas I was married by the time I started work. Still enjoyed socializing and partying, but not the same way, and had other interests too that went beyond work.

There were challenges in the community. It's like anybody coming into a new community, but in small towns, a woman in a non-traditional job stood out. In some ways, I was better off because I was married, and some of my friends over the years really had some tough challenges when they were single and in some very small rural towns. Sometimes the challenge was that it was hard to make female friends because many of the females there were married, and this might have been one of their first times of experiencing someone who was going to be working with their husbands in the woods.

There was a lot of fear about what might happen sexually, how things might affect marriages. I mean, lots of fears along those lines. I've probably told this story before. It's probably in at least one of the other oral histories I've contributed to, but—

SHAPIRO: [unintelligible].

ODELL: Yes. [Laughter.]

SHAPIRO: [unintelligible].

ODELL: [Laughs.] The version.

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: Like I said, in this technician job, I really got a chance to do a variety of different kinds of things. One of the assignments was helping with different crews as different kinds of projects would come up. Sometimes you just need people. There were different times I went out with a survey crew. We had a land exchange program, a major land acquisition program because of the NRA legislation, and so we actually had a survey crew right there on site. Again, in general, when I would go out with them, there would be, say, three, four, five of them, and I'd be number six or number four or whatever. We'd be out working in the woods all day. That was one of my favorite times because we were actually fairly quiet moving through the woods and so forth, and we'd see wild turkey or we'd come across different animal sign. It was just a great time to be out like that.

But I also would get assigned to different crews, and so one day I was assigned to the range con, and there's this part of Mt. Rogers NRA, on a couple of the highest mountains there, on Mt. Rogers and on Whitetop [Mountain]—there are big open balds, and in that area there are wild ponies and then there are grazing permits, and so there are places [where] there are fences and gates. And so we needed to do some fence repair and hang a new gate. They just needed people to help do that. I was just among a crew. We went out in, like, a six-pack pickup and a new gate in the back and stuff like that, and drove a certain distance. And then we'd tote the gate up to where it was.

It was an all-day job. Well, partway through the day, I had to go to the bathroom, and I couldn't hold it anymore. You know, I'd had coffee in the morning and coffee or water during the day, you know, lunch, whatever. Well, we were out in one of the big open bald areas, a very rounded area. It was a gentle slope. To get down to the rhododendron and the laurel and the big huckleberry bushes, something to—

SHAPIRO: Cover.

ODELL: —for cover, yes, was a walk. So I finally said, *I better go now or I won't even be able to walk*. So here's the range con and, like, three other guys, whatever. I don't even remember total numbers. And so I said, "I'm headed for the bushes. I'll be back as soon as I can." So I head off, and I make sure I get into the bushes pretty deep, take care of business and come back up and go back to work. Never think anything more of it.

Well, it was a couple of weeks later, there was a district social event, like a potluck dinner. We did those kinds of things all the time. I mean, they did it when somebody new came, and they would welcome them with a big potluck dinner. If there was some other event, they'd have a cookout and a potluck. It was families and everything else. Well, I was at this. My husband and I were there, and the wife of the range con came over, and she said, "Could I speak with you for a moment?"

So we went over in a corner, and she gave me a real dressing down for having embarrassed her husband and the men on that crew. And it was, like, "Excuse me?" She was extremely upset that I dared embarrass them by having to go to the bathroom and doing it in such a way that they felt embarrassed while I headed for the bushes. I mean, I was so stunned that *they* had a problem, that someone had a problem with this, whether it was her husband bringing it up with her or whether he told the story and she interpreted it as a very embarrassing thing. But *I* was the one at fault.

SHAPIRO: Mm-hm.

ODELL: Later, when I thought back, and [sic; delete "and"] I said, *This is so ridiculous.* I mean, they could have stood in a circle and I wouldn't have know what *they* were doing. [Laughs.] I had to go find cover. When I think of what has changed in the Forest Service—by

the time I became district ranger in Region Five and particularly by the mid eighties, the consent decree had been in full force for a few years, and I was ranger down on the San Bernardino, and we had women on every engine crew; we had women on Hotshot crews, whatever.

By that time—we're talking ten years' difference. When those women and those men had to take care of business, bodily functions, and they were on a fireline or they were the one operating the pumper truck or whatever, they couldn't go off in the bushes. It wasn't safe, for one thing. They couldn't leave the crew. They couldn't leave the truck. They learned how [sic; what] people in some foreign countries have done for generations, which is you take care of your business in a way that doesn't cause any problems for anybody else, but you do it in front of whoever is there, and it's done. It's just something the body has to take care of and you're back to your job. None of this [speaks in high-pitched voice], "Excuse me," you know? "I'm embarrassed, but I'm going to go off into"—none of that. In ten years that had changed. In some places.

But I'm willing to bet there are still places in the Forest Service, whether you're on a fire crew or not. The mix of men and women is still such that when it comes time for women to go to the bathroom in the woods, there is an embarrassment factor there that does impact people. I mean, yes, in this country we're not really very good at that, but there's that kind of contrast. How someone can learn to turn that into something that's just a fact of life and move on and it no longer is an issue, I think it's true on other things that keep cropping up in terms of why do we keeping having problems over racial issues? Why do we still have people who don't treat their employees well? It doesn't matter what their gender is or what their ethnic background is. We still have people that can't get over it, whatever "it" is.

In many ways, I'm thankful that I saw some of that change, [that I] was helping make some of that possible for people to get over it, those who had the problem, and for the people on the receiving end to end up being treated better. And [there are] lots of other examples, but having felt some of the problems of being on the receiving end, I think ended up making me a much better manager of people but also someone who could to try to step back and say [sic; ask], *What's going on with the different players here? Is this a darn poor Forest Service employee who, it doesn't matter what gender they are? Is it a really bad supervisor?*

I mean, because some of that is still the basic part of the problem, and we're not very good as an organization [at] dealing with that, either. When it was just all white guys, if you had a really bad employee [sic; if you had really bad employees]—you know, it's hard to figure out how to get rid of them, or whether or not to spend your time getting rid of them.

I think I'm lucky in that I had enough good experiences at different times and exposure to people who were trying to do the right thing, trying to be professional, from early on in my career and before that, to realize, *No, everybody's not out to get me because I'm a woman, and everybody's not out to get me because of this or whatever[indistinct]*. In fact, I often turned it the other way [around], and I often wondered, *What did I do? I must have really screwed up*. It was much easier for me to blame myself and internalize it than to actually get angry or expect that it was somebody else's problem.

And I think how each person who comes through those trials and tribulations—each person is going to react based on kind of what their personality is, but definitely what their previous experience has shown them to be true. If I hadn't had such overall good experience on the NRA, very definitely my second job in the Forest Service, when I did get a professional

position out in Oregon on the [unintelligible]—some of the experiences I had there would have in fact led me to resign and say, *This outfit is not worth my time and my life*.

So I can say that whatever comes first, the good or the bad—

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: —can really make a difference in how you live your own life and what you do with your career, and how you see other people, and how you might help or hurt that situation.

SHAPIRO: I mean, it goes back to your points—as you said earlier, one of the reasons why you sort of got into the Forest Service initially was to get the survey of the land and to sort of understand broadly and see all the possibilities, and you're introduced to them in one situation on the Mt. Rogers, where you have this very positive experience; then you go somewhere else and it's not quite the same but it's educational in the sense of [unintelligible] as you get to San Bernardino.

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: You take that experience, you take that knowledge, you take those difficult times that you've had to deal with and become that much more of an effective manager and so on.

ODELL: Right.

SHAPIRO: I'm going to take a quick break—

ODELL: Yes, yes.

SHAPIRO: —at least a brief break, and we can come back and get more into the sort of more formal questions related to the theme. But I think this has been, at least from my perspective and I hope yours, helpful, sort of laying out some of the groundwork,—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —thinking about dome of the background and so on, so we'll stop there.

ODELL: Okay.

[End CD File 1. Begin CD File 2.]

[Transcriber's note: Mr. Shapiro began this part of the interview closer to the microphone but moved away again, and now there are occasional voices in the background.]

SHAPIRO: We are back from a brief lunch break. It's Tuesday afternoon. It's Aaron Shapiro with Susan Odell in the Washington office of the Forest Service, and we're going to kick into the more explicit questions from the changing workforce thematic, drawing on—realizing that in some of the material and conversation we had this morning Susan addressed some of these issues, but we'll get into them—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —in more detail, and want to make sure that we're staying on task here.

So, Susan, over the years of your career, what changes in the mix of disciplines and specialists did you see? And you talked a little bit about this in the context of your experience, a lack of sociologists, for instance, but with archaeologists, wildlife biologists, et cetera. If you could talk a little bit about that and—

ODELL: Right. And I think that's probably similar to what other people saw who worked especially in the seventies and eighties, when I think the real change were speeding up, anyway, when we started seeing, like, the need to do environmental assessment documents and to follow NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] and that kind of thing. One of the big responses was to hire [people in] a variety of disciplines, and those people, depending on how a particular forest was structured—some of them were hired at the district level; more often a lot of them [were]

hired into forest supervisors' offices and then [were] serving more than one district. But we definitely saw—depending, again, on what the particular ecosystems were—but we saw more fisheries biologists, something that maybe hadn't been very common at all. And wildlife biologists.

Those were probably some of the first real –ologists to come on scene. But we also saw some additional people hired who were specifically educated as planners. Sometimes it was outdoor recreation planners. More often than not, it was people hired to become the leaders of a forest planning team. The first kinds of plans that were being done when I became aware of that kind of broader land-use planning in the Forest Service was [sic; were] still under the category of what was called unit plans. But in the late seventies, most forests were finishing up those, and a few forests, by 1980 anyway, had been designated as lead forests for the new category, which were truly forest-wide plans that integrated a lot of the old approaches of having individual resources looked at.

Actually having people hired with that as more of a specialty, of a discipline was something different. And quite often in the Forest Service and definitely before my day but also through the first several years of my career, the tendency was more like, well, if you need a particular specialty, you just take a forester and ask them [sic] to do it. And a lot of the way I got educated in forestry was really broad in the sense that I had a lot of good coursework in wildlife biology, in ecosystem approaches, in learning about water and soils and so forth. So there was a real strong belief that, hey, a forester has all the basics, so if you need something more specific, take a forester because they've [sic] got the basics and they [sic] can quickly adapt and move on into something more specific.

That didn't always work, because not every forester had either paid as much attention or cared as much [chuckles] about some of the other resources. And some of them were just not that good at leaving behind maybe their timber mind-set and actually getting into and learning more about what they needed to do in some of these other disciplines.

That was definitely true, though, in the sense that almost anywhere you looked in the Forest Service, you could find somebody, even in personnel jobs, administrative officer jobs, that when you found out what their career was, you'd find out, oh, they came in as a forester. Sometimes it was an engineer. But it was pretty common that foresters got what used to be the term re-tread, and they became something else. Just having a lot of different disciplines hired directly, whether it was from school or from state agencies or whatever, that itself was a change, instead of having foresters take on those jobs. That was a pretty big shift for the whole agency.

SHAPIRO: And you talked about—I mean, obviously—so the foresters that would have taken on those roles in the past would have been—and their formal forestry education and school would have been very different than [sic; from] what you talked about [unintelligible].

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: So was there a sense that some of these positions, even in the seventies, could be filled by—there was still the sense that foresters who were graduating from programs like Tech [sic; programs such as those at Tech] and elsewhere could fill these positions.

ODELL: No, that was actually part of the change. I think people stopped thinking that they were going to be able to get away with just hiring more foresters and then asking them to take on this kind of work. In fact, I think most of the foresters who in the past had taken on something else actually were people who had had some years of experience in the agency and weren't fresh out of school.

I think it really was a different attitude, and I think people were being cautioned to not assume that they could just using the people they had on board, that they really did need to add employees from different disciplines and to use the new approach of an interdisciplinary team really had a different expectation to it, and that we weren't going to be able to sign off or have line officers sign off on [BAs?] or whatever NEPA document when you look at the team and it's just foresters and engineers, for example, that that was not going to hold up to any scrutiny.

But I also think that one of the other ways in terms of the mix how things changed is that the people in the supervisor's office who were in some of these new disciplines, as I said earlier, might have had a real different context for getting into the forestry field or natural resource field or into their special discipline. I saw a fair number of these specialists who were farther along I would say the spectrum between preservation and conservation. They were closer to the preservation end than the conservation end. Or some of them might have been maybe halfway. But a different value set came with these people, regardless of the difference of discipline.

In fact, there was some good research done back in the eighties in Region Five that looked at some of the value differences between, say, some of the botanists and biologists and so forth and foresters and looked, like, why did these people want to have these kinds of careers, and what were their basic values for life, what were their world views—and there were some real [sic; really] striking differences.

Over time, when I see some of these things that have happened in the Forest Service, some of it came about, I think, because we had more internal conflict. I mean, I don't think that every forester thinks alike. But when you have a much more homogeneous culture, then how you approach change from the outside or conflict or challenges can be different. But definitely when we were feeling a certain amount of conflict inside, I think it became even harder to figure

out: Then what do we do with the larger cultural changes that were going on when we could say, well, the public expected something different. They didn't like clear-cuts anymore, or they didn't—you know, whatever it was.

We definitely had a lot more employees inside the Forest Service who also didn't care for some of our past practices or the current approaches that the agency might want to use for certain things. So I think that is another aspect of this difference. It's a mix of values that really hit us because these people were coming in to bring the disciplines into play but nobody inside the agency anticipated such a striking difference in values.

SHAPIRO: This was the follow question what [unintelligible] about these changes. You talked a little bit about some of the legislation, but clearly from your comments here, you're suggesting obviously it's this, it's the culture of the time, too,—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —both inside and outside the Forest Service, obviously,—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —the increasing role of modern environmentalism, the sort of spectrum, the movement towards, as you said, more towards the preservation end at least somewhere along that spectrum—

ODELL: Right.

SHAPIRO: —of people who were coming in in these particular specialty areas, that these are all sort of factors playing a role. You wouldn't necessarily just pinpoint, well, it's NEPA or it's [the] Clean Air Act or whatever.

ODELL: Right.

SHAPIRO: But it's sort of everything coming together at one point, really in the seventies [unintelligible]—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —that leads to some of these [unintelligible].

ODELL: Right. And one of the things that also had a real impact was the rather sudden appearance on the scene, I think, of the value of cultural and heritage resources. I worked in various places where some old cabin somewhere was, quote-unquote, "always causing a problem" because people would want to hang out there or camp there, and it was an attractive nuisance, or in the days of the hippies, you know, the hippies would wind up coming there and wanting to say in those kind [sic; kinds] of places. They've had problems with fires, campfires and stuff being set in them as well as next to them. There was the joke about the winter lightning fires that would happen in the middle of winter in a snowstorm, some old cabin would burn down. "Gee, I wonder how that happened," you know? Well,—

The other thing would be: Where's the best road alignment for an upcoming timber sale? Or if we're going to try some new cable yarding equipment and we're going to need to lay things out differently. Maybe it would mean trying to put in a road in a different place than where we've been able to use over the years. In the past, if they were out there and they came across an old dump site from where there had been a logging camp decades before, they ignored it. They figured, "Hey, we'll cover that up when they doze this road in."

When we really started having to work with the state historic preservation offices and we had to get out in front of timber sale planning far enough with the archaeological reviews, looking for more of—and paying attention to the older sites as well as the ones that are much more recent historical, cultural—all kinds of people got their noses out of joint. It interfered with

the timber sale schedule or, again, it was like "this will become a nuisance" or "we're gonna have to move this road? Upslope this much? Or down-—because of a what?"

That was another big impact in terms of how people thought about what was important or not. People that always thought their job was about timber and the natural resources and might have actually been very careful about erosion and sedimentation and those kinds of things when they were dealing with roads might have had a very negative reaction about this idea, "Now we have to take care of some old dump or the remains of a railroad trestle?" or whatever it was that might have been of potential significance.

And how fast can we get this done? Even though we were hiring and bringing in archaeologists or anthropologists, whatever, we weren't hiring that many because we never really did have that much money for that program. That was probably another point of conflict, is we had other things that were also impacting the land, and that would be special-use permit requests or trying to keep up our own cabin permits and those kinds of things, and some of those becoming historical structures, themselves, and what does that mean.

So a lot of things started coming into play, and people started saying, "Well, we've never had enough money for our range program or to administer our special uses the way we should, and the impact that those things can have on the land, and now we have more that we have to do with about the same money." That was another part of this. And spending the time, then, working on [yea's?] and being on in interdisciplinary team, even if you were a timber sale forester all of a sudden took on this other aspect of, again, "I don't like working in the office. That's not what I hired on to do. And I don't agree with what's in the law."

There was [sic; were] a lot of people, whether it was explicitly said—but there were a lot of people figuring out, "How do we get around these new rules?" That was one of the things I

definitely did see and tried not to become a part of. By the time I was on the Malheur [National Forest], which is where I worked after the Mt. Rogers NRA—that's where I got my first appointment as a professional forester, and after about I would say eight to ten months there, [I] saw some things happening in preparation for an EA [environmental assessment] getting done and overheard some folks on the neighboring district talking about what they were going to do—so we're talking basically 1976, 77.

This particular timber sale they were dealing with was going to bump up against a small wilderness area on the neighboring district, and some of the stuff that they felt that, you know, like, "Hey, we care about that wilderness, too, and we take care of this and that, so we really don't need to do all this stuff. We don't need to document this, and all these people that are complaining, these environmentalists"—I mean, again, by the mid to late seventies, there were people being called environmentalists, again, comparing to when I was back there in the eighth grade and using a term that hardly anybody was familiar with.

[We were] hearing people specifically planning to not really do everything they could to show that they wanted to take care of the land and pay attention to the wilderness and the impacts there. That was kind of my first glimpse of people reading into things what they wanted to or trying to avoid doing things and just skate around the edge. That was a disappointment.

I was willing to try, whenever I got into situations of, say, supporting an interdisciplinary team early on or, later on, being on a forest planning team, things like that—I was willing to try to work with people and get them to participate and comply effectively instead of trying to avoid things, but I think the fact—

SHAPIRO: Was that a general consensus among people on the planning teams? I mean, that there was this—

ODELL: Well, I would say people on the planning—I think the people on the planning teams eventually became, like, folks hired to be the planners and hired into that, and so they actually came into the jobs thinking about doing the right thing and following the regs, but it was more some of the people on interdisciplinary teams working at the district levels and so forth who were trying to figure out, "How do we get around this without being too obvious about it? How do we minimally meet the expectations and the regs?"

And, again, none of them were particularly bad people, they all just thought, "Well, it's paperwork, and we shouldn't have to do this to get our job done." That was a big part of the attitude. But because they weren't truly kind of stepping up to the line and doing what the regs really expected—and we did ourselves in with some of the way we wrote our own regulations. When you'd go back to the original law, then the case law started complicating everything else.

But the reason I'm bringing this [up] was when the new specialists came in and they saw and heard people trying to get around doing this, that to me just solidified their opinion that the Forest Service may not be the white hat people, that in fact we needed to have some things done differently, that we weren't paying enough attention to or didn't care enough about all resources, that, yes, timber was king, but not only was that [the case], that [sic; but] we were potentially endangering other resources.

And so this attitude, which I think very much came from, again, frustrated foresters and engineers and others, who just wanted to get a job done and had already thought they had actually done a pretty darn good job for the environment and were not paper people, were not good at team efforts from that standpoint of talking things over and trying to figure out how the different resources truly interacted—they were used to being the professional that no one questioned.

Again, this change in who was on the scene [was] happening at the same that the laws and regs were changing, and once it's reflected back poorly to these new people on the scene—and I definitely saw that kind of thing happening, and trying to figure out how to—

SHAPIRO: In both Six and in Five? In both places?

ODELL: I saw it more in Region Six because that's where I was in, like, from early '76 through [the] summer of '80. There really was just a lot going on then. When I went to Region Five in the summer of '80, I guess I saw a little bit of, some remnant of that, but I went from the Malheur to the Ochoco [National Forest], both east-side forests in Oregon. And on the Ochoco I was on the planning team, and I was the writer-editor for the last one and a half unit plans they needed to finish up. I was also there during the time when RARE II [Roadless Area Review and Evaluation] was introduced and when the first RPA [Resource Planning Act] stuff really was getting serious. Again, more stuff that the typical district and SO person, who had already been able to just go out and do their job, saw as barriers rather than, Okay, here's a way of engaging the public and perhaps even doing our jobs better. Just so many of them saw it as a big problem, one more legal problem.

By the time I got to Region Five—I was selected as ranger on the Sierra [National Forest], and that forest had been named one of the lead forests for the country. For a few years, when everything turned over to a forest plan style similar to what we have now, there had been a decision that in each region there would be at least a couple of what they called lead forests, and they would get out a couple of years ahead, before anybody else starting working on this stuff, and that there would be some feedback and some learning, and it would be this really adaptive learning kind of process.

It sounded like a great idea. About a year or so into this lead forest concept, something happened, and I don't know, maybe it was pressure from Congress; it might have been public pressure from environmental groups or whatever. The Forest Service said, "Oh, we can't wait." [Laughs.] "We can't wait to learn." [Laughs.] And so all of a sudden, now there was this new schedule in here with all these other forest, just boom, boom, boom, doing forest planning.

But the Sierra really had taken its role seriously about being a lead forest that wanted to learn from this revised process, these new regs. The forest supervisor there I think had a real impact because of his personal convictions and leadership style. That was [Richard] "Dick" Stauber at the time. His approach was, "For this to really work, the rangers on this forest have to be as engaged in this forest planning process as my staff in the SO. And, in fact, they have to be engaged to the point where they're really familiar with what's going on across the whole forest, not just their own district one by one."

I think that really set a different tone so that when I got there as a ranger—yes, I sometimes had to be explicit with interdisciplinary teams on my district and sometimes would have to sit in at different times to make sure some of the dialogue happened in a way that really was not just somebody taking a position and then standing there and trying to fend everybody off, but getting past that to truly looking at options and finding out what's [sic; what are] the pros and cons and what are the consequences if you choose this versus that, and making time to do that, and having my own personal involvement rather than just saying, "Well, you guys work it out." On that forest, I felt that at least a good portion of the employees understood we were trying to do something truly in a different mode, that interdisciplinary mode.

SHAPIRO: I mean, and I don't know, maybe they had already gone through what you had gone through in Six in some of that period of '76 to '80 that you discussed, so when you arrived, you're sort of at a different point—

ODELL: Right.

SHAPIRO: —in the stage of—

ODELL: right.

SHAPIRO: —that forest's history, too.

ODELL: Yes, yes, and that part I really can't judge too well, but I suspect, because I have friends that worked in different parts of the country, but I do believe that there were pretty widespread examples of people, especially in the early days, trying to figure out what to do with NEPA and everything else, who were trying to just get by, trying to get on with getting their "real work done."

SHAPIRO: Yes.

ODELL: But it was interesting—and you can't just say a whole region is like something, because when I left the Sierra and went down to be ranger on the Big Bear District on the San Bernardino—and that was the spring of '84—the ranger that had been there before me had been there a number of years, and I no longer remember how long. I mean, eight, ten years, I don't know. But apparently a lot of what happened with projects, whether they be a timber sale or something having to do with wildlife, habitat improvement or whatever, the ranger came up with an idea and gave the assignment to a small team of people on the district, and they wrote an environmental document. What I learned is they basically wrote it so that the answer that the wanted is what he got, and he got to sign off on it. Well, I didn't operate that way.

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: And so I had to help some people do some un-learning and some changing of habits. I'm talking [about] intelligent people, again, who wanted to do a good job but literally had grown used to being told what the answer was and also people that had not been exposed very much to what was going on on other districts on that forest, let alone other forests in the region. And so as we were dealing with very challenging issues with off-road vehicles there—I had already been working in the region almost five years, four and a half years, and had friends and colleagues scattered all over, and I knew, *Well, gosh, there are people on the Los Padres that are doing some really great things* and found out we were dealing with some challenges with prescribed fire. Well, there was some really good stuff happening there, too.

It was, like, "So who were you all working with?" You know, one of the other kind of Southern California forests. And finding out that, well, no, they didn't—

SHAPIRO: It was not working in isolation.

ODELL: It's [not] just they weren't working with them, they didn't even know people; they didn't even have networks that really left the forest except the fire guys did when it came to fire suppression. Again, this was another thing that [made me think] you can't say that a whole region has a certain culture or a certain way of operating, either. So that was one of the things I did, too. I personally kept active in region-wide activities, but I also started doing a lot to try to get people from my district and my forest connected and engaged in different things.

That included the fact that on the Big Bear District there were a lot of endemic plant species. I'd never had a botanist work for me before. In fact, in the seventies and so forth—that's another –ologist, you might say, that really hadn't been hired. We were doing fine with hiring, like wildlife biologists because, gee, foresters know all this stuff about plants. [Both

chuckle.] And wildlife biologists should know about wildlife habitat and the food and the shelter and that kind of thing.

So this change in terms of –ologists and specialists—it was still going on, you might say, again, ten years after the first really big push, [with] people realizing, with all the spotted owl controversy and everything else, hmm, not every wildlife biologist is the same as every other one. Some of them really need to know about certain kinds of species. And the agency, which for so long was able to draw a pretty [bright?] line and say, "No, no, Forest Service takes care of habitat, and the state Fish and Game takes care of the animals"—well, you know, that line got blurred in there, where we had to have people who knew about the animals, too, and not just the habitat.

And so that's another part of kind of that change. Some of the first –ologists that came on were people who maybe knew a lot more about habitat, but we had to keep figuring out what it was, as an agency, we needed to do to be better with our environmental assessments. And if we're talking about forest-wise EISs [environmental impact statements] on different issues or on the forest plan, you also needed people who could look at some of these big pictures and help you sort out, well, which are the species that maybe could be indicator species?

A lot of what happened—and this, again, in almost any state that I worked in or knew people that worked in—is that you didn't have necessarily all that great a relationship between the biologists in a state agency and the Forest Service, particularly foresters, because for years, that's who the biologists had to deal with, was not someone in their own discipline but someone in a different discipline who thought they knew about wildlife.

SHAPIRO: Yes, and it wasn't Forest Service—and also was a state employee, not a Forest Service employee.

ODELL: Yes, yes, yes. There's [sic; There are] those kinds of pieces, just like working with [SHIPO?] in a particular state and the rules and the laws that they're trying to deal with. And if we were lucky on a particular forest to have one person helping with that and really understanding the federal law and perhaps knowing something about state law for historic preservation—so this kind of change had subtle differences over time, as I look back.

Throughout all this time, too, I think there was continually this question, like, "Well, how important is it to have somebody that really has a degree in, say, outdoor recreation management or outdoor recreation planning? Couldn't we just—you know, these people that have come up in the Forest Service that have gotten involved in recreation—isn't that good enough?" But especially in places like forests in California or high-use areas that attract a lot of tourists over time. People who weren't, let's say, specifically trained or weren't currently trained in, say, outdoor recreation, tourism, those kinds of things had a hard time of thinking of the Forest Service as a tourist attraction, so even how they thought about this, the changes that were going on—

Line officers—many of them resisted hiring somebody because they didn't want to finally get to the point where they had to admit, "We're not talking about outdoor recreation management, we're talking about tourism development." I mean, for a long time, that was a nasty phrase in the agency.

You look at different ways this specialist—and, you know, we never really hired that many people with that kind of a specialty, just like we haven't hired that many sociologists. From the very early days working in the Forest Service, hearing rangers and forest supervisors and others talking about how important it is to communicate well with the public or whatever, we over the years really never hired that many specialists in natural heritage, history,

interpretation, say, if we had a heritage site. I mean, it might get a little bit more attention, but the average district wouldn't have anybody with any particular special knowledge about communications and working with the media or about interpretive programs.

Public affairs officers—it was hit and miss what kind of real training and background they might have. Again, it could be a forester, because I served that role for a while on the Ochoco, as the public affairs officer.

Just the Forest Service as a whole [was] struggling with change that are going on in society and [thinking about] how to be more effective but not necessarily ever translating it into: "We really should be hiring differently." "How do we afford these kinds of people?" was often the first question, just like, "The budgets are tight. Who goes first?" Recreation techs or people that might be summer employees doing campground programs and environment ed kinds of things. Just like with your regular, full-time employees, sometimes what went first was training. You know, "We can't afford to have so much [sic; many] dollars spent on training this year." And yet maybe training is what would have helped those people be more effective with all these changes going on. Some of that same kind of—

SHAPIRO: It sounds [like], then, we're getting into the—you know, we've gotten into the additional questions here, but—and I'll recite them at least at some level—but it also sounds like what you're suggesting with this sort of move from generalists to specialists is that it was mixed, and it varied, depending upon the area in some ways. In some cases, whether it was a fisheries biologist, you might really have that, but in the case of public affairs you might not. So it really varied, where there was a continued strain where certain aspects and certain roles were thought of as: "Well, anyone can still do this."

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: And others, where it was increasingly becoming more apparent, like: "Oh, our wildlife biologists don't—we really need them to have more knowledge about habitat and wildlife" or whatever.

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: You know what I mean. So that there was a sort of mixed bag—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —in this sort of transformation.

ODELL: Yes. I don't think we can generalize and say, oh, yes, there was this total shift to specialists, because in some cases there were districts and forests who [sic; which] couldn't afford to do that. They couldn't afford to have all the specialists maybe that they really needed, so they had to figure out which things still had to be done maybe by people a little bit more of a generalist [sic; by people who were a little bit more generalists]. But I think some of us also bemoaned the fact that many of the specialists when they came on board were allowed to truly stay fairly narrow specialists, when—

SHAPIRO: There had been a long tradition of being so much of a generalist—

ODELL: Yes, yes, and that includes the fact that many of them then weren't expected or required to be trained for firefighting, be part of the fire militia, which [is] kind of another part of the questions here, but—so we ended up with them also not understanding necessarily enough about fire-based ecosystems. They may not have really gotten a whole lot of that in their college program or in their previous job. And definitely—like, with my education at Virginia Tech, I didn't really get a whole lot of classroom education on prescribed fire, but we did have some exposure to fire-dependent ecosystems.

And then with my first job with the NRA, because of the balds and the changes there, they were using prescribed fire. It's one of the reasons I think Region Eight has been out in front the last number of years in prescribed fire acres, is that they were learning and figuring things out on a smaller scale and locally and helping a variety of people understand and accept this. They had a lot smaller acreages that they might do also.

But the real understanding of what goes on there on the land and what it takes to use this as an environmentally sensitive tool—you have to get out there and do some things, and seeing the difference between a prescribed fire and a wildfire that has just toasted everything and really impacted the soil can have a real impact on somebody who thinks that, *Oh, shoot, let's just let nature play its course. If it's gonna burn, it's gonna burn, and we shouldn't be trying to thin it, burn it*—you know, whatever else.

So I think that there are some of us who were really concerned, and tried—like, when I became a line officer, myself, to help some of these specialists get some exposure. We would try to do some cross-training. For example, at Big Bear, I had foresters who went through paraprofessional training to be able to do archaeological surveys. We had—

SHAPIRO: Was there resistance to some of this, or was it—

ODELL: In Region Five they had that opportunity. It wasn't always consistently available., but that was an opportunity. In some places, yes, people pushed back and said, "Oh, nobody could ever do it as good [sic; well] as me." But in other cases, they were happy. I mean, it puts more people out on the ground, and you get things done, and if somebody was hesitant—the point was, you ask questions, you bring somebody in that's more experienced, whatever.

And we would do cross-training, too. We had people learn how to hoot owls. We had spotted owls, not the northern spotted owl but we had spotted owls on [the] Big Bear District, an

we really had some challenges because some of their favorite habitat was right up against ski areas, which loved to have snow machines and lights on at nights and all kinds of other things. But we cross-trained people. I think it helped them become more understanding of the challenges of their peers in other disciplines, and I think it increased their awareness of the value of some of what was going on, instead of this resistance to taking the time to looking [sic; look] at that and talking [sic; talk] about that.

But I don't think that that happened everywhere. We were fortunate we were able to do that.

SHAPIRO: I would think that it gives people a sense, at least at some level, of what everyone is involved in. You know, some little piece of someone's specialty but then also giving that some person who's in that specialty a sense of the general nature of what's being done.

ODELL: Right. And some of what else what was going on, too [sic; And what else was going on, too,] is that by the time I was on the San Bernardino, also what was going on with the consent decree and so forth in Region Five was people taking a closer look at what disciplines should be allowed to compete in the field for district ranger and line officer jobs. When I first started in the Forest Service, again, it was unusual for anybody other than, say, a forester or an engineer to get into a line officer job—over time—a wildlife biologist or whatever.

The initial process was, well, if they have this four-year degree in a natural resource kinds of discipline, that would be okay. But when you start talking about archaeologists or someone that had gotten into the Forest Service and was classified under an administrative series and not a natural resource [four-oh?], whatever series, then there was a real question about, "Gosh, do we dare let people like that have a ranger job? Because how will they understand the

natural resource side of things? I mean, what kind of decisions will they make? What kind of managers will they be?"

I think some of that concern came from looking at some of the, quote-unquote, "-ologists" and realizing: They're so narrow. How could we even let some of *them* actually get ranger jobs? Because of how they deal with, say, interdisciplinary teams and how narrow or structured or position-based they are. How could they ever truly be an effective line officer for all the resources on a district? So that was people with a more natural science background. Some of that change was also going on in terms of not just who else [was] coming into the agency as a whole and serving in staff kinds of jobs at the district [level] but—

SHAPIRO: [unintelligible].

ODELL: —what's changing with the line officer jobs. That change very definitely was more obvious in, like, the late eighties. In Region Five it was often women who were breaking that barrier because that's part of what we also were looking at, is [sic; was] how do we bring more women into at least the pool for line officers or for upper-level staff, say, at the regional office or someplace, though, where you need a different kind of management and leadership rather than just strictly in a single discipline, where you can't afford to be that narrow anymore, that specialized.

That was one of the things I felt really good about in terms of really helping the dialogue, say, on my forest, on the San Bernardino, as we approached that and also the benefit of people who were saying, "We do have to look at: What is it we were rating these people on? Rather than looking just at what discipline they came out of college with." And so because of that, we ended up with people like Nancy [Curridan?], who was an archaeologist and who became one of the first archaeologists to be a line officer. But it wasn't just, "Oh, well, we throw open the

doors." It was different than having the environmental law come into play that says you have to bring these specialists in or the laws for historical and cultural resources; this was something different. This was a different dynamic.

SHAPIRO: Is there also—I mean, the fact that there's sort of a decade there or part of a decade where [sic; when] there's growing interdisciplinarity in the way things are done so that, you know, the [unintelligible], if there's a forest archaeologist or a zone archaeologist that can have that experience but on these sort of interdisciplinary teams, that there's a sense that they can take on this new goal.

ODELL: Yes, or that they've at least been much more exposed to other disciplines and the issues and the challenges of bringing some resolution when you've got to deal with the different concerns and opportunities. Having had that experience would have been key to being competitive for a ranger position, but also it's, like, again, the person, each individual person's style of working with other people and whether or not that [sic; delete "that"] they have a real interest in becoming truly a people manager rather than a proponent for their discipline.

We clearly had people who never really could leave that proponent role. That was just who they were. But they would have loved to have been a ranger because they saw the power of that position or the promotion potential and all those kinds of things. But in some ways, that's no different than some of the foresters that I knew, who also got in the Forest Service because they wanted the power job of being a ranger, not because they necessarily wanted to manage people well or even had a particular vision for natural resource conservation or taking on a particular resource challenge and helping fix it but because they wanted that job.

Again, that was where—I said earlier—that's very different from my reason for wanting to join the Forest Service. And, in fact, when I first took the job with the Forest Service, I never

even imagined that I would become a district ranger. In fact, I had no clue about even how high I would go, say, grade wise or what kind of job I could aspire to, which was very different from probably every man, young or old.

SHAPIRO: You didn't even know how long you would last.

ODELL: No, I didn't.

1[Laughs.]

ODELL: I didn't. At one point, I truly can remember thinking, *Well, gosh, if I were to ever make it to be, like, a GS*-11--like district staff level at that time, that was about the right level—I thought, *Wow! That would be something!* Because I also saw that as a key place for, again, working with the resources, with people, on the district and then with community people, depending on the kinds of projects and so forth. I mean, that was kind of like as big as I could think within the first couple of years. And I really didn't even get serious about thinking about [becoming] a line officer until I was on the Ochoco and was on the forest planning team, and we were wrapping up the unit plans, and they were going to go to a different structure. There were a couple of people that were encouraging me to consider to apply to be the new planning team leader.

But, again, I had figured out by then, too—I didn't really just want to do planning. I really enjoyed—and had used some skills and done some interesting things with communities, with some of the interactive things we needed to do for feedback on RARE II. I mean, there were a lot of good things going on. So I started looking at applying. I wasn't [sic; was?] looking at district staff jobs, to go get a supervisory job on a district somewhere and get more experience that was, so I was looking pretty much at lateraling from that SO job on the Ochoco.

Just an aside: It was in some of those applications and interview processes and so forth that I ran into a little bit of the glass ceiling. It was very interesting. I won't go into a lot of detail, but it was also partly feedback that [sic; delete "that"] what happened after someone else had been selected from the job and the rationale. They would have to give at least a short blurb on why somebody wasn't selected.

But I kept trying, because that's really what I thought of as a realistic thing, is [sic; was] to go back to a district, get that staff level job, get that kind of experience and really show that it could be a supervisor, [that] I could manage a chunk of the budget—you know, all these kinds of things. And one day three different people in the SO, three different men who [sic; whom] I highly respected came by my desk or caught me in the hall and said, "Hey, have you seen that new job posted down in Region Five?" And I said, "No, what is it?" And they said, "It's a district ranger job. It's a GS-11 district. There aren't many of those left. You ought to go look at it.

I mean, the first guy who said that, I just laughed, and I said, "Yeah, right." After the third one said, "Go look at it," I went and looked at it, and I made a copy of it, and I kind of brought it back and read about it, and I thought, *Well, GS-11 ranger, yup. I've heard there aren't that many of those left. But it's still a ranger job. I mean, it's still a real ranger job. It's still a real district.* I didn't think—I mean, I read—I didn't even mention it to my husband. Like, a couple of days later, the forest supervisor came by specifically to see me, and he said, "Hey, have you seen"—and I thought, *Oh, boy!* When he asked me that—

SHAPIRO: Did he want you out of there? [Laughs.]

ODELL: No! I mean, that's the thing. By then I knew him well enough—this was [William] "Bill" [McLease?]. I thought, *Well, I respect*—I mean, the other three were—the first one was

the forest engineer; the second one was one of the other staff—he had a whole variety of assignments; the third one had been my immediate boss, and then the forest supervisor. And that's when I realized, *They're serious. They think I should apply for this job.* And so I actually took time and sat down with my boss and talked with him about it and made an appointment and talked with the forest supervisor to find out what they thought it would be like.

I thought, *Maybe after I've been in this district staff, I might consider it,* but it hadn't become real, and so it was almost overnight I went from—it had gotten [sic; moved from being] kind of maybe a fuzzy goal out there to, like, *Wow, this is something that other people that I really respect think should happen sooner rather than later, and that I don't need to go through this*—because they all knew—I mean, they'd been signing recommendations or knew that I'd been applying for these other jobs. And I talked with my husband about it, and decided, well, I would take a weekend and really work on an application.

At the time, I think it was something like twelve or thirteen evaluation criteria in addition to the SF-171. At the time, I had my portable typewriter at home, and I'd be working on some of these evaluation criteria, and I'd go, *Oh, I can't do this.* And I'd walk away from it and go have a cup of coffee or something, and then I'd think, *Well, no, I promised myself I'd sit down and try to see if I could respond to each of these criteria and what I would think at the end.* And so by the end of the weekend, I said, *Well, if I get offered the job, I have to have faith that any forest supervisor cares more about the district and the responsibilities than they do about anything that was cooking at the time [sic; that is cooking now] about hiring more women or whatever, that the forest supervisor is going to have to think I really can do the job. And I'm going to have to trust the system from that standpoint.*

But more importantly, by going through and responding to those and really thinking about the different kinds of experience I had had—and by then I really had had some real diverse experience. I started going, *Wow! This is different than somebody who's only done timber work the whole time.* I'd done all kinds of things. I thought, *I think I can do it. It won't be easy because I will have to face various kinds of perceptions, expectations good and bad.* And so I signed the form and submitted the application.

But that was a pretty short timeframe to go from not really having an expectation, or at least a very high one, about being a line officer in the Forest Service—and so when I became [the] first woman forester to become a district ranger, I'd only worked for the Forest Service seven years. I didn't realize that was anything to make note of, but somebody later on, when they [sic] were asking me about stuff like that, they [sic] said, "Seven years? Do you know how many guys would have loved to have been ranger in seven years?" But I hadn't realized it, but part of it is because so many guys that started out as foresters stayed in forestry and timber for, like, the first seven years and may not have ever branched out much.

But we were also still hiring a lot of rangers who only had timber experience, and they were on heavy timber districts when they became ranger [sic; rangers].

SHAPIRO: Right.

ODELL: I was very fortunate that the Mariposa District on the Sierra had a whole diverse range of resource management opportunities and issues, and I actually had quite a bit of skill and experience and so forth that I could put into play there. But in some ways, it happened pretty fast.

SHAPIRO: So in a sense, I mean, what you're suggesting is that almost the idea that because you could be sort of a generalist, you could have your hand in all of these things and you had

done—had had your hand in a variety of areas over the course of those seven years and your experience that you talked about earlier, you know, with the kind of educational background you had—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —at Tech that it really was in a way—you know, you were well positioned in some way,—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —in many ways to take on that role.

ODELL: This whole thing about generalist and specialist—see, for me it has a different context because when a lot of people talk about it, they think of it as there were a bunch of foresters and engineers who were expected to be generalists, but they were expected to have this more generalist approach from a fairly narrow disciplinary start.

SHAPIRO: Right.

ODELL: And yet I was fortunate enough that I had more diversity in what I got to do in college, and I didn't take a traditional, straight timber forester path, and so I was a different kind of generalist, and in some ways I wasn't a generalist at all; I was a natural resource and people specialist,—

SHAPIRO: Right.

ODELL: —you know, figuring out how all these things—an integrator. Rather than being a single discipline, it was a different kind of approach to even taking on—

SHAPIRO: The discipline of forestry was changing—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —in that time period, and you were—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —you were there.

ODELL: Yes, and I never became the kind of specialist that some people were hired to be and stayed. I wasn't the same kind of generalist, and I never became a specialist, and I often challenged the system on both—

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: —both sides. [Laughs.] And often saw that what I needed to do was [to] learn more about organizational development, to learn more about people and help people deal with change and help people function in teams or not. And so a lot of the stuff that also started coming along more especially in the eighties looked at what was happening with change management or organizational management, those kinds of things. Some of those things—again, partly because [of] what I had been exposed to, I think, in my college program—is that I was always looking for that kind of development for me in terms of a lot of the training or whatever that I would get involved in, and then eventually that I could turn around and help develop training and opportunities for other people, to help get them exposed in a way they could start using facilitation skills or they could start understanding that the whole human rights, civil rights process really could be better for them, too, even though if though [sic; delete "if though"] they thought it was, well, because we've got these laws about dealing with racial minorities differently or we've got to worry about, again, more women in the workforce, how to help people understand that a key part of civil rights is really about everybody's rights. And so just using what the Forest Service had to offer and seeing so many of these things as great opportunities rather than, "[Sighs.] Groan. We have to go or have to send somebody to X, Y Z. it's getting in the way of us [sic; our] doing our job." Trying to look at these in as many ways as

possible of [sic; in as many ways as possible and to ask:] how does it help us do our job better in a changing world?

SHAPIRO: Can you talk about some of the specific things that both you took part in, that you helped developed, that you sort of played [unintelligible] on the district and then maybe that had resonance across the region?

ODELL: One of the things—actually, it started in Region Six. It was in Region Six that I first attended a civil rights or a human rights training session and then also attended what was new to the Fo-—that had been around a little while but was—in one of the earliest sessions that was called "The Changing Roles of Men and Women." This is [sic; was] a program that was actually developed by a woman named [Evie Seashore?], here in the D.C. area.

SHAPIRO: Not Forest Service.

ODELL: Not for the Forest Service. And she wasn't Forest Service either. National Training Labs was who she worked for at the time. But it was for the national Naval Academy, and it was to deal with the fact that they weren't doing very well with bringing women into the Naval Academy. They still aren't. But anyway—

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: They really have been slow learners. But anyway, she developed this really interesting, multiple-day session. I think originally it was five full days. It might have even been five and a half full days [sic; five and a half days]. But it really was targeted. It was very structured in how many people, how many men and women came and exactly the order in which you do [sic; did] did different activities and the kinds of discussion and topics—I mean, a very structured thing, because she really knew a lot about the challenges in the gender cultures in this country. It's not just one culture. There really are gender cultures. She really understood group

dynamics from the standpoint of when you have someone who is different—it doesn't matter whether it's gender based, racially based, religion based—when you have only a small number of "the other" infiltrate the group, it changes the group's dynamics, and it tends to be bad. It's very hard for it to just go on the way it was or to automatically be this great new opportunity. She really—

SHAPIRO: You mean trouble ensues.

ODELL: Trouble ensues.

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: Tends to be that. Trouble ensues. The existing group feels threatened or decides it has to do something to get rid of this intruder—I mean, there's just—in real general terms. So anyway, I was very fortunate in my time in Region Six to go to those sessions and really kind of experience the sessions in two ways at the same time.

One was as a true participant, but because I had had some experience as an environmental education facilitator in Region Eight and just, again, how my mind works, I would see kind of behind the activities and go, *Oh, that's the process*. I would see process strategies and how, over time, these sessions would play out. And I would begin to see, *Oh, wow! That was really neat! They did this before they did that, and look how people are opened now and [are] discussing things that they probably wouldn't have done two days ago like this*. It was just something that I started realizing: *I really understand this process, even though I don't know all the details of how it was built and I don't have all the content or whatever*. And I just really got excited about perhaps getting engaged and becoming one of the trainer-facilitators and doing that.

And so I found out how I might start doing that while I was still in Region Six. Then when I moved to Region Five and found out that, yes, they did have some kind of civil rights and

human rights training, but not every forest participated. And they basically had—there were maybe only a couple of people in the regional office in their organizational development staff that had even heard about changing roles of men and women, let alone been involved in it in any way.

I kind of took on, as an additional job, this idea of introducing—helping getting "The Changing Roles of Men and Women" introduced into Region Five as a region-wide opportunity for all employees and to figure [sic; figuring] out how to help the Sierra really get engaged with the civil rights-human rights training.

The Sierra was more going from a personal to, like, a forest-wide opportunity and getting people trained up on the forest to help facilitate and train by, like, bringing in—like, if we needed a cadre of twelve people, then I would bring in six from forests that were already doing it and had experience, and we would have six from our forests. And then we would share. The people that had been trained from our forest—they could go help somebody else do theirs, and so they would get more experience.

We always kept a mix, because part of it was we felt that there probably were people on the forest that [if] they really needed to have a one-on-one conversation and discuss something of a sensitive nature, they might want to do it with somebody who wasn't anywhere near their forest the rest of the year,

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: So we always tried to have a mix, but we did eventually grow a pretty good cadre of people on the forest and a stronger network kind of across the region of sharing people, and then any special presenters and training session coordinators, we really were able to support each other that way. We also invited people, employees, to bring a spouse to those sessions because

we felt—again, the style, the format and everything, the content was really useful, and we didn't always have spouses there, but we frequently had at least a few spouses as part of the group.

It was another time when I found out that there were still people harboring what I thought were pretty old myths, but to them were still truths, and that [sic; delete "that"] a couple of times had wives there with husbands who were just sure that what I was all about was tearing down somebody who had chosen to be a wife and a homemaker and [had chosen] not to have a career outside the home or whatever. I mean, not even knowing me but having heard of me, of course. And getting the chance to interact with that person and let them [sic; her] know me as one human being, not some icon for "women libbers" who were against homemakers or whatever. You know, truly trying to get past the myths and the stereotypes and bring the personal contact into play in a way that you didn't just let all this stuff spew out and then people walked away and had to put themselves back together. It was in the structure to help bring this back together and resolve some of these issues.

The first time that kind of came out, it came out in one of the large groups during kind of an open panel thing. Again, it's one of those myths, like—my mouth hanging open, like: [Draws in breath.] Okay, how"—and the only thing I could do was talk from the heart in terms of why am I [sic; why I am here], why did I get into this, and who am I in terms of a relationship with a husband, those kinds of things. It ran us over time for that section of the thing, but there was definitely a different feeling, not with just this one woman but there was a different feeling in the room about who this woman ranger is, too.

I learned fairly on in my time on that forest that disclosure of who I am sometimes is the best diffuser of animosity. And it wasn't just in that more civil rights, gender conflict kind of thing, but sometimes it was true when we were dealing with permittees or the public or whatever

on resource issues or use issues. Sometimes [it involved] letting them get out what it was they were thinking or their assumptions and letting them know where I was coming from and trying to be as open and grounded as possible about where I start from.

In different situations, that became something I tried very hard to do, was not take things so personal [sic; personally], because, like the first woman in the room—she really didn't know Susan Odell. She had this stereotype. And learning [sic; And I learned] that a lot of this stuff was not personal. But I also figured out, over time, that I was, though, the personal embodiment of all the stuff somebody else carried around about women's libbers or about women in and taking jobs in the Forest Service that guys should have.

I mean, all of a sudden they had a face and a name, a real person. I had to often figure out how to let that cool off or that animosity die down a little bit so that they could also see past kind of this façade that they had put up. The idea that I could maybe help other people do that—I mean, it was a very strong motivation. With "The Changing Roles for Men and Women," it was one of the most fun things—it was a challenging thing, too, but to go region wide and to train people to be a cadre—we turned it into the regional office's organizational staff getting a cadre, a core cadre trained, and then over time training enough people so we could have these session going on across the region.

But that one was really critical, I think, in the early days of the consent decree, from the standpoint of helping some people deal with the real anger and frustration about what was happening in the more legal arena—again, to help people face to face, because in the "Changing Role" sessions—I said they were structured. Every session was 50-50 men and women, and part of the training design is [sic; was] there are [sic; were] times when you were in small groups and

it was all the same gender and there were in times you were in small groups when you were 50-50 in small groups, and then time in the whole group.

It was really one of the more positive things that happened during that time, when some of what was going on with the consent decree felt very negative and felt very heavy-handed and top-down, even for those of us who were line officers. And I was someone straddling a line. I was someone who was both a member of the decree but I was also a member of management. The decree monitor didn't really want to deal with me because I was neither fish nor fowl.

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.] Was there a sense in the program [unintelligible] there was a sense among people that it was coming up from the ground more than—

ODELL: Through "The Changing Roles of Men and Women," yes, that people were sorting things out and working things well together, but the consent decree, itself, the way it was managed both by Forest Service people and the decree monitor, was extremely heavy-handed and top-down. I mean, we had people, men and women both, working—for example, when I was on the Sierra, there would be some quick turnaround project from the regional office on the consent decree. "We need people to review these goals and objectives and give us feedback and we need it in"—like, two days or next week or whatever.

And we had people pulled together from every district. We had men and women from across disciplines and technicians and professionals, and for some time we'd get those kinds of things, we'd pull together, we'd work, and we were providing feedback, and this was happening across the region from multiple forests. We were saying, "We don't want these kinds of goals. We don't want these kinds of objectives. They're divisive. They're not going to be successful." I mean, we would put lots of thought into things that we thought would be workable, and we would send them up, and the next time something would come out, you would find basically no

evidence that any of our feedback, any of it, from anybody had gone—it looked almost exactly the same.

We were trying to truly design opportunities that would have said: We're going to raise all ships. We're going to improve conditions for women, and we're going to open doors, but we're going to improve a lot of things. We're going to improve training and supervision, and we're going to do a lot of things. And every employee has the potential to really benefit from this. With special emphasis in areas that we felt women really had this extra need.

We were basically cut off from doing that. And so after a while, men and women both said, "What's the point? Through the consent decree, what's the point of trying to make this work? Somebody up there has got it figured out how they [sic] want to do it, and even though it's not going to work and it's going to be awful ever trying to reach these goals the way they're written and the way we're supposed to measure them, we're just basically going to stop trying to change it because, you know, it's a done deal."

SHAPIRO: Mm-hm.

ODELL: Which was quite different than people coming out of the "Changing Role" sessions. In other words, we would try to have big enough groups of people come from a particular forest, too, [so that] when they went back, there were enough of them going back to help make a difference in that local culture. That's part of what we were trying to do with that design.

One of the parts of the "Changing Role" session also was a little thing near the end, where we'd have, like, career and life interviews. We would have, let's say, six or eight people sign up to be the featured speaker for a small group, to talk about their career and their life. This would all be arranged beforehand, so we knew really who was going to be there. Or we had people come in if we had to. And then the participants would have to sign up, [a] maximum

number per group, and then they could come. The person would do a little introduction about themselves [sic], about their [sic] career and then people could ask questions. That's something that I did several different times.

But what was interesting is, over time, as the consent decree wasn't working, was causing more problems, there were still problems with NEPA and all these kinds of things, and rangers constantly feeling like, *Boy, I have less flexibility to make decisions*—over the years that we did "The Changing Roles," people would start asking a question like, "Why would anybody want to be a line officer?" Now, that was—I mean, talk about a switch. And some of these were the specialists. They definitely were looking at, "Hey, when I can stay in my discipline and just do this and I know I like it, why would I want to get into the broader management thing?"

But some of them were people who maybe came from a little bit broader background or from a forester background but were looking at all the changes going on, in particular in that region with the consent decree layered over [the] top of it, and [were] going, "Why would anybody take on that level of responsibility?" The first time that happened—and in kind of checking later in the day, debriefing with other people and finding out that it kind of happened almost every single one—at least at some time. I was, like, *Wow, what a change.*

SHAPIRO: The [unintelligible] off of them. [Laughs.] The line officer. [Laughs.]

ODELL: Yes. Again, it had been worn off.

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: The external scraping and scrubbing, the sand and gravel and all that stuff getting tossed around in the stream and not having an oar or anything to help you. So that's a whole different way of thinking about what really impacts people in terms of their choices for their career, how they interact with other people. Do they give up, or do they step up? And I can say

that I felt pretty good while I was there in Region Five that—I knew a fair number of rangers who kept trying to step up, who kept trying to say, "Wait a minute. This is about taking care of the resources" or "it's about taking care of the employees." But there were also plenty that were just—you know, they liked being ranger [sic; rangers], but they weren't going to put their career on the line or they weren't going to get very involved in anything too controversial. They didn't want to rock the boat.

I figured, *Hey, what do I have to lose? I'm pretty atypical anyway.*

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: *They don't know what to expect anyway*. [Laughs.] But I think, again, some of the grounding, some of the reason I got involved in natural resource management had been there so long that it was pretty hard to back away and not take on some challenges for either employees or for the resources or in some cases for the community, really listening and hearing a community concern and saying, "This is valid. We've got to do something different. We can't keep plowing ahead and saying, 'Well, just because we're the Forest Service, and trust us and you'll be okay' is a message we can't keep giving."

SHAPIRO: Yes. Well, in a sense, I also wonder—and we can take a quick break if you want—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: But I also wonder whether—you know, how much of that sort of internal culture gets broadcast in some way to the community? How much is the community sort of engaging with a new Forest Service and how does that change their perception of what the Forest Service is about and what's being offered over time?

ODELL: Yes. When in fact either a whole district or most of a national forest really does start acting differently, I think that really does quickly get communicated. People notice. They notice

either because their neighbors are Forest Service employees and they hear about stuff and they see stuff, or they're users and permittees and so forth and so there is something different about how they're treated or when they're engaged in decision-making processes as a whole community. I mean, just things change. But enough has to change, I think, for that to get consistently community, for the community to say, "Yeah, this is a real different situation." It could be good or bad but especially in a good way, you have to see it for a while before you really believe it.

SHAPIRO: Right. And I'm thinking the communities understand the notion of a changing workforce.

ODELL: Mm-hm.

SHAPIRO: You talk about the example they give of the wife coming into the meeting and these sorts of things, but that even non-Forest Service folks in communities have certain understandings of how things might work as well as certain gender expectations that might be challenged at certain times.

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: [unintelligible].

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: How does that sort of—you know, thinking about how that translates, not just within the Forest Service but also to the local communities.

ODELL: Right. And, again, in the smaller communities it's just more visible,—

SHAPIRO: Right.

ODELL: —regardless of what it is. I think one of the things I also felt the best about, after being here in the Washington office and getting involved in the national program managements

for the rural community assistance programs is going out and doing activity reviews or program reviews where a big part of who we were listening to were community members, and hearing community members say, "This program has helped us see the Forest Service in a new way" or they will say, "Because of this program, the Forest Service now interacts with us differently." And to hear it consistently, in all different kinds of communities, to know that even one program with a few people who really "get it," who really understand what the purpose is behind it and that it's more about helping communities deal with change than it is about anything inside the boundary, on the land or inside our own organization.

That one program, without a lot of money, can make a difference in almost any kind of community if there are people who care enough to have that behavior to really consistently show that we do mean it; we're here to help in a different way. We're here to be at the table with you as a peer rather than professionals that you should just listen to and then let us go do our business. It really was very gratifying. In a different way, it was an extension of part of what I was trying to do when I was a ranger.

SHAPIRO: I think there's no way you could disconnect [unintelligible]. They absolutely are connected as you move into the eighties and you're talking about engaging with [unintelligible]—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —and getting up into the program.

ODELL: Yes, and having that experience as a line officer, being truly on the front lines during some of the tough times, like with RARE II or RPA, with forest planning, as well as the challenges of what it takes to take something new and make it work on the ground, coming into the State and Private branch of the Forest Service here and bringing that experience into a

program that had to in fact be delivered back through NFS [National Forest Service?] was [an] invaluable experience. But it wasn't just the experience of being on the land. It was truly, I think, that personal commitment, again, to people and resources together. And it was exciting to find folks scattered around the Forest Service all over the country, who also said, "Wow! This is what we've been waiting for. We've been looking for some way for us to be different as an agency and for us to bring people and resources together differently. So, yes, timber jobs have gone away. But the people haven't, and the resource still needs care, so how do we deal with this?" [Coughs.]

SHAPIRO: Let's take a quick break.

ODELL: Excuse me. Okay.

[End CD File 2. Begin CD File 3.]

SHAPIRO: we are back. It's still Tuesday,—

ODELL: [Laughs.]

SHAPIRO: —May 7th.

ODELL: Two thousand and seven.

SHAPIRO: May 7th, two thousand and—no, not May 7th.

ODELL: May 8th,

SHAPIRO: May 8th, 2007.

ODELL: Did we say the 7th at the beginning?

SHAPIRO: I don't know.

ODELL: Oh, well.

SHAPIRO: Tuesday, May 8th, 2007. Still in the Washington office. We're going to get back to some of the questions and start with having Susan comment a little bit on the changing demographics she experienced in California during the 1980s and how you experienced changes in cultural diversity as new employees were added to the workforce. And I'm just wondering if you, you know, want to comment a little bit about that and talk potentially a little bit about whether it was on the Sierra or the San Bernardino or across the region in your experience. How did you see the agency, the region, the forest and your role on the district, responding to integrating non-traditional cultures into the workforce and potentially commenting about women and family needs and things along those lines as well.

ODELL: Well, definitely by 1980, which is when I went into Region Five, the Forest Service had more of a challenge to increasing [sic; increase] the diversity in the workforce. It was not something that every unit thought was something they were going to be able to make very much headway with. In California in some ways, we had a little bit [of an] advantage over some of the other regions in that the overall population in California had some higher numbers of Hispanics or blacks in certain parts of the state. There were folks from various tribes. In some cases, [there were] areas where the national forests and the tribal lands and so forth were right up against each other.

But there was definitely more deliberate action, I think, in California to really be focused on figuring out how to recruit people who might really want to work for the Forest Service but also how to look at opportunities perhaps to get students maybe at the high school level—in other words, backing off from just college level—to say that there would be some value for them considering college or considering additional training beyond high school that could lead to a

Forest Service career. So there was some force light, I think, given to the fact that to get a bigger pool of candidates in general, you have to start growing it earlier.

There never was a whole lot of money available to spend doing maybe as much outreach and visitation and programs and that kind of thing as possible, but I do think that while I was there, I saw also just an increasing number of brown faces in the general population. I mean, California has a fairly high percentage now of Hispanics and others, not just Latinos but people from other places who have settled there, and so really the balance has shifted there in terms of numbers.

The shift that was going on, I think, when I was there was complicated with things like the consent decree and trying to figure out if you were a manager, what do you focus on to try to get more diversity in your workforce. But people would make jokes about, you know, "Well, how many points do you get for this?" You know, is she a black female? Is he Hispanic? We were looking at all the various special populations in terms of [the fact that] we wanted to employ people that had disabilities and make sure that we were offering those kinds of opportunities.

It was complicated, but I think we actually had more people in the general population to draw from. But I still think that most of our success happened, let's say, through the fire organization, for Hispanics and Native Americans. In some cases, we had real challenges trying to even hire black students that would come maybe for a summer from some college somewhere, because they may not be as comfortable in the small communities if there aren't very many other black people in those communities.

And I can remember back all the way to my years in eastern Oregon, in Region Six. There was a woman that was a friend of mine. I worked on the Malheur; she was over on the

Wallowa-Whitman [National Forest]. She had a good friend who was a young black man, and when he and his wife moved there, one of the biggest challenges was finding someone who could do black hair for his wife. That was a major issue. They were the only black people for miles. In that time, which was, like, the late seventies, that was a big thing. People were, like, "Oh, we never realized we had to think about that." Well, by let's say the mid eighties in Region Five, in most places things like that weren't an issue, but they still might have been, say, in more remote Northern California or maybe over on the Inyo, on the east side.

Again, everything wasn't truly the same across the region, so some forests did have an easier time of attracting people and keeping them. But I think retention was becoming a bigger issue than just the hiring or getting people on board. I still think that's probably an issue in some places today, is the retention.

SHAPIRO: Was that related more towards—do you see that as a combination of both internal Forest Service culture but also the fact of living in communities where other minorities might not be present?

ODELL: Yes, I think that combination—I mean, I think the internal Forest Service culture was changing. And, again, the work that I did, say, with the civil rights and human rights training—I mean, that was one of the reasons that I spent some time on that, was trying to help people internally sort out what was going on and to truly figure out how to be [sic; how to make it] a better place to work, how to be a more multicultural organization so that it was a good place and that people would want to be there as an employee [sic; as employees].

But it was a challenge in some communities. Again, I think back to a friend of mine where we lived in John Day [Oregon]. He came on board the Malheur maybe a year or so after I did. He was Hispanic. He grew up in the outskirts of Chicago. He was a forester. He loved

working in the woods, so actually being in a rural area, remote area—that part wasn't so hard. But there were only a couple of other professional Hispanic people in the whole community, and nobody else that had ever lived in or near Chicago anywhere that he could talk to and relate to, whatever.

And so the kind of friendship and bond that we formed was on kind of like—well, we were both a little bit on the outside. But if you can't find at least a couple of people who [sic; whom] you can make that kind of friendship with and realize, *Here's somebody that has some similar values to me. I can talk about different kinds of things and not worry about their [sic] politics*. And so I think from, again, that standpoint, if there isn't something in the community or someplace else you can connect up with, it is harder to retain that person. And sometimes it was just you were able to help somebody move on and get into another Forest Service job someplace that was going to be a better spot for them [sic]. But that wasn't always the case.

Again, for me, I looked for different things when I would come into a community. Did they have, for example, a chapter—well, actually, it was called the branch of the American Association of University Women. It was usually women with college degrees who placed a high priority on education and children and things like [that]. These were things that I cared about, usually women who were interested in continuing to learn about things and not just focus on what they'd achieved so far.

With minorities, it's not as easy to pinpoint and say, *Okay, I'm going to look for this type of organization*. You know, *I'm going to look for somebody who looks like me*. That becomes harder. I think my experience on the San Bernardino was we had a lot easier time of that than we did, say, when I was on the Sierra, and we weren't that far from Merced and the Central

Valley, where a lot of Hispanic people lived and worked, but that didn't necessarily mean they were ready to come up and work on the national forest, either.

Part of what we had talked about just briefly before was how these changes were being addressed as different kinds of people were being added to the workforce. I think there were some deliberate things that were being done: literally plans being written and people trying, through the personnel offices or through other people, trying to figure out what kind of strategies or tactics could reach more people. What do we do need to do to change our internal culture? I think there just was a lot more deliberate thought, and thought really based on people caring about: We want this to be a good place to work, not just saying, "Okay, we have some numbers we have to count up." I felt pretty good about that aspect of it and that it wasn't just something to check off the list and say, "Yeah, we've done that part of our annual reporting this year. We met a certain number. We're okay."

I think probably what, again, was a challenge was when some of these folks were moving kind of through the organization, especially when I think of the fire organization. It's really hard to say [sic; ask], "When does somebody have enough seasoning to, like, move up and become more of a supervisor on a crew or an engine? When is somebody really ready to be an assistant fire management officer, really have the experience?" And that was probably one of the biggest professional and personal challenges for me, was to try to help people sort through that, because I knew, too, from just experience that you have to have a certain amount of time out there on the fireline. I mean, there are just times when the hairs on the back of your neck stand up and you know, "We gotta get outta here." You can't teach that in a classroom.

There were times when I had to go head to head with somebody that had a lot of experience in fire and say, "I disagree with that decision. I don't think that's safe." I had to have

enough experience before I was a line officer to be able to challenge somebody because, at least in Southern California, the guys that make it to, like, the district fire management officers or the folks in the SO that are in charge of the fire programs—you know, they're called the fire gods. And very few people stand up to them and question their decisions. But there were a couple of times I had to be able to do that, because I truly felt that, for whatever reason, somebody had made a bad decision and was going to put firefighters' lives in danger, that I just couldn't go along with.

So even if experienced people can make a wrong decision sometimes, what might happen if we put somebody in one of those jobs that truly was still too inexperienced? I think that was really one of the hardest things, is to balance out trying to get people from different backgrounds into the organization and if they liked fire and they wanted to really get into that organization, how do we get them enough experience, and how much is enough? So that's a real challenge. [Someone knocks on the door.]

[End CD File 3. Begin CD File 4.]

SHAPIRO: I don't know if you want to complete the thought about sort of—you were talking a little bit about people who might come in and be interested in the fire organization. I don't know if you wanted to continue along those lines?

ODELL: Yes, I just think, again, that knowing how fast to push them through different levels of assignments—when we try to make people effective in the red card system, you know, we have a method for getting them trained—send them out on trainee jobs, and then eventually they take on that responsibility on some fire team on their own. That has, I think, a certain amount of review

and feedback, and people do better or worse with that. But truly putting somebody on an engine as the captain or as the assistant fire management officer, somebody who might be in charge of a small fire that could become a big fire, it really was difficult.

And fire management people truly had a lot of problems with—whether it was women or minorities or whatever being brought in and rushed up the chain of command. It was often hard to determine how much of it was just because, "Well, here's this woman or here's this minority guy who's gonna get this job when I've been grooming my bud over here or So-and-so has done his time for years, and he's never going to get a chance now because there are so few key promotion opportunities." When's [sic; When is it] a real honest concern about somebody's real ability and how safe they'll [sic] be and how good a manager versus when is it about, "You know, we have been waiting for years trying to get this guy into an assistant job and now he'll never do it because"—

SHAPIRO: Did you feel like you experienced some of both? I mean, that there were situations where one might have applied and other situations where it was [cross-talk; unintelligible]?

ODELL: Yes, and it was, but I think it's really hard to really know for sure what's going on at the time. Again, some of what we did with trying to get our fire people into some of the courses, like Changing Roles of Men and Women or, under the consent decree, we tried to have certain kinds of training and discussion sessions, trying to help people deal with this. Some of the guys were pretty nervous about even surfacing this concern, the whole safety issue and the experience issue, because they were afraid that they might just come across as somebody [sic; people] who just didn't want change to happen.

So I think that just really was a challenge to know how much to support this accelerated development. You know, how much could training and a few times experience on the line or on

the engine or whatever—how much of this really was enough? How many lives were we going to put in jeopardy? That, to me, was probably one of the bigger challenges about bringing people into the organization, regardless of whether it was from the different ethnicity or the gender, especially in Southern California, where fire is such a big factor

But now, looking at all the years with heavy fire seasons we've had since 2000 and knowing that we've had some serious problems, we've had fatalities, sometimes it makes me wonder, Who made which decision? How much experience had they had? Was it an old-timer who just missed it on that one, or was it somebody who was part of the militia and didn't establish leadership and command effectively and didn't hold to the ten standard fire orders? I mean, [I was] really wanting to know what was behind that because any loss of life is bad. But we know from the outset that going to fight any fire should be considered a hazardous job.

I just think that that's, for me, what stands out in terms of one of the biggest challenges, of knowing how successful are you [sic; you are]. It was pretty hard to gauge accelerating that kind of development.

But we also, I think, had said we wanted to talk a little bit about here on [sic; to talk here a little bit about] responding to integrating non-traditional cultures into the workforce.

SHAPIRO: Yes, and I had mentioned the fact that if you wanted to comment on a little bit on in—and you talked a little bit earlier about it when you initially went into the For-—you know, initially joined the Forest Service in the sense of wanting to have a family, wanting to have a career.

ODELL: Right.

SHAPIRO: As you experienced it [unintelligible] Region Five and potentially here in the WO as well, but especially in Region Six how that sort of played out for you personally, but also how it played out for other colleagues of yours—

ODELL: Right.

SHAPIRO: —and so on—

ODELL: Right.

SHAPIRO: —in the sense of—obviously, you know, it had traditional—traditionally one might look at the fact that spouses tended—you know, spouses of course of employees tended to be female for the most part, and they might have responsibilities at home with children, but this was obviously changing in the context of the seventies—

ODELL: Right.

SHAPIRO: —and eighties, not just in the Forest Service but across the country, and [I'm] just wondering how you might have—you know, how you saw that situation play out on the ground.

ODELL: Yes. Well, very definitely, my husband and I were a non-traditional couple in that he was the trailing spouse, and he was not a stay-at-home spouse. But when it came to having a family, I think [I] was a few years into working for the Forest Service before we seriously were thinking about, "Yeah, we would kind of like to do that now." But part of it was taking a look at what was going on in the Forest Service. Was the Forest Service going to be an entity that could handle professional employees having children and still trying to have a career?

Partly I think I saw some change going on that was encouraging when I was still in Region Six. One of the things that happened while I was on the Ochoco is that there were a couple of people in the regional office, a couple of women in the regional office who knew that there were women in professional positions kind of scattered around the region—you know, a

couple of foresters, an engineer or two, an archaeologist—I mean, just a variety of kinds of professional—and they started talking about the idea, "You know, one of the issues we know that these women have is this feeling of isolation and not really knowing how to deal with some career issues or family is[sues] or career-family conflicts."

They were able to talk to a couple of other staff officers in the regional office and get some money and sponsor, like, a three-day workshop and bring women in, help pay travel, because many of the forests didn't have a whole lot of money. This meeting wasn't about accomplishing work objectives and targets. A bunch of us went, somewhere around thirty women across Region Six—and actually they had a couple of people help with the workshop that were out of, like, either research stations or other regions that were women also in key professional jobs.

From that three-day workshop, we developed a new network, and we didn't really restrict it just to professional women. We would have been happy for any woman who was interested in more of a career approach to the Forest Service, men who were interested in being effective and supportive of women and change in the Forest Service. And we started doing these little informal newsletters. We would write personal articles. We would share clippings from things. And eventually that developed into a little journal that was called *Women in Forestry*. That eventually expanded to be called *Women in Natural Resources*. I was one of the first people that wrote and helped submit material for that.

But it was through people, some of the women I met in that who in some cases were older than I was and had already had children and were back in the workforce, maybe had taken some time off, but, again, mostly women my age were single that I had met at that time, and so I wasn't very typical of the more non-traditional professional women at that time. But that's part

of what we would talk about, is [sic; was]—even if they were single—you know, what if? What could we do? How could we manage this? Could the Forest Service handle this?

We started seeing some—enough of us [were] seeing change that we thought, You know, maybe we could do both. Maybe we could be mothers and professionals in this agency. It was on into the eighties, I guess, where [sic; when] there were a few more women [going into] more, like, field-going jobs, who were having children, trying to sort out how to balance things. But I also saw, as I had moved into line and everything, there were also men who were becoming single fathers and having primary custody of their children, and some of them either were in fire or at least were serious militia employees in terms of when fire season came, and they were having challenges with child care and training and things.

I saw situations with dual-career parents, where they were both Forest Service employees or they were both natural resource employees but had more field-going jobs, and so saw other people trying to sort out what they could do from the standpoint of family, child care. I think having some of the discussions we had—for example, during the Changing Roles of Men and Women, more men started saying, "Well, you know, I wouldn't mind being able to spend more time with *my* kids, instead of feeling, like, I have to trade off that family time." You know, "I wouldn't mind being able to stay home once in a while and do something—you know, take care of my kids and feel like I was playing a different role."

And [I was] hearing some of those kinds of things happening, men talking about how they'd be happy if there was less pressure to move in order to move up or in order to prove that they were dedicated to a career with the Forest Service, that sometimes they'd like to stay longer and let their spouse get further in their [sic; her] career or let their kids complete high school in one place instead of being—I mean, so family concerns—

SHAPIRO: Do you think that those things were always there but never expressed, or is it that they were—just this really was something brand new?

ODELL: I don't think it was totally brand new. I mean, I think a certain amount of this had been around because, again, I talked with some older employees, people with a lot more time in the agency than I had at that time, and some of them talked about the negative impacts on their families from a time when literally you could get a phone call on a Monday and be told, "We need you at Such-and-such a place, and you have a week"—or two weeks or a month—"to be there." You didn't apply for the job. You didn't anticipate a move. You didn't consult your spouse and think about those things. If you wanted to keep a career, an upwardly mobile career, you said, "Yes, sir," and you showed up. And maybe you came with your family, or maybe they joined you later. But there was a time [when] that literally was the more military approach to—you got your orders.

So I know that there were men who even in those times were concerned about their kids or would have liked to have had a little—but I think that, again, some of the overall change in our culture here in the U.S. was showing men that they maybe could have some other choices. And the Forest Service had changed enough by then. Again, people applied for jobs. And if you didn't always apply for the next promotion every time you could, it wasn't quite so bad. And there were people who were staying in place a lot longer, and there weren't so many consequences. So, I mean, there were other kinds of things changing. But to hear people, to hear men actually in more open discussion talk about those things or, again, challenge: How important is it for people to move a lot in order to truly move up? Is that really the best thing? Not just for career but for family.

So I think hearing and seeing those kinds of things were encouraging to say, *Yes, I think that I don't have to give up a career or I don't have to resign and expect to spend some time out of the workforce and then wonder where I might come back in*. And it was something that my husband and I had to talk about, too, because at different times it was still, like, he and I had to kind of check in on each other's expectations, you know? Because at the first [sic; delete "the"] he also was kind of where my mind-set was, which is, *Well, probably*. At some point, he would become the primary breadwinner, employed person and I would be probably a stay-at-home mom or, at best, a part-time [position]—and so as things changed, we had to keep that connection live.

When we were in California at Mariposa, that's probably when we were the most serious. Okay, we think it's really time for us. We think that the Forest Service could handle it.

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: And, not to get too personal about it, but then we had a hard time getting pregnant, so that was a whole 'nother factor, which we definitely had never expected to be an issue. But fortunately, by the time we had been at Big Bear for a couple of years, I did get pregnant and was the first line officer, women line officer to have a baby while being in a line officer position. My approach to dealing with that was also something that was a little bit different than what most people expected. What I asked for is that we advertise a detail opportunity for a little over three months. I expected to take three months off. But I wanted somebody to be able to come in and have a week or two working with me before I left, and I didn't want to have to impact my staff by having one of them be acting for that time, that there [sic; time. There] was just so much going on. Now, they could apply for it, but if that's [sic; that was] the case, then I had to get approval for a detailer to come in behind them [sic] because we really needed everybody there.

But I also lived right on the compound, just a little ways up the hill from the office. Part of the deal was once I go—I mean, I'll stop in and let people see the baby a couple of times, but this is really an opportunity for somebody to try out being a ranger. You know, what I'd really like is not for people to apply to [sic; for] this who were the absolute [sic; absolutely] best ranger candidates around. [sic; What I really wanted was not for people to apply for this who were the absolutely best ranger candidates around.] I'd like this [sic; I wanted this] to be the time for those women, minorities, men, whatever who were asking themselves, *Do I really want to do this?*

We really went out and recruited in a different way for that. In fact, the woman who dif the detail decided that, *Well, yeah, I do now know I'd like to be a ranger, but not now*. And she was able to give feedback to her immediate boss, her district ranger, and the forest supervisor about why she wanted to wait. And she did eventually become a ranger on a different forest. But I think it was a very constructive thing to do during a time when, again, the consent decree was priority and somebody could have really been trying to push and prove something with it. We wanted to say, No, there's a reason sometimes to look at it in a different way.

The other challenge that I kind of took on after I came back to work and started doing more things around the region and traveling and stuff again was trying to figure out how—not just for my own self but for other mothers and fathers who were having a hard time, say, getting to critical training session that were offered, centralized, say, in Sacramento or whatever [sic; wherever]. They, like I said, were single moms and dads or dual-career parents, and they both really need [sic; needed] to be there.

And so a couple of us started working, figuring out how—okay, first it was: Okay, I can hire, for myself, a nanny or a professional child care provider to come to wherever I am and for a

couple of days watch my child while I'm in the sessions. But how could we offer something different? And so we started pioneering the idea of bringing child care into the planning of critical training sessions, and how do you [sic; how you] offer that, how do you [sic; how you] do that in a way that's safe for the children, that we don't get the Forest Service in some kind of legal bind or whatever. But that was something that I think we really need [sic; needed] to break the ground.

And near the end of my time in Region Five, the federal government in general was finding ways of supporting the Forest Service and others with remote offices in looking at child care for children of federal employees. Again, we were right in that kind of change, where what does it take [sic; at point when we were considering what it takes], say, for GSA and whoever else needs to be behind this to make some of these things happen.

In one sense, the Forest Service had a pretty strong culture about people and their families, but as you said kind of in the introduction, it was mostly men and their trailing spouses and families, and at [sic; families. At] one point they didn't really care a whole lot about the families, because they [sic; families. They] figured, well, if the guy's got a job and he's moving up, everything else ought to be fine.

But we did, I think, truly go through a Forest Service culture change. People with different kinds of family structures and maybe even, when you think about it, people from different ethnic backgrounds. I know that we did have Hispanic employees that didn't really want to go all that far from where their core family was. Even if their spouse and their kids could pick up and move, there was this really strong family tie to a place, and so that was something that had to be considered.

I think we got better at understanding those factors were going to be part of how people made job decisions, and they were going to be important for us to consider when we wanted to do training and development and were trying to be more deliberate about retaining a good, diverse workforce. We really had to think through: What's an option here? What could we do that's different than how the Forest Service has traditionally done this?

SHAPIRO: It sounds like—I mean, you talked about the issue of retention earlier, but at this point, you increasingly get people interested. You're looking—you know, you talked about reaching out at the high school level, getting people interested earlier, all of these sorts of things. It's one thing to get them interested; it's then [important] to provide the level of support, the programming, the training, all of those things—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —that once they're in those positions, to [sic; positions would] make them successful, to make them feel like they could accomplish what they want to do.

ODELL: Right.

SHAPIRO: And at some level, it sounds like a lot of the things that you talked about through the course of today—there have been these programs that you were involved with, that you took a leadership role in that really sort of facilitated a lot of these efforts in Region Five.

ODELL: Or at least tied in with other people who were also trying to figure out the answers. And even if I didn't have a leadership role, [I] was trying to figure out, *How do I help this forest support that? Or how do I bring that idea in here and help more people understand what's going on here?*

Some of the other things that we tried to do, like across groups of rangers while I was there was to even look at, like, dealing with post-traumatic stress issues with our employees, our

firefighters, our law enforcement people. In some cases, there might be an employee on a district that would commit suicide. You know, how do you help coworkers deal with this, deal with the loss of this person in this way? I mean, it's bad enough [if] it was a traffic accident or cancer or something, but especially if people thought, *Well, if I had only known, maybe I could have prevented that*, all those kinds of "what if's." And yet in the Forest Service, so many, especially the men, have still in their basic gender culture, which is [sic; the conviction that] you don't talk about these things; you don't show that kind of weakness; you don't show that emotion. And so that in fact gets in the way of truly helping deal with post-traumatic stress.

There were a couple of different times at region-wide ranger meetings that we were trying to help rangers, men and women alike, figure out: How do we deal with—because things were happening more often that we realized [sic; that made us realize]: Oh, this could lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. And when we would—when I would get involved with people on my district, when we would do some debriefings after a couple of serious incidents on the San Bernardino, and I would find [sic; on the San Bernardino—in one case, I found] out that one of my people that had been a fire prevention officer when I first came there and he was getting more and more law enforcement training, and he eventually became a Level 4 law enforcement officer—but in one of these discussions, he brought up the fact that there was one automobile accident from years and years and years ago, when a child was kid, and how in certain situations that incident and what he saw when he first got to that scene would still come back and haunt hi.

The very first time he talked about it was at one of these Forest Service sessions. He admitted that for many years he just thought, *No, I'm tough. I've got to tough this out, and it'll stop happening at some point*. That part of the culture—it's not just the Forest Service, but it was heavily reinforced by being part of a fire force, by being part of a law enforcement force,

and we know that those kinds of jobs make it harder for people to deal with that because they're the ones that are supposed to be taking care of this instead of the ones feeling the impact of it.

SHAPIRO: Right.

ODELL: So those kinds of things, I think—in Region Five, there were people in the regional offices, there were forest supervisors, there were some of us as rangers—well, we were truly trying to look out ahead and [were] trying to say: We need to be better leaders. We need to be better people managers. And it's quite a broad spectrum of what that means. And we can't always take it all on all at once, but if we start having a different expectation for line officers, more people will toe the mark. But we got to give *them* training and give *them* feedback. And there has [sic; have] to be negative consequences, too. And that's still one of the things I think we have a hard time with, is what do you do when somebody just doesn't seem to get it? Whether it's your average employee or whether it's somebody that's already made it into a line officer or a staff position.

So if you're really expecting change to happen, there's lots of things that have to line up. You need people who are willing to lead that change, even if they aren't in a prescribed position of, quote-unquote, "leadership." And that's one of the other things that I got very involved with while I was in Region Five, was—it was as much a process as it was an event, but once a year there was a big conference. And this started somewhere in the early eighties, and maybe in 1980; it might have been before that. But it was called management improvement technology. Nowadays a similar thing is called leadership improvement technology, so it was called MIT or LIT, for short.

But anyway—

SHAPIRO: [unintelligible].

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: Yes, it was easy to make that change. But leadership became really important. [there were] people brought in from around the region who were interested in developing managers differently and interested in seeing people develop regardless of what their grade was, what position or education they had, so that over time, those of us who really got involved with it would help, again, develop different kinds of training, would help expand, say, the sheer number of really good group facilitators, meeting and group facilitators. There were some folks who were much more comfortable with just, say, helping design and conduct and keep people on schedule for a real specific kind of meeting; they really weren't into maybe some of the more difficult conflict resolution stuff, but [had] a different range of skill level[s], but really just expanding the number of people with different kinds of training and experience and then adding on more of an expectation, kind of changing the culture on a forest that people will use these facilitative processes not just in a formal, "I'm the facilitator for this meeting" but literally how you work together, use that and apply it in different ways so that, again, what gets done, whether it's in an interdisciplinary team meeting or it's just you're working with some coworkers on a problem out in the field, trying to solve it, and you do tings differently, and you don't have a lot of top-down management because people think, "I'm in this position. I'm in charge." You have people who maybe start being more open to realizing "other people have good knowledge and information. That, in fact, may mean they have to lead at some point and I don't." And so literally changing personal behavior as well as group behavior.

These kinds of things were happening, so if you're really seeing a change in culture, at least on some forests and more across the region, then when you realize, *Gosh, we have to lead*

*differently; we have to see people's potential differently; we have to look out there and say: Okay, what is it we haven't figured out yet that we're still lacking?* Looking forward. There was a lot of that kind of thing going on, and yet we could regularly run into a problem. A regional forester would change. "What are ya doin' this thing for? I'm not sure we should be spending any more money and time on that." So what do you got [sic; have] to do to convince somebody who is coming in cold, and truly coming in perhaps from a real old-style Forest Service culture?

There was stuff like that would happen [sic; Stuff like that would happen]. Or a forest supervisor would change. Maybe it was somebody who came from another region or somebody who had just been wanting so bad [sic; badly] to be a forest supervisor that that's all they [sic] could focus on, and they [sic] never really bought into a whole lot of other change; they were just so anxious for that position to be theirs.

It wasn't all smooth sailing, but in terms of looking at how we take on the future, how do we [sic; how we] help people better manage change—not that change is going to be something we would expect everybody just to be able to snap their fingers and say, "Oh, well, yeah, I can handle that" or "I can anticipate it" or "I can control it." No, but how do you more effectively, as an individual or in your work group or in your family—again, this was not seen strictly as a professional work kind of skill base; it was helping people—knowing that change is only going to speed up.

And it's interesting because in so many different places, people look at California and say, "Oh, that's a bellwether state" for this or for that or whatever. And yet what I found is that that region didn't get, I think, as much respect for its thinking and the kinds of issues it was dealing with from the rest of the Forest Service. It was truly seen as the land of fruits and nuts.

SHAPIRO: Mm-hm.

ODELL: I mean, all kinds of disparaging kinds of labels. The land of shake and bake was Southern California for the earthquakes and fires. People would make fun of that. But we learned a lot from the kind of firefighting skills and equipment and things that had to happen there to protect lives. We could have learned a lot more in this agency about off-road vehicle use and a lot of other things on changing demographics and so forth if we had looked at California and said, "Well, that's where I could region could be in six years," ten years, whatever. I mean, [there was] not enough of that in the Washington office, really valuing and then validating some of what was going on out there.

To kind of wrap this up, I really felt when it came to understanding some of the change that had gone on in California with regard to gender issues, diversity, and deliberately helping the larger workforce improve its capacity to deal with all these changes. When I came back here to the Washington office, in 1989, I felt like I went back in time by about fifteen years. I mean, I would show up at meetings, and certain things would be going on, discussions would be going on, and it felt like I was all the way back in Region Six days. And I'm going, *Whoa! I thought this was the headquarters, where people were supposed to be really looking ahead and big oversight [sic]—you know, the big picture, but understanding how it connected to the field*.

Even finding out that, gee, there really wasn't a federal woman's program here that was for the women in the Washington office. No, it was someone who was referring to and managing issues out with the regional people and managing a program out there somewhere, and so there were issues that women here in the Washington office were dealing with that they had nobody to go to about.

I'm thinking, *Whoa! This is very strange*. And like I said, it was like a time warp backwards. And I still sometimes—

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: —feel that way! But to kind of wrap up that kind of thinking process, it was like, "Well, we don't really have to deal with that stuff here. We're the Washington office. We don't really have to know how to run a meeting any differently or better. We're the Washington office." I mean, literally the number of times I would show up to be a participant in a meeting and end up partway though, helping people who were struggling, trying to figure out what was their real agenda [sic; what their real agenda was], what was their real goal [sic; what their real goal was], how could they in fact come with something useful at the end of the meeting—I mean, [I was] literally kind of negotiating my way around to help people get something useful out of a couple of hours of their time.

Now, not that every region had the kind of facilitation, change management and everything else going on, but what had gone on for me and what I was able to contribute to and to learn from served me extremely well. But coming back here was—[Makes sound.] Really cold water. Splash! Okay, back to reality. [Laughs.]

SHAPIRO: I guess it gets to the—you know, one of the questions is—you know, you're reflecting on that point let's say in 1989.

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: And you talked about fifteen years back and thinking—you've just explained in great detail, really wonderful detail a lot of the programs, initiatives, changed management, understanding—bringing in training aspects around fire, around integrating law enforcement—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —more effectively in Region Five. But if you had to then sit back in, say, 2007, still in the Washington office, or in 2006—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: Yes, yes, before—

SHAPIRO: [unintelligible] give you a year back. Sort of how have you see that situation change, maybe both in Region Five from some perspective and also in the Washington office now fifteen—you know, well, eighteen years or seventeen years since you—

ODELL: First came.

SHAPIRO: —since you first came here.

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: And also, I think, reflecting back on some of the effort in Region Five if you can at some level think about—

ODELL: Yes. I think what [sic; why it] is hard to do that kind of reflection is that the longer that I was [sic; I've been] here in the Washington office, the harder it was [sic; is] to know about the specifics of what's really going on in a region: what's really working, what are the real challenges. But that was one of the things that I kind of set out for myself when I first came back here, was to try to find some way to try to stay in touch with people who were still on the front lines, people in district offices, say, or people that were in the SO, whether they might be a friend that became a forest supervisor or whatever.

I did try to do that—and people scattered all over the country—I did end up with a pretty good network of people that I would send information to. Sometimes the first time they'd ever hear of something would be this e-mail to my big mailing list out there. But getting stuff back in became harder over time.

But one of the really big challenges, I think, for Region Five let's say in the last ten years has been keeping people on the ground. The lack of money for somebody just to be out there in a fire prevention position or recreation technician position or even a district level staff person—to be able to be out making contact with the public, covering the ground and seeing what's going on, what kind of use is out there that may be a problem, to be able then to bring it back in and take on tough issues.

When I think of when I first went to Mariposa and very quickly figured out, from talking to people, listening to things, folks that were on the ground, is that [sic; When I first went to Mariposa, I very quickly figured out, from talking to people, listening to things and to folks that were on the ground, that] we had a major problem with pirate white-water rafting companies. They didn't have permits. When they were bringing their passengers down, they let them go to the bathroom in the bushes, and the bushes in some cases were right in front of people's homes along the Merced River. I mean, there were real problems.

Part of the problem was on us, on our district; part of it was on the Stanislaus National Forest; part of it was on BLM [Bureau of Land Management] [land]. People had just basically thrown up their hands and said, "We'll never solve this problem." And the previous ranger had not even really tried. And I said, "We are going to do something about this."

But I wouldn't have known about how bad the problem [was] if I didn't have a fire prevention technician who was out there in that river canyon, talking to the local residents, watching what was going on, even if he couldn't catch up with the rafters, seeing some of the stuff that was going on, talking to the visitors, talking to the Park Service people in Yosemite—I mean, just out there working and doing his job.

And by working with the BL M and so forth, we did eventually do a major turnaround of that whole problem, and it took law enforcement, and it took some attention, and it took field people being able to keep that presence after we did the major turnaround. I know now back on that district, they have hardly anyone left anywhere out there in a green truck or a white truck—depending on what color the paint is that year.

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: That district isn't even a single district anymore; it's been combined, and it's been combined again. There's, like, north and south of the river. I mean, there's this huge forest, and now it's two districts. So it cuts down your overhead in terms of rangers, but because they have so little money, they couldn't take ranger money and turn around and add more field people. They just don't have [sic; just have] hardly anybody anywhere to be in touch with the local community, to be out there watching for legal or correct activity. They're just not there. And I think that's one of the bigger challenges that Region Five has in order to maintain that kind of—you know, what should we be looking ahead to? What kind of future change do we need to be dealing with if you don't even know how *things* are *going* right now?

And then I think the other part is that even though I don't know any of the real details about some of the other court cases and consent decrees or whatever, when you have to spend so much of your money and time dealing with court cases, whether it's about ethnic and gender problems or whether it's because we aren't doing right by NEPA or NFMA [pronounced NIF-muh; National Forest Management Act] or anything—I mean, either way, if you're spending that much time on legal costs [sic; that much time and money on legal matters], that's training people's energy, it's draining people's hope, it takes away creativity, it takes away the incentive

to try something different when you're thinking, *Well, is that going to just get us in more trouble?* You know, how do we deal with this?

When a judge and lawyers are going to answer the question rather than people learning how to work together [sic]. Or the agency figuring out [that] we did have some people that were really bad managers. And instead of figuring that out, we ended up with another consent decree. It never really was maybe about discrimination or about X, Y, Z; it was about people that would have been bad managers if they just had everybody looking exactly like them. Then you're back into this mode about: What *can* we do? How do we get back into the mode of being more proactive and developing the workforce so that everybody can start seeing, *I have the potential to be a leader, from wherever I sit today. I have the potential for advancement, or I'm appreciated and valued, and the frustration of not seeing very many promotional potentials isn't quite as bad.*

That's looking at some of the challenges that are different. We just had one consent decree in that timeframe, and then the extension. I didn't feel good when I had been back here in D.C. for a year or so, and I got called in to the NFS associate deputy chief's office and said [sic; and was told], "We need you to go back out to Region Five and work in the regional office and help clean up some of this stuff on the consent decree. We want you to leave tomorrow." I'm sitting there going, "Excuse me?" I mean, it's like I knew things weren't going well, and there's [sic; there were] rumors about contempt of court and all this other kind of stuff, and I basically was able to negotiate a couple of days' delay, since I had to figure out child care for a young child and how my husband was going to manage this kind of thing and get everything taken care of.

But I had to go out and spend basically three weeks doing stuff, to check off things on the checklist of these old goals and objectives I mentioned earlier. And much of what was left to be

checked off were things that from years before we'd said, "What's the use of *this*?" And, yeah, the region hadn't done it because after a while it became obvious it didn't matter. It didn't make any difference. But legally we had signed and said we were going to do this. And then there was the extension and there was [sic; were] modifications, and every time somebody signed, it just meant more ineffective stuff got added to the list.

So it's really even hard for me to imagine, as a line officer, if you've just continued to have consent decree after consent decree and legal oversight on top of more goals and objectives, and how you try to do that when things are still changing in your communities, you're having more and more problems with illegal aliens [in] certain forests—you know, having to deal with that, say, down on the Cleveland, and then the forests that have to deal with the just rampant problem with marijuana gardens and the increased degree of guns and violence and everything else associated with the people trying to protect the gardens.

Again, we want to be looking, as far as the Forest Service, on [sic; at] how bad things could get. That's already worse in other parts of the country, too. It's not just California, it's in Region Eight, Region Three, wherever the warmer climates are where they can pipe water in. So when I think about that, [I ask myself], *What could we have done differently?* Well, our law enforcement folks have become truly much more in the mode of dealing with those kinds of serious problems rather than, like, public lands and public user protection officers.

SHAPIRO: Was that more what they were in the 1980s?

ODELL: Yes. They were kind of building on the need for something more than our fire prevention technicians, who could warn people about campfire danger and write a citation around those kinds of things, when we really started getting into other kinds of crimes on national forests. Part of the change was we would have, let's say, co-op agreements with the

county sheriff's office, and they would run patrols through campgrounds for us. Or there were certain other kinds of things that they would help out [with].

But over time in some places, the criminal element just moved onto the public lands, and so whether it was meth labs and dumping stuff—well, that then became a major hazard. You're not just talking then about the law enforcement but what do you do—you've got hazardous waste cleanup, so you've got to call in other people to work with you on that, so just even who [sic; whom] you start working with—it's no longer the local volunteer fire department and the local county sheriff deputy. You know, you start working with different levels—

SHAPIRO: FBI.

ODELL: The DEA.

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: Even when I was out there, there was enough work with DEA because, I mean, there as already marijuana growing in forests, but, again, at that point in time it was much more associated with what people would think of as the old hippie culture. Now it's international drug cartels.

SHAPIRO: Right.

ODELL: Even in—the Forest Service still probably hasn't figured out quite how to deal with this from the standpoint of working with our typical forest visitor, who doesn't expect to have to run into something out in the woods like this versus—you know, what should we be spending our time and money on, whether it's California or Georgia or whatever [sic; wherever], to deal with this kinds of professional crime, big-money [operation], even with the level of law enforcement training and numbers that we have now? I mean, we're still dealing with something that I'm not sure anybody has a good answer for.

But I think that's just one more overlay of the challenge that California has. We started, again, when I was still there and has continued onward is [sic; When I was still there and to this day, we are] trying to figure out: How do we offer to a multilingual public written materials, people who can speak their language—you know, how do we offer them information and service? How do we help *them* be safe and happy users?

We were making changes, like figuring out how to have day use and picnic areas different for larger family groups, learning about the kind of experience that, say, Hispanic and black users from L.A. wanted when they came out to creeks on the Angeles and San Bernardino national forests and how they wanted to spend their day, in the water and picnicking. And it looked different. You know, what's crowded to you and I [sic; me], to them looks like, "Hey, this is great fun. This is exactly what we want." How do we change what we do with bathrooms? How do we deal with trash? How do we deal with public contact?

I mean, there's a lot of stuff in Southern California [in] particular which probably has happened also in other—like, say, outside Atlanta or in other places where the urban recreating public is looking for something, but they aren't going to go very far. And we're seeing different kinds of growth and use happening in those areas.

We were also dealing at that time with designated shooting areas—you know, people just bringing out their weapon [sic; weapons] or shooting up old TVs, shooting trees down. I mean, just amazing things with these shooting areas, and trying to figure out what to do about those. And at that time there were still plenty of forests who [sic; that] just said, "We're not going to have that kind of a thing." If we hadn't done it as a designated space at that time, there still would have been—but it would have been all over the place.

[It was] just these kinds of things building and not being able to really stay in touch with all the details. I just know that there is [sic; are] more and more challenges. It's just something new, but without enough people I don't think we're able to stay kind of on the cutting edge the way you'd like to, to try to figure—even how do you get the public to help you solve the problem if you don't have people to help you do it? Do you have the money to pay a contractor maybe? Maybe. But, you know, sometimes all contractors do is hit the surface. It's hard for them to really dig in and have the time and the effort to put into that kind of thing.

We have one unit that's at the Riverside Fire Lab that focuses on outdoor recreation, has done a lot of research over the years with looking at different cultural groups and how the recreate and what their values are and the differences between various kinds of Latino cultures and what that means: first generation, second generation. I mean, there's [sic; there are] researchers there that are doing great work. And for those of who know about it and appreciate it, at least we know that's one place we can go to learn about that stuff.

But it still doesn't help if you don't have people and especially if you can't afford to hire people who are bilingual or multilingual, if you are struggling to say, "Okay, we need somebody to translate this so when we put our phone message on that says you [sic; you've] got to have chains to come here during the wintertime, and we need it in Spanish and maybe in at least—you know, in some cases maybe it's some Asian dialects or whatever—how do you do that?

SHAPIRO: And those challenges weren't—those same questions were not being asked when you were there [cross-talk; unintelligible].

ODELL: I think they were being asked, but the pressure wasn't as great, and the area where you needed some of that wasn't as widespread, I don't think. But when you have—I mean, you have in one sense a larger pool of people to hire from, to get into your workforce, to be a face that

looks similar to this ethnic group or to be bilingual, but if you can't afford to hire anybody, if you don't have the money to hire anybody—and maybe you can get some volunteers.

I mean, there are some great partnership and volunteer programs. We were doing a lot of that—I mean, they were doing that before I went to California and before the Forest Service had a very well-known national recreation strategy which included partnerships. This is an area California was way ahead of a lot of people [sic; a lot of other places] in terms of just the sheer amount of work they were doing through partners, or it wouldn't have gotten done. But, again, partners can only do so much. You can't really put them out in law enforcement jobs. They can go out and help make contact and patrol, say, if there's a four-wheel-drive trail and they're a four-wheel-drive user. I mean, that's a good thing, having peers talk to each other about wise use and handing out educational material, but it's not the same thing as being someone who can go and write a citation and haul somebody in because they've just driven right through a T&E [threatened and endangered] plant area with their Jeep, or because they can't explain to someone—

Like, on the Sierra, when I was there, we were dealing with—we had in this one season a bunch of wildfires starting from similar kinds of situations, where the folks on the ground would go out and find that the fire originated in a campfire-cooking fire-bonfire kind of situation that obviously had not really been put out properly, if at all. And they were finding all these little bird bones and squirrel bones, and they were going, "This is really weird." But they just started finding them all through kind of like the front country—not all the way up in the mountains but not all the way down in the grass and woodland areas. And [they] finally figured out that this was evidence that people from a Hmong community in the Fresno area were coming up and

doing what they used to do in the hills of Vietnam, where they came from, and in Vietnam in those hills it was wet all the time.

And they were coming up, and not only were they not putting their fires out, which was one cultural and environmental difference [but] what they were hunting for was basically any small bird or animal that moved, and then they cooked it over the open fire and they ate it, because that was typical, that was normal for them to do that. They were killing songbirds. They were killing rabbits and squirrels and gophers. I mean, it didn't matter if it was in season or out season for squirrels, because this is how they'd lived. I mean, this community had been building and growing, but it's like all of a sudden one year, pooh! They were all up on the forest.

And so we had had several wildfires. None of them got really big, luckily. This was something that the Sierra quickly had to figure out: How are we going—you know, we actually want theses people to hunt when it's appropriate. We want them to feel good about coming, because they're mountain and hill people. We gotta do somethin'.

And so luckily they had a couple of people in the supervisor's office who quickly figured out how to make some contacts, found a couple of leaders in the community who could help them have community meetings and start talking about—you know, did they want to see everything burned up? Oh, no, no, they didn't want to see everything burned up; they loved those mountains. Well,—then they also had to try to explain how in this country our people love to look at songbirds, not eat them. And that was actually harder than the whole fire and everything else. But it had to be a real commu-—and it had to spread—because you couldn't afford for, like, people on one block to know about it and somebody a couple of blocks over not know, and they and their family and friends go up and start the next fire.

That was something that was a wakeup call, then, to a lot of other forests. The fire prevention people then would start spreading the word: "Okay, you need to be aware"—because until it happened, none of us knew that their culture included eating songbirds. It was just good little—it tastes like chicken, you know? Little tiny chickens. [Laughs.]

So having that ability to then really activate and go work with that community and spend some time with them and over time really have them kind of become the educating force and have people really understand we weren't out to get them; we really did want them to use the forest, but this was one of the—you know, a couple of things that they were going to have to change in their culture. And then they got behind it.

We have so many other groups coming in, not just in California, which does have I don't know how many hundred different dialects and languages and everything else, but places across the country or out in the middle of small rural community all of a sudden some community springs up from some other country or ethnic group.

SHAPIRO: Yes, and there's, you know, various stories of refugee groups and things like that—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —that end up in particular locations, and it's understanding, from a manager's perspective—it's understanding your users, doing the best—and working with them and doing the best to understand their culture,—

ODELL: Right.

SHAPIRO: —respect their culture and also [get them to] understand that there has to be some respect for the laws that are in place.

ODELL: Yes. And so then getting out in front, so that more of our managers need to realize, "Oh, if you have some change like that going on next to your national forest, here's [sic; here

are] some things you might need to be thinking about. It might not be obvious to you, but you might need to be thinking about what do they like to hunt with their shotguns or with their .22s, or where do they see as good places to recreate versus where you might, or how might they use it, family size groups?"

I think some of that does go on, but if you've got lots of things happening at once, kind of different layers of things happening—that's what I imagine California is like, is there's so much and so many different facets. It just keeps expanding. And I think that some of the people that are there as forest supervisors and so forth now very much still have that same kind of desire to be out in front, to have this be a place people want to work and have it be a place, as an agency, that does well working with communities and taking on these challenges.

And I suspect there's [sic; there are] also line officers—again, it's just—you know, just want to get through the day and just want to try to get the targets checked off and don't want to rock the boat. But I think that we've lost some of the learning and so forth that went on, as you and I were talking about when we have people retire, kind of a cohort leave that takes with it [sic; him] experience. The agency really loses. You know, people have to go back and, if they're lucky, relearn some of these things without too many mistakes.

And I think from the time, say, that I came into the Washington office, Region Five did lose some people either through retirement or in one of the big downsizings in, like, the mid nineties, people that had been fighting the good fight, who had been trying to figure out how to deal with this change in cultures and the various things that were going on. And when the buy-out came, they said, "You know, it's not fun anymore. I don't feel like I'm able to make a difference anymore. I'm taking the buyout." And we had a brain drain that wasn't just about what they knew about the land and how long they'd been there or about a particularly

challenging effort with prescribed fire or tree species or bird species or whatever; I think we lost some people who also had done some of that tough work on, like, the organizational development.

But the leadership improvement technology effort has had its ups and downs, and as far as I know, it's still going on, and I don't know whether it's still as egalitarian in the sense of whether or not it really has people from all levels engaged. Of course, there seems [sic; seem] to be fewer levels, so maybe it's just reflective of the flatter organization.

SHAPIRO: [Laughs.]

ODELL: But I do know that some people, who were involved over the longer period of time, have really done some wonderful things and have made sure they keep bringing in new thinkers, introducing different books and authors, helping people take this and turn it into action, changing behavior. So I think there has been an effort to keep some strong thread of that improvement. You know, how do we help this workforce? How do we make better leaders out of whoever is willing to be a leader and interested in being a leader? I think that remains a strength, but I think it's challenged even more so—just everything that is California. [Laughs.]d

SHAPIRO: Why don't we end there?

ODELL: Okay.

SHAPIRO: It's been a real pleasure to talk with you at length, and I think if there's anything you want to add, feel free. One thing that I would say is that obviously getting these experiences, recollections, reflections down and somewhere down the road into print and [for] people to read about and hear about is, from I think a lot of people's perspective, very important and one additional way to have people engaged in what has happened—

ODELL: Yes.

SHAPIRO: —and how they can [cross-talk; unintelligible].

ODELL: And to not lose all that knowledge.

SHAPIRO: Exactly.

ODELL: Yes. Thank you very much, and I look forward to, again, perhaps contributing in some other way.

SHAPIRO: Wonderful. Goodbye.

ODELL: Bye.

[End of interview.]