

An Interview with Jere Christner

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0:00:05.7 James Wall: Okay, alright, I'm still James Wall, last I checked, and it is Tuesday, May 24th, 2022, still Denver, Colorado, we're at the Sonesta Hotel and we're interviewing you on behalf of the National Museum of Forest Service History. A few disclaimers: one, you can pause the interview at any time if you want to take a break. You can also end the interview at any time if you find you are getting out of it. The main thing, I guess, for our purposes is, before we archive this interview, in other words, before we ever release it to the public, such as there are, we'll send you your footage. You can take a look at it. Let me know what works and if there's something that you don't like we'll scrub it out, so feel free to fire away, so to speak. But with that being said, could you tell me when and where you were born?

0:00:58.0 Jere Christner: When: July 29, 1943, in Watsonville, California.

0:01:05.2 James Wall: And where is Watsonville? I think I've heard that.

0:01:08.0 Jere Christner: It's near Fort Ord which is on the North Coast, and I think another town... another town where a...anyway...

0:01:24.9 James Wall: So, were you an outdoors kid growing up or were you interested in the forests and streams and rivers and things like that?

0:01:34.3 Jere Christner: Yes, I was. We lived in central Colorado, Fort Collins, not too far from here, actually, that's where I was raised and my parents were raised in eastern Colorado, on the prairie, so they both happened to go to Colorado A&M in Fort Collins, so they were near the mountains all the time and my dad majored in forestry and they both liked to fish, my dad liked to bird hunt, so we spent a lot of time in the outdoors, I was in the Boy Scouts and...

0:02:11.5 James Wall: And was your father in the Forest Service?

0:02:14.0 Jere Christner: He was, a little bit before World War II and when he came back from World War II there really wasn't a job for him, I think they wanted to be back in this part of Colorado. But he had some variety of jobs and then later on in his career, he worked for the Soil Conservation Service, well, just Colorado State Forestry too, and then he worked for the SCS [Soil Conservation Service] for a while too.

0:02:44.2 James Wall: I see, so you grew up with a bit more understanding of resource management?

0:02:49.9 Jere Christner: Yes, and one of our neighbors was a Forest Supervisor for the Roosevelt National Forest and so I was around Forest Service type things every so often.

0:03:01.7 James Wall: So, when you got to college, did you know—this is the time period in which hydrology is basically in its infancy as an academic subject, not a lot of people majored in it or if they did, it was called watershed management or something like that—how did you learn about this field?

0:03:23.8 Jere Christner: Well, a little bit about it in Fort Collins at CSU [Colorado State University], I attended two years at Colorado State and Jim Reed was going to school again, he was

ahead of me age wise, a little bit, but he had mentioned the field of watershed management, I don't recall if he mentioned hydrology specifically, and I enjoyed skiing and snow and things like that so, it interested me.

0:03:54.7 James Wall: And how did you make it into the Forest Service?

0:04:00.4 Jere Christner: How did I make it? [laughs]

0:04:01.5 James Wall: Because there's a few people who immediately got jobs and there's some folks who had the... They had no job offers, they had to sort of work their way in slowly but surely, what was the path like from college to the outfit for you?

0:04:17.3 Jere Christner: Well, I got my degree and ran out of money at Colorado State because I, even though I was raised in Fort Collins, I was a resident, but my senior year, we... Our family had moved to Nevada, my dad had a job with Nevada State Forestry. And I came back as an out-of-state resident, a non-resident rather, and it was very expensive to go for, to school, I ran out of money quickly and transferred to Utah State, which is much more reasonably priced at that time but going on for jobs I finished my B.S. [Bachelor's of Science], I had a girlfriend and I was interested and also being in ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] so I had to go during the Vietnam era, I was going to be called to active duty, but I was interested in hydrology and they offered a program at Utah State, and I was accepted for that.

0:05:16.4 Jere Christner: And I applied for a deferment of my active duty my commitment after being in ROTC and got that for two years and at the time when I was ready to graduate, my... I wasn't going to be called to active duty immediately, I think there was going to be a month or two delay so I applied with the Forest Service or applied for a job with the Forest Service, and I was offered a job in Denver in the regional office and I made sure they understood that I would be called up for active duty sometime after that and they still hired me. So, I worked in Denver for, I think it was a little over a month, before I actually had to leave to go for my two year assignment with the Army.

0:06:12.0 James Wall: And what did they have you doing in the Army?

0:06:14.3 Jere Christner: In the Army I was, first I went to Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia and I had my commission in military intelligence so I said, "Wait a minute, Why am I going to infantry school?" I said, "What?" They said, "Well, in military intelligence, everybody's going to infantry school," because Vietnam was really going hot and heavy at that time so I went to Georgia to Fort Benning, Georgia, and through that and then I was on orders to go to Vietnam, but I also didn't get sent there because I was sent to Intelligence School in, just outside Baltimore.

0:07:03.3 Jere Christner: And so, I did that and the day before I graduated from the intelligence course, it having to do with remote sensing and aerial photography and those kinds of things. The day before graduation, the [USS] Pueblo was captured in the waters near North Korea. I don't know, you probably don't remember that incident, but it was an intelligence gathering naval vessel that was captured by the Koreans and they changed my orders, I was going to go to Vietnam. Just about everybody in our class was going to go to Vietnam, they changed my orders. They said, "All the orders are canceled from," and then a couple days later we got orders and about half of our class went to Korea and about a half of our class went to Vietnam and two other people plus me were

assigned to locations in the US, which was fine.

0:08:05.9 James Wall: Wow. So that small moment in time, you could have ended up in a perilous situation.

0:08:12.2 Jere Christner: Oh, yeah, I could have.

0:08:13.2 James Wall: Yeah. So, this... How was the transition back into civilian life once you left the Army?

0:08:22.7 Jere Christner: Oh, it was pretty easy. I had that job and here...

0:08:26.5 James Wall: And they re-hired you.

0:08:27.0 Jere Christner: In Colorado, in Denver, at the regional office. And they held a job, which was...

0:08:34.8 James Wall: Wow.

0:08:35.6 Jere Christner: That was a requirement of federal government, to hold jobs for people who were drafted or entered service. So I knew I had a job to come back to, the Army wanted me to stay longer and I said, "No, I got a job."

[laughter]

0:08:52.0 Jere Christner: "I'm going to go back."

0:08:53.1 James Wall: Ready to make more than a hundred bucks a month or whatever it is.

0:08:56.2 Jere Christner: Well, I, yeah, I think so. Yeah.

[laughter]

0:09:02.1 James Wall: So, what were you doing in Denver at the RO [Regional Office] there? Because it seems like a lot of people start out on summer jobs in national forests and things like that, and you went right to the RO.

0:09:12.1 Jere Christner: Yeah, I had worked for the State of Nevada in the summer and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in firefighting in the summer, but other than that it was an unusual jump just right into a professional position. And because I had a master's degree, I got a little bit higher entry grade, which was nice. So, it was an easy transition. And what did I do in the regional office then?

0:09:39.3 James Wall: Mm-hmm.

0:09:40.5 Jere Christner: A number of things, but at that time there was real concern about the Colorado River Basin and water supply and so forth, so the planning was going on related to that. So, a lot of activities were related to software and photos and photo interpretation, mapping, doing

things related to that effort, and a few other miscellaneous things occurred I got to do, see some of the other places in Region Two as well. And that, let's see about a year, about, yeah, around a year they talked about transferring me out of the regional office to the Arapaho National Forest, which is next door. Well, it turned out that the person they were going to remove to put me in his position, he said he didn't want to move, so they changed their mind and at that time, a lot of bureau activation [?] money was coming to the National Forests for irrigation projects, reservoirs and so forth, and so one of the forests in Western Colorado, Grand Mesa Uncompahgre at that time, had funds and could hire a hydrologist so they transferred me over to Delta, Colorado, where the supervisor's office was at that time. So that was about, let's see, 1970, '71.

0:11:13.3 James Wall: Wow. So, you at least got to stay in Colorado. You were sort of staying a little bit local.

0:11:19.0 Jere Christner: Yes.

0:11:19.3 James Wall: Yeah. So, take me through sort of the arc of your career. So where did we go from here in Delta, Colorado?

0:11:30.1 Jere Christner: Well, I was there about three and a half years, and then I moved to Reno, Nevada where the Toiyabe National Forest headquarters was, still is.

0:11:43.4 James Wall: Alright. And what were you doing there?

0:11:45.3 Jere Christner: I was a forest hydrologist there as well.

0:11:48.0 James Wall: Okay. In these early years as a forest hydrologist, there's sort of a continuum of experiences that I found with these interviews with hydrologists. There's a rare group of people, they were very small, where they always worked with good bosses and they were well respected and welcomed and knew what they were doing and all that. Probably more people, I would say, on the other end of the continuum where it's like, "District Ranger hated me, Forest Supervisor was, didn't know I existed. It was all about getting the cut out, getting out the cut" ... where would you sort of situate your early years in that continuum?

0:12:32.5 Jere Christner: Well, I got a BS degree and a master's degree, it didn't really prepare me to work. I didn't know what to expect, didn't know what they might be working on. Got to the forest, I had a... My boss was the range staff on the district. I don't think he knew what I was, should be about, and he didn't give me really much information, just kind of like, "Oh, here you are." And we got some money and they had a brand new Chevy truck, white Chevy truck rented or leased for me to use. And I thought, "Oh, that's great." The reservoir was in the early planning stages. My principal reason for being there is because of the reservoir that was going to be constructed on the Ouray [Ranger] District, and so none of them wanted to help there. I did get to know a lot of the other staff really well, the small town and well...

0:13:34.3 James Wall: I think we dropped your mic. Could you clip that? Yeah. Great.

0:13:44.4 Jere Christner: I moved my arm, sorry.

0:13:44.6 James Wall: Oh, no worries.

0:13:45.5 Jere Christner: There we go.

0:13:45.9 James Wall: Clear as a bell.

0:13:47.7 Jere Christner: And anyway, one ranger, District Ranger where the reservoir was going to be, he was very, I like to say progressive, but he was really into doing the right job with... The people in the land were first. And I appreciated that because he was supportive, he had ideas, that was nice. Some of the other staff, maybe not. Some of the other rangers were old time people and they did the job like they did before. But other SO staff were good, timber staff, very supportive, very easy to work with. So, it was a good job, even though I was kind of planning my own way and doing my own things. So, I got some help from other people in the region, from the regional office, as well as one person in particular, Dave Falletti, who was on an adjacent forest.

0:14:58.0 Jere Christner: I had known him in college. He was very intelligent. He was in the Air Force. He was a meteorologist in the Air Force, but he had qualifications to be a hydrologist. So that was nice having someone like that close by that I could bounce things off of or get ideas from. That was quite helpful. I'm not sure I did the things that the Forest Supervisor wanted me to do. In fact, I got crossways with him occasionally, and one District Ranger sometimes, because they were going to be old or "old guard," so to speak and...

0:15:36.5 James Wall: Yeah, it sounds more generational when people had trouble, it was usually with the older "timber beasts," so to speak.

0:15:46.3 Jere Christner: Not always.

[chuckle]

0:15:47.2 James Wall: So, this Forest Supervisor, just for whatever reason would cross ways with you at some point about something?

0:15:52.5 Jere Christner: Well, yeah, and not so much about my work, but, I guess, some of his attitudes they're... One example is, there were sheep driveways, maybe still in the Forest Service, where they would send sheep, thousands of sheep from Montana down to Texas or wherever into New Mexico, Arizona, and they would unload them, maybe haul them a little bit on a truck, and then they'd turn them loose on national forests and they just go through the forest like a herd of locusts. And that was the way things were done. Well, we had a big sheep driveway on part of the Ouray District, not in the same drainage where this reservoir was going to be, it was a couple drainages over, but I walked around up there and there's bare ground, little scrub trees and hardly anything green growing, every year it was that way. And holes from the gouges from where the poor sheep had gone year after year after year.

0:16:56.1 Jere Christner: Anyway, so I talked to the District Ranger about a little project where we just fence it, put some fencing around to have some demonstration areas, small, maybe the size of this room and plant some other vegetation. Well, Forest Supervisor wasn't too happy with that, because the vegetation kind of started growing and plants that they hadn't seen out there probably for a hundred years. Anyway, bounce ahead a little bit further, turned out that when the Forest Supervisor retired, he went to Alaska for the summer to look at something or on a trip. And he came

back and he made a comment to somebody, I don't remember it was directly to me, I don't think it was, but to someone else in the office that he was really surprised at how well some of these lands can recover. And this was Alaska where it's really grim. And so there... He was raised, probably trained and worked and had a certain point of view just because of his experience. And when I was bringing maybe something new, he wasn't real comfortable, he said, "Why are you doing this?"

0:18:11.0 James Wall: I see. So, it's lack of imagination, I guess, I would...

0:18:14.7 Jere Christner: Well, yeah.

0:18:14.8 James Wall: Chalk it up to...

0:18:16.3 Jere Christner: Yeah, I can't really... He was a nice guy, but...

0:18:20.0 James Wall: I see. So, what would you say would be the biggest accomplishment that you would point to, or that you come back to in your own mind about your time in the outfit?

0:18:36.0 Jere Christner: I think maybe transfer of information or technology to people on the ground passing along some of my training or experience to improve the land management.

0:18:56.4 James Wall: So, what is... So, your generation of hydrologists, how are things sort of easier now for the generation that came after you, for the people that you hired as you were on your way out?

0:19:10.3 Jere Christner: Well, I guess there's a track record. Hydrologists were these new specialists, they called us specialists. Who are these people?

0:19:18.3 James Wall: The "ologists," yeah.

0:19:19.7 Jere Christner: We know what engineers are. We know what timber management people are. We know what range managers are. Here's, who's this... This odd thing... It's a round hole and it's a square peg comes along. What is it? So, I guess over the years there were surprises.

0:19:38.3 James Wall: So, you... At least there's an acceptance of that hydrologists... We know what they do, it's accepted what they do. But in your time, there was a bit of a fight that you had to have of justifying your own existence.

0:19:51.7 Jere Christner: Transition. NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] was passed, water...

0:19:56.5 James Wall: Clean Water Act.

0:19:56.7 Jere Christner: Clean Water Act, things like that. So, the attitude in the nation was moving slightly and these other things kind of boosted that along, I think. The more direction in land management planning or different way of doing it.

0:20:15.6 James Wall: So, you'd say probably the biggest change was the regulation or the legislation—NEPA, Clean Water Act—in terms of changing the job for you and for others?

0:20:25.4 Jere Christner: Well, I think it went hand in hand... I think without that legislation, I think soil scientists and hydrologists and people like that would still have nudged the agency in the same direction.

0:20:40.8 James Wall: I see.

0:20:41.9 Jere Christner: But the legislation added a little more teeth, I think, to that. And also the money that came along with that legislation helped. The money was important.

0:20:52.1 James Wall: Yeah. Yeah. Well, you can't do much without it.

0:20:55.2 Jere Christner: No.

0:20:56.7 James Wall: And then that's a big fight to have. So, from Reno where did you finish up on, in your career?

0:21:06.1 Jere Christner: Well, ultimately in Alaska.

0:21:09.2 James Wall: Wow. So...

0:21:10.0 Jere Christner: I went from Reno to Western Oregon, the Willamette National Forest, and then from there up to Alaska, Southeast Alaska, the Tongass National Forest.

0:21:21.4 James Wall: Wow. So you finished on the big one. [chuckle]

0:21:23.1 Jere Christner: Yeah.

0:21:24.7 James Wall: That's maybe the biggest national forest.

0:21:26.4 Jere Christner: It is.

0:21:26.8 James Wall: I know of, yeah. That's...

0:21:27.8 Jere Christner: In the nation, yes.

0:21:29.4 James Wall: And the Willamette is the, like, it's up there in the echelon of really highly regarded, everybody seems to want to get to the Willamette. It's always mentioned as kind of the best place to be.

0:21:45.4 Jere Christner: Right. And that's changed after the spotted owl. The workload on the Willamette drastically was reduced but...

0:21:53.4 James Wall: Were you there when that happened?

0:21:55.5 Jere Christner: Yes, that was just before I moved to Alaska. But there was a transition, a lot of environmental interest in the Willamette, and the workload on the Willamette was incredible. It was a very interesting place to work. I was the only hydrologist for a while. There was one

preceding me, but impossible workload. I couldn't keep up with it. And eventually we got, at my urging, oh, I think we had four other hydrologists in addition to me, but they were at the Ranger District level. I did have some help in the SO though.

0:22:32.2 James Wall: Wow. So, what, how specifically, how did the Spotted Owl Controversy,¹ what are you now doing to try to keep up? How much more work, what type of work are they throwing at you now?

0:22:47.1 Jere Christner: You mean...I'm not working now.

0:22:48.7 James Wall: Oh, sorry. No, no, I meant in the time. Sorry, I'm using the present tense.

0:22:53.1 Jere Christner: Yeah.

0:22:53.4 James Wall: I should be using the past tense.

0:22:54.1 Jere Christner: Well, what were they throwing at me?

0:22:55.6 James Wall: You said that things started to pile up, which I've heard, and, but how did that look like on the ground?

0:23:01.4 Jere Christner: Well, support for timber management. A lot of additional watershed soils, fisheries, wildlife management, [got] input into the planning and the execution of timber harvest and other things. So, every time something was planned they had to consider those things, the planners, as they were putting things on paper and as well as on the ground. So, I had to be out in the field a lot, often with a few biologists or soil scientists, just incredible on the ground workload. And I'd often have to provide a written report to support what the people on the ground were doing, because they were putting things on paper and drawing maps and so forth. I didn't have time to even write letters. I would dictate things sometimes as I was driving back into town and give... Get the little cassette or small cassette to the office staff in Eugene, and they would type it up.

0:24:07.2 James Wall: Wow.

0:24:07.5 Jere Christner: In, just amazing workload. And then we had, we had other things going on. Fuel treatment or slash treatment after timber harvest, treating fuels using herbicides. And that was a big controversy there. So, I was involved in monitoring, so I ended up monitoring prions and data collection for herbicide spraying, aerial spraying.

0:24:40.4 James Wall: Wow.

0:24:41.1 Jere Christner: So that was a big impact, also with the Ranger Districts... At that time, we had some hydrologists out in the field, and that helped. But using technology and a scientific approach to collecting data and making the analysis and so forth...that was new to me.

¹ "In 1990, the Northern subspecies of spotted owl came under the Endangered Species Act...A sweeping federal court ruling in 1991 closed much of the Northwest woods to logging. By the end of the century, timber harvest on 24 million acres of federal land had dropped 90 percent from its heyday." <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-spotted-owls-new-nemesis-131610387/>

0:25:02.2 James Wall: So, was it the, did you start looking for a different posting at a certain point, or was the Alaska job brought to you as an option?

0:25:15.4 Jere Christner: I got interested in Alaska very early in my career. And actually, in college I had a roommate that worked in Alaska. He was a fish biologist and told stories, I thought, "Wow." And even in the Boy Scouts, one of the people I knew had gone on up to Alaska on a small boat, Explorer Scouts, I think, "Well, that sounds kind of interesting." So I always had it in the back of my mind. And then on the Willamette I was a GS-12, and I thought, "Well I'm looking around for maybe another promotion." And I didn't... I had, was being considered for a job. I didn't get it. I think I applied for a job in Alaska and, actually, back up a little bit. When I was in Reno, I was looking for a promotion because I'd been at the other grade for quite a while. And I was offered a job in Petersburg, Alaska, which was a promotion. And one of the staff officers in Eugene, Oregon came to Reno for... To interview me because they were considering someone, I believe, for a job that they were just interviewing people who knew about this, the other people. And...

0:26:49.7 Jere Christner: I don't think I applied for the job, it's a long ways ago. [chuckles] But I was offered a job in Eugene, or no, not offered, asked to come for an interview. I made a mistake. They knew I was interested in getting a promotion somewhere. And I was offered a job in Petersburg, Alaska and bought a ticket and was getting ready to fly up there and a couple days before they said, "Well, come to... We have a job we want to interview you for the job in Eugene." I said, "Well okay, I'm going to Alaska now. I'll just stop on Eugene on the way." And I'd been praying about getting a promotion actually, and just nothing was happening. But anyway, so I got the tickets. I had to change my tickets I guess so I could go as I flew to Eugene from Reno and then I was going to fly from Reno, or, excuse me, Eugene to Petersburg, Alaska to talk to them.

0:28:04.8 Jere Christner: They didn't flat offer me a job, early up there, or I would've had a job. So, I stopped in Eugene and I let him know. I said, "You know, I got a job offer in Petersburg and I'm going to go look at it to see if I want to accept it." And I showed up in Eugene. Plane was late, it was a rainy day in Oregon and went down to the office six o'clock I think and the Forest Supervisor and a person that had contacted me before to come up there. They interviewed me and talked to me, and I said, "Well you know I'm heading to Petersburg and I'm considering that job. When are you guys going to decide?" And he said, "Well give us 15 minutes." Left me in the room. [chuckles] This was very weird, and came back and said, "Well, we're offering you the job right here." And I said... I think I called my wife, but it wasn't very long. I said, "Okay, I'll do it." So that's how I ended up in Eugene.

0:29:07.1 James Wall: Wow.

0:29:07.6 Jere Christner: It was a blessing in disguise because you probably got this... We'll cut this part out. But my boss in Petersburg had real mental problems and I didn't know about it at the time. And if I would've ended up in Petersburg, it would've been really difficult. And that individual eventually left the Forest Service. I really don't know the circumstances but I... My opinion, God was protecting me because it would've been bad for us and my family because we had three small kids.

0:29:40.1 James Wall: Wow. That's...

0:29:41.4 Jere Christner: No, two small kids at that time.

0:29:42.9 James Wall: Wow. Wow. And so, was that the last posting that you were on?

0:29:47.1 Jere Christner: Yeah, in Alaska? Yes. So, I was up there for fifteen years.

0:29:52.6 James Wall: Wow. And how did you like it?

0:29:57.7 Jere Christner: I really liked it. It was great. It was...

0:30:02.1 James Wall: Alaska is one of those places where you either you work there for a little bit and you leave or you love it to death.

0:30:06.9 Jere Christner: Exactly.

0:30:07.2 James Wall: Yeah.

0:30:08.5 Jere Christner: And I wasn't sure... My wife said, "Okay, we'll do it for two years because the rules are, if you go... You get transferred, the government pays for, to U.S. But if you leave on your own where, that you didn't get transferred, if you left on your own, initiated it, you had to pay all that money back. So, I say, "Yeah, we'll tough it out for two years," and it was great. A lot of interesting stuff. The way you work in Alaska is different, transportation's different. Everything is different. Weather's not all that different from Eugene, actually, in some respects it was better than Eugene weather, but anyway...

0:30:49.6 James Wall: The scale is just so much bigger there of what the amount of land and everything's just larger scale.

0:30:55.6 Jere Christner: Oh yeah. Transportation is amazing. Its safety issues are quite different from down here.

0:31:02.9 James Wall: So, when did you know that it was... When did you start seeing the light at the end of the career tunnel, so to speak? When did you start considering that it was going to be time to hang it up?

0:31:13.6 Jere Christner: In Alaska? I had decided that I might work a little before. A little longer than I was... The period I was eligible to retire and... But back to working in Denver, when I showed up in Denver there were some old geezers sitting around in the office, nice people. They had been in important positions before, but they ended up in the regional office and kind of...

0:31:42.1 James Wall: Couldn't let it go.

0:31:43.9 Jere Christner: "Cold Storage Positions," so to speak, and they would complain, be drinking coffee and complaining about the Forest Service, the old Forest Service and how good it was and everything else. And I told myself, "I want to leave with a good taste in my mouth when the job is still enjoyable, when I feel like I'm contributing, not complaining." And that's... So, I set a date and stuck to it.

0:32:07.6 James Wall: I see. So, there's a few questions I always ask of each interviewee. It's sort of the same ones. I like to see how answers are different. What's the part of the job that you miss the most of being in the Forest Service?

0:32:29.4 Jere Christner: That's hard to say. I liked quite a bit of the job. I guess maybe some of the structure, you know, you have to figure out some things to do. There's plenty of things after retiring to fill a person's time and it's been very different, but I was ready to make the break, so I ended up, kind of, "Oh, I don't have to get up early," but I kind of miss doing some of these things, going to some of the places, because I got to do some things that most people in the Forest Service don't ever do.

0:33:07.8 James Wall: Yeah, definitely. Let's see. One thing I always ask is if you could go back in time to when you were first starting out in the Forest Service, knowing what you know now, and give yourself a piece of advice of about how to survive in this business, what do you think that would be?

0:33:31.1 Jere Christner: Well, I'd say, for me, "Go to Alaska sooner." [laughter] Not just because of the Forest Service, but a lot of other opportunities in Alaska that used to be there that aren't now. And I don't know. I considered the Forest Service a vocation rather than hydrology as a job. So, I was... I had an attitude of, I guess, loyalty and maybe came some from my upbringing where my dad was involved a little while, my neighbor and so forth. So, it gave me an appreciation and I guess, a feeling like this is really a useful agency and a good agency to work for. And for the most part it is, but...

0:34:22.4 James Wall: Yeah. What was your favorite time in your career? Not necessarily when you felt like you were accomplishing the most, but when you were having the most fun. Was there a place in time in your career that you would take over the others?

0:34:40.9 Jere Christner: Boy, I don't know. I guess the most fun was maybe when I first started out because I was so new and I kind of got to invent things on my job or figure out what I was going to do, of course, even though maybe I wasn't giving the taxpayers as much as I could have or should have had I known better, and that was okay. The most challenging was probably personal workwise was on the Willamette National Forest, incredible workload. Whereas in Alaska, I was a Staff Officer and I had hydrologists and fish biologists, soil scientists, other "specialists" working for me. So, they did the jobs. I didn't know their jobs, there was... I had an Engineer, people that did blasting, ecologists, I couldn't do the work. I was looking after the people who were doing the work, trying to help facilitate them and make it possible for them to do the work. And that was a different twist. It was a... I enjoyed that too. It was different, being responsible for people having budgets, being... Holding to budgets, making sure I'm doing the right thing for the taxpayers. And helping people do their job and learn when they, give them... I gave them opportunities to learn. A couple times I'd send people down to Region Six to interface with their counterpart somewhere, Willamette National Forest or wherever.

0:36:18.1 James Wall: I see. Well, last question is always what does the Forest Service mean to you now that you think back on it as a force in your life?

0:36:27.0 Jere Christner: I'd say it was positive. I could come up with a lot of complaints now, but it was positive. I think it was positive on my family too. Not necessarily easy all the time.

0:36:42.6 James Wall: Yeah. But you'd do it over again, would you say? Maybe not in the same way.

0:36:48.2 Jere Christner: Yeah. Well, I don't know. I might just be a electrician or a plumber, [laughter] because if you do your plumbing right you just go home and do something else. You're an electrician, you just go home, throw your tools and drive and go home. And in the Forest Service, particularly when I was in Oregon, I was working on the weekends too. If there was a storm or something you could be, If somebody didn't do something, didn't go out when they should, I developed a storm response model. We had thousands of miles of roads on the Willamette and bridges and everything else, and worked out a really simple crude system to help people in the field know when they should mobilize over the weekend to go out in woods and watch things, culverts and stuff like that. And...

0:37:43.6 James Wall: Yeah. A lot of work.

0:37:45.6 Jere Christner: You know, it was, I didn't mind doing that. That was... It was something that needed to be done.

0:37:50.6 James Wall: Yeah. Well, well you did your part. I think that sounds like you had a good run.

0:37:56.3 Jere Christner: Yeah, I'm thankful.

0:37:58.1 James Wall: Well thanks for sharing time and your memories with me. I really appreciate it. And we'll click this off and let you go.

0:38:02.7 Jere Christner: Yeah.