

An Interview with Richard F. “Bush” Buscher

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**0:00:04.8 James Wall:** Could you tell me when and where you were born?

**0:00:07.7 Richard F. Buscher:** Le Mars, Iowa. Near Le Mars, in the basement of a farmhouse with a tornado going by.

**0:00:16.3 James Wall:** Le Mars, Iowa.

**0:00:18.7 Richard F. Buscher:** Right.

**0:00:19.8 James Wall:** Is that?

**0:00:20.2 Richard F. Buscher:** North of Sioux City.

**0:00:22.4 James Wall:** Of course.

[laughter]

**0:00:25.9 James Wall:** Of course. Now, did you grow up there in Iowa?

**0:00:29.6 Richard F. Buscher:** No, no. My dad lost his farm in the [Great] Depression and he moved into Sioux City for two years to get another career and went to the foundry. And then when the shipyards opened up out here, he came out into one of the shipyard jobs and then my mother and my sister and I moved out in the back seat of an old DeSoto, because that's how you traveled in those days, and with nothing but our suitcases, and found a walk-up tenement in downtown Portland.

**0:01:06.6 James Wall:** One second. Your mic fell. You sound a bit distant. Let me just pin this back on. Alright, that's not going anywhere. I was about to say, I don't think that Iowa is the first state you would guess as a Forest Service hotbed, and yet so many people who ended up in the Forest Service and climbed up through it came from Iowa. And Iowa State's got a good program.

**0:01:43.2 Richard F. Buscher:** Yeah, Regional Forester here was one of the best we ever had was from Iowa. The best ranger I ever had on the Wenatchee [National Forest] was from Iowa. Yeah, there are quite a few, surprisingly. But at any rate, I came out here when I was eight years old, grew up in Portland, and went to all Catholic schools and then went on to Vanport College, which was one of the GI Bill colleges that came in with the shipyard workers because so many of them were black because they couldn't get in the Army during the war, so they were the shipyard workers. That was really the first significant black population in Portland. And they lived in housing in Vanport, and then they started a college for them. My first year at Vanport, so it wasn't in Vanport anymore. It was in Oregon Shipyards, which was closed. And then went to Portland State for a year, and I was taking a pre-forestry course, and I got involved in inter-college politics and football and didn't do a hell of a lot of studying [chuckle]. And so I decided I really ought to grow up. And so I quit going to guard meetings. It was Korean time. So I got drafted immediately, which is what I wanted, and went into the Army.

**0:03:15.9 James Wall:** So you wanted to get drafted?

**0:03:16.7 Richard F. Buscher:** Well, yeah, because I thought, I just need to grow up a little bit, and in a couple of years will do it if I don't get shot. [chuckle] And I got down to Fort Ord, and they were so short on cadre because of, Korea was just taking everybody that was there. I ended up an Assistant Platoon Sergeant because I had already had all of my guard training [chuckle]. And anyway, it led to a wonderful career in the military as far as I was concerned. I got scheduled to go to Korea when I graduated from the leadership school. Went down to the Soldier Club on the beach there in Monterey Bay, and I had a pitcher of green beer and I was kind of moping about going to Far East Command. And an old Master Sergeant with stripes all the way down his arm sat down and said, "What's the matter there, soldier? You look kind of morose," he said. And I explained my problem. He said, "Well, I can fix that for you." I had poured him a beer already, of course. And he said, "I can fix that for you. I'm the guy that signs those orders from classification and assignment." I said, "Oh, yeah, sure." [chuckle]

**0:04:38.7 Richard F. Buscher:** And he said, "I have been sending the first half of the alphabet to FECOM [Far East Command] and the second half to EUCOM, European Command." And he said, "I will just change those orders." And so we drank some more beer and I went back and figured that was the end of that. Next morning, we were in four-man tents at the leadership school and we hear a big uproar out at the bulletin board. And we go outside and he changed the orders, and I went to Austria [laughter][slaps chair]. And Austria was great. And I loved the people. I went to the Mountain Training Center and skiing, climbing. Then I ended up in Military Intelligence on the Danube River right across from the Russians and did a little bit of work across the border and very interesting times. And I ended up a Sergeant. And in only 14 months, I think after I got in, I had made Sergeant. And so I had a good experience. I came back and found a girl and got married, went back to Oregon State and in three years, got my degree because that's all the money we had. We didn't borrow a goddamn cent from anybody.

**0:05:53.3 James Wall:** Wow.

**0:05:54.3 Richard F. Buscher:** And no student should ever have to, in my opinion [chuckle].

**0:05:58.1 James Wall:** I will support that. It's interesting how one little moment could have changed your entire life. You could have been in Korea.

**0:06:05.8 Richard F. Buscher:** Many moments have done that. When I thought that was a bad thing and turned out to be a good thing.

**0:06:11.9 James Wall:** Do you remember that guy's name or was he just a stranger to you? The officer?

**0:06:17.8 Richard F. Buscher:** It wasn't the officer. It was the Master Sergeant.

**0:06:19.7 James Wall:** Yeah, yeah.

**0:06:21.4 Richard F. Buscher:** And which is a hell of a lot bigger than any officer. And no, I don't remember his name. But I do remember the Master Sergeant in the training company where we were. And his name was "Jokebook" Anderson. And I never knew him by any other name. The reason he was Jokebook is he had a lifetime career, chose to be a training sergeant because with all the Master Sergeant stripes he could have any job he wanted. But he believed in good training. And

he didn't live off post like most people in his position. He lived right on the training company. And in his room he had all of the manuals, the Army manuals, paperback Army manuals on every subject you can think of. And he knew the words of every one and he referred to them as a "jokebook." So he was Jokebook Anderson. But I learned more from Jokebook about being a leader of people than any other experience I had in my life.

**0:07:27.3 James Wall:** What's the best lesson that he taught you?

**0:07:29.3 Richard F. Buscher:** Well, one of, the fundamentals, but one of which was you give credit and you take blame, never the opposite. And that you manage with tough love, but you are never punitive. And you understand that if you are going to have a team and you are the team leader, you have to realize that the members of your team probably are better at what they do than you would be. That has to be your attitude. And that you accept all advice and criticism, then you make decisions and when you make decisions the team follows.

**0:08:19.4 James Wall:** Well, it sounds like he knew what he was doing. And you had a pretty good run. Well, hell, you got to be in Austria for a good amount of time, I think a lot of people would take that assignment. So, remember, you came back to Oregon State, you finished up there. Was wilderness a topic of study at Oregon State?

**0:08:36.7 Richard F. Buscher:** Of course not, when I went to Oregon State, and it was... The School of Forestry was probably well over half married veterans like myself, and one of whom worked with me to clean the swimming pools, two Olympic-sized swimming pools, men's and women's, every morning, and we would get up there at six o'clock in the morning and work two hours and hit our eight o'clock class, awake while everybody else was trying to wake up. But his name was Moe Murray, and Moe, he ended up a Research Forester for Weyerhaeuser, a very bright guy. But the two of us always referred to Oregon State as "Weyerhaeuser Tech," and they had no course in forest recreation and no course in wilderness, and they rather frowned on cross-campus courses. You should get all your, most of your courses either, other than physics and chemistry, ought to be all forestry courses. No liberal arts.

**0:09:44.0 James Wall:** So, Oregon State basically served as a funnel of talent to a Weyerhaeuser.

**0:09:51.9 Richard F. Buscher:** Well, and see, that's not all bad. If you wanted to learn to manage an industrial forest, that was the best school you could go to. The problem was it is not the best foundation for anybody that's going to manage the people's forest. And so, it's interesting, we will go to my first assignment then. I worked summers and got to know the Forest Supervisor because they were there in Corvallis and his staff and so on. And I started on the Mapleton District, burned slash, fought fires, laid out timber sales, lots of cruising. And then my second year I worked on cruising for a major land exchange, lived out on the forest in a tent and they airdropped our supplies to us with a little plane, and cruised 7,000 acres for an exchange with Georgia Pacific and the Forest Service. And so I got to be a pretty damn good cruiser. Well, in the process I got to know, as I said, the Forest Supervisor, Rex Wakefield. And so I got an agreement with Rex that I would start my career in the Forest Service. I had no interest in anything else. But I went to interviews with two timber companies and they would have paid twice what I started with in the Forest Service.

**0:11:24.2 Richard F. Buscher:** All I wanted to do was go through the process almost for entertainment value. But I ended up starting at the Mapleton District of the Siuslaw and was the

only Layout Forester that they had. And I had two technicians, young guys who were third generation from homesteaders in the area. And they were all loggers and their dads were loggers. And I called them "brush apes." I'm telling you, they could put more work done in a day than anybody I ever knew. They were just terrific. Navarre Woosley and Del Reavis. And they were wonderful people. At any rate, we laid out 75 million board feet a year. And the Siuslaw is a relatively small forest, about 330,000 acres, compared to my later assignment on the Wenatchee, which is 2.5 million acres. But it's so productive. But it's also coast brush. It's wild, wild country. You don't wear a uniform. You wore a staged off Levi's, hickory shirt, logger suspenders, old-fashioned hard hat and cork boots. And you wore out four pair of cork boots in a year from the brush slap would wear the leather away. And it's at \$100 a pair in those days. I mean, that was spending.

**0:13:02.1 Richard F. Buscher:** Well, at any rate. Everything was going just fine. And along came Hurricane Frida, which they call the Columbus Day Storm, but it is correctly Hurricane Frida. It was a category three hurricane that came ashore on the Oregon-California border, then turned and came due north and went all the way to British Columbia. In the process, it blew down 18 billion, billion board feet of timber. I was in Portland to see a football game between Oregon State and Washington when the storm hit up there and dumped a tree on my car. And I pushed the roof up and we drove back to Mapleton expecting the little Forest Service house on the mountainside to be gone. And all that happened is it blew down the older tree in the front yard. But we went to work and this is important when you consider today because we went to work on... The storm hit on a Friday. I got back there on Sunday and driving through downed timber barns, blowing away everything. And on Monday we sold the first sale. And we had five companies that bought sales on the district and they sort of bought in their own regions to feed their mills.

**0:14:36.6 Richard F. Buscher:** Their mills were local. And so the ranger and the TMA [Timber Management Assistant] sat down with the representatives of the five companies and agreed to pre-sell all the downed timber on the roads because when Frida hit any place that got to an edge of timber, if it hit solid timber it could blow down. But so much of it was when it didn't have a supporting edge. And of course on the roads they would just...

[vocalization]

**0:15:08.0 Richard F. Buscher:** And so we started logging three days after it hit. And in the meantime I went into the air with Del Smith, who built Evergreen Airlines, the largest cargo carrying aircraft company in the United States. But at that time, he had two helicopters, Hiller 3s, one of which he cannibalized and one of which he kept flying. And I flew with Del and mapped all of the blowdown, on three districts: the Mapleton District, the Waldport District and the Smith River District and got that all mapped. The next day I started out layout and they got me detailers from the snowbound forests, the Wenatchee and the Okanagan. And they got there and they'd never seen anything like the Coast Brush, but they were great workers.

**0:16:13.6 Richard F. Buscher:** And we worked from "can't see" to "can't see" for three months straight. I let them have Christmas off because I'm such a soft-hearted bastard. But they did work on New Year's Day all the way through and we laid out 177 million board feet of downed timber. The companies all agreed for their, their current sales inventory to back off of the green timber and go to the dead timber because the whole goal was to get it out of the woods before the Dendroctonus, the Douglas fir bark beetle, would get in there and get to epidemic proportion and kill all the rest of the

trees. So the important thing is that if that happened today, first of all, they'd be screwing around with an environmental statement for a year. Secondly, the loggers are all gone. All five mills are closed. There's no capability to recover. So that's today. But any rate, to me it was a terrific accomplishment with just nothing but everybody working together and working hard and on a common purpose.

**0:17:32.8 Richard F. Buscher:** Well, I was just about through with that and I got a phone call at home and I should have said in the beginning that I learned a lot from my dad. He was just a working man, but he was a happy man that loved to work and he was quite wise. And one of the things he told me, he says, "Don't worry about a career ladder. There ain't no such thing." He said, "If you believe in a career ladder, you are always thinking about the step that's ahead of you and you shouldn't be. You should be thinking about the step you are on and work as hard as you can to do as good a job as you can. And if you do, they will notice you." [chuckle] And so, how do you stay that way? Well, the system in the Forest Service, probably most the government, is they advertise jobs and you put in for them and tell them what a good guy you are. Well, I never did that.

**0:18:28.7 James Wall:** In my entire career, I never put in for a job and I went from GS-5 to GS-15. So, any rate, I'm home having dinner, phone rings. I answer the phone and a voice says, "This is Forest Supervisor Tenney Moore," who had taken Wakefield's place.

**0:18:53.8 Richard F. Buscher:** He said, "This is Tenney Moore." He says, "I'm up here in a bar in Portland and we are having a supervisor meeting. An old friend of mine is here from a place called the Wenatchee and he said, "He's kind of interested in offering you a job." He said, "Against my best advice." He said, "I will put him on." And so, he gets on and we talk a little bit and he says, "Well, I hear you have been getting rid of all that blowdown down there. Why don't you come up here to the Wenatchee and show them how to get that job done?" And so, I said, "Okay, when do you need me?" [chuckle] And months later, I was on my way to my first job on the Wenatchee and I was Timber Management Assistant at Ellensburg.

**0:19:41.4 Richard F. Buscher:** And when I got there snow was just melting and it was my habit to drive every single road and get to know the country. And I drove out into a nice pine stand and here's blowdown. About maybe thirty beautiful yellow belly, old-growth ponderosas had gone down from a Columbus Day storm and nobody had even bothered to go after it. And I thought, "What in the hell? We are down here laying up a million." It was Memorial Day weekend, three day weekend. So I took my two children, my son was a toddler at the time, and we went out there and we camped on the sale, and my wife and my two children and I laid out the sale. I had them pull the tape, measure the diameter. My daughter would record it, and we camped and had nice meals. And then my wife wanted the book to appraise it. She took it home and she did the appraisal. And she came to the auction to see it sold and she had to keep it under ten thousand value to be a ranger sale. And so she got that done. And then it got bid up four times the value [chuckle] and that made her happy. And that was kind of a start to our whole life together until I ended up in the goddamn regional office.

**0:21:12.9 Richard F. Buscher:** I shared my work with her and she'd go after a different adventure every time, but she was a bull cook on my wilderness studies and she was a volunteer when we had the hearings for the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. She checked all the people in and she worked on the coding system we had for public involvement for the Alpine Lakes. She was always involved in my career. And well, the whole family was and my kids were raised in wilderness, no Disneyland. We

didn't have a word for vacation. Hell, our life was a vacation. But at any rate, Ken Blair, the supervisor said, called me up one day after I had been just barely two years at, in fact, it wasn't two years yet at Ellensburg. And he said, "Bush," he said, "You have been working in timber long enough, it's time you have new responsibilities." He said, "I just cleaned house over there in Cle Elum [Ranger District]. We got a new ranger there and I want new staff." And he said, "I want you to take over the District Resource Assistant job." So I moved over there and I had a graduate from the University of Washington, who did have a degree in forest recreation and knew what the hell he was doing.

**0:22:43.0 Richard F. Buscher:** And I learned a lot from him. And so it was also the largest checkerboard district anywhere in the Forest Service. That is, the railroad grant lands. Every other section six miles wide was given to the railroad to build the damn railroad. And so we had a share cost program. We got together and we shared on the standing timber and all the sections for each road. We shared in locating the road. And it was a terrific success because they had an outstanding old forester named Morris Jenkins that was not a company man. He was a forester and he really knew the land. And he and I did all of the cruising and road layout together and it just went very smoothly. But it was a whole new education. And then at the same time we were rebuilding the largest campground on the forest at Lake Kachess. And Dennis Earhart was my Recreation Forester. And he and I designed all that together and did beautiful, beautiful improvements in that old-growth forest in the middle of all of the camping areas along the lake. And so we decided we needed a nature trail into that old-growth forest because it would not have been safe to create picnic sites in there or camping sites.

**0:24:20.4 Richard F. Buscher:** And so we would go out on the weekend with his family and my family and we located and built the entire trail, [chuckle] borrowed trail building equipment from the North Bend District and built that trail. And he designed the signs and had them on interpretive signs and had them all done. The whole family.

**0:24:44.3 James Wall:** So you are not somebody who waits for paperwork to be done, would you say?

**0:24:48.9 Richard F. Buscher:** What is paperwork?

[laughter]

**0:24:52.4 James Wall:** So did you miss timber, going to recreation? Is a timber sale, putting that together, it's a big deal?

**0:25:00.4 Richard F. Buscher:** No, because actually I stayed involved in that in a lot of ways because of the Share Cost Program. Partly I was still doing a lot of cruising and, but I also... See, I could never think in terms of a resource. I mean I did not go from timber to recreation because I did not think timber all the time when I was at Ellensburg. And I got involved in a lot of public service programs there like the Christmas Tree Program. God, oh, we had a great time with that. And we would set up out on the Swauk Highway and it was of course lots of snow and Lauren Lucore who had come down to help in the blowdown, had come from that country and Lauren would operate the Dodge Power Wagon, which of course you couldn't do any of this in the Forest Service today, and plow the roads and help people that got stuck and so on.

**0:26:00.5 Richard F. Buscher:** And I stayed on, and we wanted people to cut Grand fir that was coming up on what was the Douglas fir larch and Ponderosa pine area, and the Grand fir was the best Christmas Tree anyway. And so we would have a sample of a beautiful Grand fir and then a crummy looking Doug fir and of course we would not have a larch because it did not have any needles anyway in the winter time. And then, "Oh yeah, this is the tree you want," and we would send them on their way. And then if they have children and we had a nice hill they would say, "Well, you know the kids would like to go sledding," so then I would supervise the kids sledding while the parents were... And then they did not know how to put chains on so I would be putting the chains on and then... Yeah, it was a great program and of course it was all free, no charge for the trees.

**0:26:58.4 Richard F. Buscher:** And I remember I got several letters from people that just thought it was so great that the Forest Service, then I would always tell them, they are your trees. They do not belong to the government; these are the people's trees.

**0:27:12.1 James Wall:** Wow. So how long were you in recreation?

**0:27:15.6 Richard F. Buscher:** Okay, well, because I had a lot more in recreation. I also had the snow survey. I am a cross country skier and learned all of that in the Mountain Training Center in Austria with the Army. But I would ski up to two snow courses up to the Cle Elum River and take all of the data on the snow courses and then ski to get the middle one and then they had an overnight cabin with an entry in the roof because the snow was right up to the eaves, and you would drop in there and stay overnight and they had a cook stove. And then you would go on to Fish Lake Guard Station and get the second one. Well, the first time I did it I pulled up to the road that went or the little route that went up to the Forest Service cabin and there was a miner's cabin there and then a rather elaborate house across the way. And I started skiing by there and an old woman came out to the porch and said, "Where the hell are you going?" And I said, "Well, I'm here to take the snow survey and I'm going to stay overnight in the cabin." She said, "No you are not." I said, "I beg your pardon." She said, "You are going to stay here with Fred and I and I'm going to give you a good meal and a warm bed."

**0:28:31.1 Richard F. Buscher:** And it turned out it was Fred Denny and his wife, Elvira, and they were the grandsons of the Denny, the Denny Way in Seattle, the major route past the Space Needle, was a lumberman that had come around the [Cape] Horn and brought all this antique furniture on a clipper ship and made his name in Seattle cutting all the trees down. And so Fred Denny was a miner, he mined ore for mercury, which is very dangerous. And so he and Elvira would stay there all winter. There were other miners but they all went out during the winter, but not Fred and Elvira. So I was always their guest, but that was another one of my jobs. But I was only there a year and a half.

**0:29:27.6 Richard F. Buscher:** And then the phone rang again and I answered it and it was the Regional Forester and he said that he was being pressured to get a Forest Service study done within a year of the North Cascades because the Park Service was interested in making a park out of the National Forest. And his name was J. Herbert Stone. And so I of course agreed I would do that. So, I've got to backtrack.

**0:30:04.6 Richard F. Buscher:** The very first job I had at Mapleton was to work on a three-man team to do the study of the Oregon Dunes. For the same reason, the Park Service was interested in

getting a National Seashore. And so we had to get a plan out. And so I had Dick Spray, who was a more experienced out of the supervisor's office, forester and engineer, and the first landscape architect, Mike Clark. And three of us lived in a Coast Guard shack at Siltcoos, left over during the war that they would have... And they had dog kennels out back and they would patrol the beach so the Japanese wouldn't swarm. And so we lived in that Coast Guard shack in the dunes and worked that whole thing out and had a plan done in three months. And so, no forest recreation, education or anything else, but we did one hell of a good job because I know that because when I drive down, I love to go and show off all the things that were in our plan got built. That doesn't happen very often. No EIS [Environmental Impact Statement] either.

**0:31:22.3 Richard F. Buscher:** Anyway, back to the call I got. So, J. Herbert wanted me to go up and do the North Cascade study, so I went up, got a rental up in Bellingham, which is a college town. It was hard to do. And then moved my family up there and worked out of the Mount Baker supervisor's office, but I had three supervisors. The supervisor on the Okanagan, the Wenatchee, and the Mount Baker all had parts of the 550,000-acre study area they had in the most remote part of the United States at the time. USGS [United States Geological Survey] had not finished mapping it yet. There were no quads, sheets, or anything else. Because I was doing the study, they gave me their topography sheets and that's all, no names of creeks or any... That was it. That's what I had to work with.

**0:32:25.4 Richard F. Buscher:** But I took that on and I would leave the trailhead or the helicopter, occasionally I could hook a ride up, in the mountains that have no trails except in the valleys that were built either by Forest Service administrative or mostly by miners. All the ridges are super wild and heavy with timber below and rocks above.

**0:32:52.7 Richard F. Buscher:** And so I started that with a 107-pound pack for ten days at a time. I would have ten days in, four days out. Ten days in, four days out. And working alone and then arranging to meet members of the ranger districts of the land that I was on because I wanted all the local knowledge and talent I could get. But I made, in the days before miniaturization, I had a great big tape recorder on my hip and I had the mic like I do here. No, it was on my pack strap. And I would talk the plan as I went to all these places. And then when I had get back to the house, I would give the tapes to my wife and she would type it all up. And she and I essentially, she also was a commercial artist and she and I actually put that plan together at home [chuckle] and then got it typed and all that. But at any rate, that was a tremendous adventure, I will tell you. It is. But out in those mountains nobody knew where I was or could possibly know. And you had to be careful. You didn't take any chances. Because if you did, you would be there for the rest of your short life.

**0:34:15.5 James Wall:** Wow. Were you most happy when you were off the grid?

**0:34:19.8 Richard F. Buscher:** Oh, I didn't know what a grid was. I still don't. But at any rate, I had finished that. And while midway through it, Governor Dan Evans wanted to be briefed because, of course, the North Cross [Cascades] State Highway was being constructed through. But during my time it was nothing but a location line and just stakes on the ground. And so he wanted to know what the planning was going to be like being done because the state was building from the east side and the Federal Highway was building from the west side. And it was some question whether they would even meet. [chuckle] But at any rate, Dan Evans wanted a briefing. So Herb Stone met me in a motel ballroom in Olympia. And I had a great big map with all of the planning we were doing, including a system of hostels. Because that weather in that country is wild and I felt it was a good

time to introduce hostels. And we were going to put a relocated crest trail through there, and we were going to have hostels at both sides of Washington Pass.

**0:35:35.8 Richard F. Buscher:** Anyway, Dan Evans got really excited about the hostel system and, in fact, all we were doing. And he had a great big state patrol driver that kept telling him that he had another appointment. And Dan would just push him away and come up there and poke at things and so on. And finally he said, we are standing up there at the map. And he says, "Well," he said, "Dan," he says, "This is great, Bush." He said, "What should the state be doing?" I said, "Well, that whole route through there, there will be no rest stops." And so I said, "It would really be great if they had the state rest stop on the highway on both sides." He said, "I see."

**0:36:18.6 Richard F. Buscher:** "You are going to give the people a recreation, and I'm going to take their shit." [laughter] Anyway, so then I invited him on a trip, and we arranged and got a packer and took him on a trip all the way down through the location of the trail. And I got to know him pretty well, and Dan was a good guy.

**0:36:44.2 Richard F. Buscher:** At any rate, that was over, and I got a call to meet in the regional office with Herb Stone, and I got down there, and they had a conference call. And on the conference call was the Chief of the Forest Service, the Director of the Park Service, Secretary of Interior [Stewart] Udall, and Secretary of Agriculture [Orville] Freeman. And I'm sitting in the corner, [chuckle] and they started, and oh, and I forgot the principal character was Senator Henry M. Jackson, who had decided after a flight over it and so on, but really because he wanted to give a political plumb to the state that there was going to be a national park. And so they were talking that all over, and he said, "Well," he said, "I have to have somebody draw the boundaries and do an accurate survey description of the boundaries for the legislation."

**0:37:51.7 Richard F. Buscher:** And he turned to, he said, "Well, who could do that?" And the Secretary Udall asked the Director of the Park Service, if they could put the..."Well, we actually don't know the land." [chuckle] And so they bumped it to Secretary Orville Freeman, and he said, "Well," he said, "What do you think, Chief? And Ed Cliff said, look, "We've been paying Buscher to wander around in that country all summer long."

**0:38:19.9 Richard F. Buscher:** "Why don't we have him do it?" So I ended up drawing the boundaries for the North Cascades National Park and doing the proper description from this point to that point, and this to that point. And I had to go down to the engineering to learn how to do it. But at any rate, so then that was over, and I had had an agreement going in with Herb that when that was over, because I was on the roster of being considered for Ranger when I took that job, he said, "Well, if you do a good job, you can have your choice of whatever districts are open. So I got down to the regional office, and he calls up personnel, and he said, "What Ranger Districts are open?" He said, "Well," he said, "the Waldport District on the Siuslaw."

**0:39:13.9 Richard F. Buscher:** And he said, they tried to offer me the recreation job on the Deschutes, staff job. I have never been a staff officer and I told them I didn't want that. So Wingo, the ranger at Zigzag had wanted that job and had agreed to take it. So I said, "That means Zigzag's open." So old Herb turns to me and he said, "Well, Bush, what will it be, a mountain or the ocean?" [chuckle] And I said, "Hey, I haven't had enough mountains yet." I said, "I will take Zigzag." So that's how I ended up in Zigzag and that was... If I was still there, I would love it. That was my target in life, because my whole attitude was and is the hierarchy of the Forest Service are the

district rangers and their people.

**0:40:04.7 Richard F. Buscher:** Okay. And I referred to everybody else as the "lowerarchy." And the reason for that is that the mission statement for the Forest Service is, "To care for the land and serve the people." Now, who the hell does that? The people that are out there. So, once I got a ranger's job, shit, no more ambitions at all. Well, I had that job for exactly five years and the Regional Forester... And I can talk all day long about all the adventures at Zigzag because that district has everything going on. And I never knew when I walked across the street from the ranger's house to the office, what was I going to do today? [chuckle] Because whatever you planned to do, something else was going to come up. But any rate, I just, I absolutely loved that job. And I had one fantastic staff group that did their job just the way the old sergeant had told me. You just rely on them to be the best in their... And treat them that way, and you will have a good team. So, at any rate, Zigzag was really our home and had a beautiful ranger's house with a big rock fireplace and a carved beam with a ranger coming down to a lake.

**0:41:33.9 Richard F. Buscher:** Just fairy book. And Jane could look out her window, and the CCCs had built a little dam on the steelhead stream, and she could watch the steelhead jump while she was making dinner. And nothing but timber around us, no other houses in sight. And so she was out because we were planting the millionth acre ceremoniously. And the current local congressman, Wendell Wyatt, was coming up with my son's sixth grade class and to plant the millionth acre. And of course, lots of press coverage and everything else. And Regional Forester was up for that and Rex Ressler. And when that was over, then I told them that they could come down and Jane would make lunch for them. So we got to the house and I made up martinis for us, and Jane was out making lunch in the kitchen. Rex says, "Well, Bush," He said, "I wanted to meet with you today, because..." He said, "We have got a lot of pressure to do the Alpine Lakes Plan." And he said, "We have gone through all of the possible candidates and you are the man we want to do it."

**0:42:55.1 Richard F. Buscher:** And I said, "Okay, when do you want me up there?" And I happened to look out and the tears were coming down Jane's eyes because she never wanted to leave Zigzag. And well, none of us ever really wanted to. But any rate, so I agreed to take on the Alpine Lakes job. And that turned out to be pretty close to the high point of my career to be one of the things I'm most proud of.

**0:43:25.5 Richard F. Buscher:** We got to Seattle, well, actually, before I even got to Seattle, I made contact with an ad hoc group of environmental representatives of "Sahara Club," as I call them, and the mountaineers and the wilderness and everybody else. But they could put an ad hoc group together that was led by a very charismatic guy from the University of Washington and an attorney named Ben Hayes was his name, and Dave Knibb was the attorney's name and the head of the council. And he sent me a review of the laws or the legal history of the National Recreation Areas around the United States because they were proposing a wilderness surrounded by a National Recreation Area. That was their design. And then they sent me a movie, a slideshow they put together. And in the slideshow, it said, they had an egg. And it's sunny side up cooking on a griddle and it said, "The Alpine Lakes is like a fried egg." He had a southern drawl. And he said, "The heart is the yolk, and the Recreation Area is the white." But they went on then and then Ben Hayes came on and he said, "You know, in any situation like this, it's much easier to inflame than inform. We choose the wiser and latter route." And right then I said, "I'm going to get along with these people."

**0:45:14.8 Richard F. Buscher:** And so we corresponded and I finally went up there to meet him

before I ever took the job. Well then, the Regional Forester said that I could have my choice of as many people as I needed to get the job done. But it had to be done in two years. Because he gave me a copy of a letter that was signed by every member of the state delegation. The Senate and the House of Representatives had all signed the thing. They probably never all signed anything in their life besides a Mother's Day card. But they all were behind this, that they would hold back from the pressures they were getting from all the other outfits to put a piece of legislation in until the Forest Service gave them a recommendation as called for by the Wilderness Act. And so, but it had to be done in two years.

**0:46:10.3 Richard F. Buscher:** So I was grateful for that. So they told me, "You pick the people you want. And you'll have all the members of the team you want." I said, "I want two people." And I said, "And I want two people that currently work in the Alpine Lakes, so they already know some of the turf. And I want two people that are on the ranger's roster, so they are ranger-material type people."

**0:46:35.9 Richard F. Buscher:** They said, "Two people? Don't you need more than that?" I said, "Well, if I had ten years, I would have ten people, but I only got two years." [chuckle] And I said, "I've got the staff of two National Forests and four Ranger Districts." "Well, how many more people?" "Those are the people who know the land." I said, "That's all I need." So that's what I did. I got Joe Dahlin, who was a Timber Management Assistant on the Snoqualmie [National Forest] on a district on the Snoqualmie and and I got Jack Wright, who was a Recreation Assistant at Leavenworth [Ranger Station] on the east side. And then I also decided, we got the team together up in the ski area, so nobody was going to bother us at Snoqualmie Pass and talked out the approach we were going to take. And we decided we'd put Jack Wright in the supervisor's office at the Wenatchee. And we would work, Joe and I would work out of an office at the Snoqualmie so it didn't look like the Snoqualmie was planning it. But also we needed the intelligence on both sides. We also knew we weren't going to travel as a trio.

**0:47:53.4 Richard F. Buscher:** With a million-acre study, we were going to cover all the ground. And because we didn't plan in the office, we planned in the field. And it worked well. And then when I left Zigzag, the operator at Zigzag, Dick Kohnstamm, who had never gotten along with the district ranger since he took over the place. But he's the guy who saved Timberline. And he and I got along good. And so he had the banquet for our leaving at Timberline. And everybody was roasting me, of course. And then Dick got up and walked over and he had a bald head like mine. And he leaned down and he talked about when I'd come there and all the problems he's had with rangers. And he said, "But this time," he said, "The old ranger and I learned to get along together and put our heads together." And he bows his head down, "And make a big ass out of ourselves." [laughter] Any rate, Kohnstamm his going away present gave me a copy of Ian McHarg's "Design With Nature." Ian McHarg was a, I think a landscape architect, with a very famous planner back east, that had learned to design for, one of his jobs was a freeway going through Philadelphia to have the least impact, social impact and whatever. And he used a system of overlays. And I read all that book and I said, "That makes sense."

**0:49:32.3 Richard F. Buscher:** So we used the Ian McHarg approach and I made a huge map of the planning area, which was bounded by Snoqualmie Pass, State Highway 97 through Swart Pass, and the state highway through Steven's Pass, ski areas on both sides. So, highways all the way around and then Seattle on the border. So, extremely complex. So I had the map of all that and then I had pegs up on top. And I made very careful punches in the vellum sheets. And Jane and a couple

of other volunteers hand cut all of the colored sheets for high, medium, low or whatever of timber suitability, recreation opportunities and so on it goes. And we'd overlay those to find where the areas of harmony and where the areas of conflict would be. And God, it really worked. The wilderness boundary virtually drew itself. But any rate, the big question was the management of the exterior. Because the the ALPS [Alpine Lakes Protection Society] wanted a well thought out idea of a National Recreation Area, just didn't fit. And the reason it didn't fit is because it will become a magnet for use of a wilderness which was already predictably going to be overused [cough] and it would cause great political resistance, already had by the timber industry and old people that love rockhounding and thought they were going to get shut out.

**0:51:27.0 Richard F. Buscher:** And so I met with the ALPS and I finally talked them out of it. And they decided to follow our advice. In the meantime, all of the industry people were running around saying that, "We're just going to be locked out of timber and we're going to lose money," and so on. And I got them together and I said, "You know, all you're doing is digging your own hole, because nobody's going to feel sorry for you or believe what you've got to say." I said, "There is a counter argument, but you have to represent those people, like the motorized recreationists and so on, that may not agree that all of this ought to be wilderness. And you ought to put a planning team together on your own to counteract the ALPS and and give us your proposal." And so they did. What a wonderful thing happened, because a banker named Morganthaler was the head of a trail bike motorized bike outfit. And he took over the whole direction of the Central Washington Cascades Study Team. And they came up with a good plan and so on. And so I didn't have to feel pressure from one side or the other side. I could just keep going the way the McHarg's system was taking us.

**0:52:52.8 Richard F. Buscher:** And it worked. It worked beautifully. And we ended up with the wilderness that we drew. And in the meantime, I worked with a local congressman who was the lead in the subcommittee that was handling the legislation named Lloyd Meads. And we got to be very good friends. And I took him on backpack trips through the mountains and and he was a good outdoorsman. And we worked very closely together. When it got time to write legislation, Lloyd asked me to meet with him in his office in Everett and dismissed all of his staff because he had some people that were very far left on the wilderness question, particularly. And then he also had representatives because he had a big timber interest in his district. And so it was just he and I and we wrote the legislation together. And it was interesting because the wilderness law, to get passed, had to make a lot of compromises. It went through ten years of development. And so the mining interest got their shoe in and the grazing interest, which never should have happened, but they got theirs in.

**0:54:20.8 Richard F. Buscher:** And one of the things that they, because of this fear there'd be condemnation of private land, because as you know, in the National Forest, they are not solid green like a National Park, and that there'd be too much the condemnation, shouldn't be used in wilderness. And so that got taken out. Well, when Meads and I wrote this whole thing, we had to deal with the checkerboard. And so we came up with language for intended wilderness and then talked about four ways that could be acquired: by donation. I made that first, [chuckle] it never happened. And land exchange or purchase. We also, Meads said, only to satisfy the landowners, "We need to put a time frame on that." And I think we finally decided on a four-year timeframe for the Forest Service to achieve the acquisition of the intended wilderness or the owners would have adverse possession rights. In other words, they could call the shots. The other thing we did almost unknowingly is we gave, because we had mining claims dotted in there that had been patented, we

gave the right of the government to use its normal powers to take for the first time and only time I know of in wilderness.

**0:55:57.3 Richard F. Buscher:** And I ended up going to court on four different situations. We won them all and we won them twice below the Forest Service estimate for the value. Usually when this happens, the court would give away money. But had a very savvy US attorney over there in Spokane. He'd always have me wear my dress uniform and my Stetson. And he'd always introduce me as the man who made the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. And so when we went to this one case and the landowner happened to be a guy who I knew because he grazed sheep on the Ellensburg District and I'd met him and camped with him once and his attorney was a nasty little bastard. They had a mining claim up Gold Creek and I had to get, there was nothing there but to get it out. They had to go through nine avalanche shoots with a road and I had my engineers plan the road and then turn over the cost of that road. Well the cost of building a road up there were greater than the ones they claimed the silver was worth.

**0:57:16.1 Richard F. Buscher:** And so I put that in the record. Well then that little attorney gets up there and he says, "You know, that sounds just like a case of those thousand-dollar toilet seats the government buys."

**0:57:27.9 Richard F. Buscher:** And the judge gaveled him down and he said, "You will not insult this member of the United States Forest Service in my presence or you will be in contempt of court!" [chuckle] And the jury got angry with him. He had a couple of other episodes. And they ended up giving a smaller amount than the government said it was worth. [laughter] Well, so much for the Alpine Lakes. I was through with that. We got done and Joe Dahlin had an airplane and we had to meet our two year delivery of the EIS for the plan to the chief's office. And so we put boxes of it in his claim. We called the regional office and told one of the representatives and recreation there to meet us... Be prepared to go back to DC and have his tickets, meet us at the airport in Portland, and we flew in and we gave them the boxes and got back on the plane and flew back to Wenatchee, landed the plane and had a few drinks [chuckle] and that was our celebration. Well, then I got the call again and they said that they wanted me to take over the deputy job on the Wenatchee and so I moved to the Wenatchee and ten years in the Wenatchee and the best job that you can get is the deputy job, not the supervisor job.

**0:59:07.1 Richard F. Buscher:** He's got to go to meetings and ceremonies and all kinds of things and then paperwork. But the deputy gets to roam the forest, if he's smart, and spend all his time with the rangers to support them, to compliment them, to give them suggestions, to tell them what some other rangers are doing because they're all keeping up with the Joneses.

**0:59:30.9 Richard F. Buscher:** And when I left the forest ten years later when I got another phone call, I got a trophy, it's downstairs on my memory wall and the ranger at Entiet [Ranger District] carved a plaque and they put a brass inscription on it and it said, "To the Ranger's Deputy." [chuckle] And I appreciate that.

**0:59:57.4 James Wall:** Who was the [Forest] Supervisor at Wenatchee when you were Deputy [Forest Supervisor]?

**1:00:00.0 Richard F. Buscher:** Well, I had to train three of them. Andy Wright was the old time, I didn't train him at all, but Andy Wright was the old-time supervisor that I had gotten to know

because he was supervisor on the Okanagan [National Forest] when I did the North Cascades, so I knew him from that. Well then he'd come down to take over the Wenatchee so Andy was there and he really liked that because he hated meetings with the environmentalists because they were always calling him a butcher and he wasn't. But he was short tempered, and he said, "You can take care of those people, they like you." [chuckle]

**1:00:40.4 Richard F. Buscher:** But then when Andy retired, John Rogers came up, a very experienced supervisor that was more ecologist than forester and he and I really got along together from the standpoint of how we should use the timber sale to get resource work done. And we set up a whole program so when rangers met in the spring to add sales to the five year action plan they had to not tell us, "How many board feet," and so on and so on, they had to tell us, "We want to do this sale to accomplish these resource objectives," and at first some didn't get with the program and they lost money because their share of the five year action plan would go to the guy that had the best plan. Well, pretty soon they all got with it and it really worked, it really worked. We had one sale on the Lake Wenatchee District and the ranger and his people had come up with seven discrete resource objectives that could only be managed by the way this timber sale was designed. And so I got invited to a lot of different presentations. And one year the silviculturists in the region were meeting, they wanted me to come down and make a presentation, so I made this presentation on timber sales to get resource work done and most of them just thought, "What a bunch of bull, we are just here to get the cut out, the only good tree is a log." [chuckle]

**1:02:31.7 Richard F. Buscher:** But some listened, but at any rate on the Wenatchee it worked. And so I spent my ten years there and a lot of things happened. When the Alpine Lakes was out for public review for ninety days, hell, I went to the supervisor and I said, "Hey, I got this whole team and you got a big ruckus going down in the Cougar Lakes, why don't we do the study down there?" We went down and did the Naches, Tieton, White River, those are the three Ranger Districts on the east side and the north side of Mount Rainier National Park. And we did the planning, we ended up with additions to the Goat Rocks Wilderness, the William O. Douglas, I met Bill Douglas and got friends with him and it was the area that he'd grown up in when a boy, and he had a ranch right there on the gateway into the Cougar Lakes country, but he died and we named it after him, the William O. Douglas [Wilderness]. And then North Peak, just north of Cougar Pass, so we added additions, two new wildernesses and then the Alpine Lakes, all in the same process.

**1:03:53.6 Richard F. Buscher:** So we got all that done. And at any rate, when I was through at the Wenatchee, I got the phone call and we were... One thing we did, the management team on the Wenatchee didn't meet in an office. We would meet not every month, but about every other month. We'd always meet out in the field and we'd alternate the ranger that was going to host us and we'd camp out on projects that they had underway or ones that they thought they had difficulty with and because I convinced them that we didn't belong in offices, we belonged in the field. And so that process worked and worked really well so the Wenatchee was a good collective team. It wasn't just Ranger District teams, it was a true collective. So at any rate, we were at a winter meeting and in that case we were at Leavenworth, the Leavenworth Ranger was hosting us, but it was in a gorgeous little building up on the mountain and a resort and a woman came running in with one of the yellow call slips and said, "I need to speak to Mr. Richard Buscher." She said, I'm trying to say the Regional Forester's name at the time, she said, "Needs to talk to you," and everybody said, "Bye bye, Buscher." [laughter]

**1:05:31.8 Richard F. Buscher:** I went and took the call, sure enough. He talked for quite a while

about what he had in mind for me and so on and he said, "Well, you are uncharacteristically silent." He said, "You probably want to go home and talk to Jane about it, but I need to know in a couple of days." And I said, "Why the hell would I want to do that? You said you need me, I'll be there." And what he wanted me to do is come down and form a [National Environmental Policy Act] NEPA quality team to go to every one of the nineteen forests in the region which were in the process of putting their EIS together for their forest plan, which had been required by the new law.

**1:06:22.4 Richard F. Buscher:** And he was very concerned that they were not going to have a defensible EIS. And so I put a team together of three other people and we had a chartered aircraft and we traveled to every forest and it turned out, several times to each forest, to help them get through to what a true EIS should be. And I did that for a year and they held the deputy job in recreation open for me and then I got there and then being a deputy, I just left my office and went to the field. I went to all but one of the 200 Ranger Districts in the United States, [chuckle] in the region and worked with teams and I'd get calls from a ranger, "Hey, Bush, can you come out here?" You know. And then I'd arrange maybe two or three the same day or the same trip so I could efficiently hit as many as I could, and I'd keep going back and carrying my message and it was never about recreation. It was the total program.

**1:07:41.2 James Wall:** Wow. So you never wanted to be anything more than a deputy once you got to that deputy level? You were like, "Alright, this is good."

**1:07:46.2 Richard F. Buscher:** Oh, god. No. Oh, no. In fact, Jim Torrance... I was Acting Director for when there was a change of directors, but I didn't want to be because... And Jim Torrance was one of the best from Iowa, but he was one of the most progressive, young regional foresters that I served with and he called me down there and he said, "I'd really like to give you the director job but you have got a couple of people in the chief's office that are kind of pissed off at you."

**1:08:19.0 Richard F. Buscher:** That's because when I'd go back there, Lloyd Meads would arrange for me to be a requested representative to talk to the committee and they couldn't interfere and they didn't like that. They also wanted the Alpine Lakes vetoed and they didn't like it when it didn't. [chuckle] But any rate, I told them, I said, "Good, they are doing me a favor. I don't want the damn job." [chuckle] So no, so I retired as a Deputy [Forest Supervisor] and one of the things I'd started and I got it going but the idea didn't come from me. One of the people on my staff in the regional office, Jim Olsen, who had replaced me at Zigzag as ranger, he was in charge of develop recreation and he said, "Bush," he said, "We have all these training sessions, the landscape architects have one and the archaeologists has one and the trails guy has one and we have a winter sports one."

**1:09:28.7 Richard F. Buscher:** He said, "And so the same people in the district have those responsibilities and so they have to come away from their work." He said, "Why don't we start something like a recreation university and do it all at once and then have them set up the courses and they will select the courses they want to go to." And I said, "Yeah, we could even number them from 101 to 401. So the more advanced they are in the subject, that they could take the higher class." And we did that the first time in the Tri-Cities at a big motel there for a week and then, God, it just worked perfect. And so, and we called it "Recreation University," and we had a graduation ceremony and I got the director of recreation up there to hand out... Anyway, it was a success.

**1:10:20.2 Richard F. Buscher:** Well, the word got around and pretty soon the regional office in Salt Lake City wanted to have one and I had to go over there to help them put that together. And

then just as I retired, we had planned a second one in Region Six and they were going to have a dinner or something when I retired.

**1:10:44.2 Richard F. Buscher:** And I said, "No, I don't want to have it now because I said in just a month now, all of the people from the district are going to be here because we decided to have it at Hayden Island out here in the Columbia." And I said, "Those are the people I want. I want the hierarchy there." And I had 350 people there and they were all the people from the Ranger Districts because they'd come for the session and, God, did we have a night. [chuckle] It was wonderful.

**1:11:15.9 James Wall:** Wow. That's amazing. So when did you know that it was time to hang it up? Was it just you had done everything you wanted to do, or was it a series of years?

**1:11:28.1 Richard F. Buscher:** That's interesting. I didn't talk about when I was on the Wenatchee. I had a long association with a... There's a mining town that is landlocked and you have to travel by boat up Lake Chelan and then travel by bus up to Holden Village. And when the Howe Sound Mining Company closed down a very big copper mine there, a Canadian company, they handed the keys over to the Lutheran Church and it became a retreat for the Lutheran Church. And the mine was on patented land but they had built... And they'd taken the approach that they were going to have a family mining thing. And so they had all these chalets and everything and were very self-sufficient, [phone begins ringing intermittently] they had their own power source and they had craft shops and on and on it went. It was a tremendous success. Well, I would go up there and they would have lectures and they had a room and they had a hanging mic and they would tape them and they had a whole library of the tapes of everybody that lectured there. The father that...

**1:12:42.0 James Wall:** Sorry, one second. All right. [chuckle] No I just wanted to make sure that that [chuckle] somebody wasn't going to leave a message.

**1:12:49.2 Richard F. Buscher:** Oh, that's a landline. Yeah, I don't answer it.

**1:12:53.2 James Wall:** Okay.

**1:12:54.2 Richard F. Buscher:** But at any rate, Father Hesburgh<sup>1</sup> from Notre Dame was there the same time I was giving lectures. I mean, they had people come from everywhere and they had people attending from all over the world. It was absolutely a fascinating place. So I spent time up there because it was a good place to wave the flag. And so they knew they were on the National Forest and what it was all about. I ended up doing courses on "Read the Land." I haven't talked about that, but my whole approach, I found out that all the books that I'd had at Oregon State had nothing to do with what I was doing. To manage land properly for the people, you have to read the land. You have to know the interrelationships of everything happening there. And what you learn on the Siuslaw is not transferable to the ecosystems on the Wenatchee. When you get there, you got to learn the new land by reading it.

**1:13:51.7 Richard F. Buscher:** And I developed a whole approach to that. And I would take groups and take them through different sessions. I did a lot of sessions on wilderness law, philosophy, and history. But then I would take them out on the "Read the Land" thing. And it was

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Martin Hesburgh, CSC was a native of Syracuse, New York, who became an ordained priest of the Congregation of Holy Cross and is best known for his service as the President of the University of Notre Dame for thirty-five years.

good for me and good for them. I had some wonderful relationships.

**1:14:15.3 Richard F. Buscher:** Well, I had another one in the winter. I would go up there on Martin Luther King's weekend because I had the weekend off. I would go up and they had a young pastor who was a mountain climber and very much tuned to wilderness. [phone begins ringing intermittently] And we did a retreat on wilderness spirituality. And I was the example of wilderness. He was the example of spirituality. [laughter] And we had all kinds of exercises out in the snow that we used to get these people to realize the true value of wilderness. And that was a tremendous thing. Well, then at night they had a cross country ski trail about two miles long that wound over the tailings piles down across from... I was making that trip on a moonlight night. It was unbelievably beautiful. And I got to the top of the tailing piles and decided to take a break.

**1:15:22.5 Richard F. Buscher:** And I skied out to the edge of the pile looking up the snow-covered peaks, moonlight just bouncing off them. And I started thinking and I said, "You know, I'm just having a ball out here. But ever since I went into the regional office, Jane could no longer accompany me on all this fun time I'm having. And all I'm doing is stealing time from us." And I said, "By God, it's time to hang it up." So I made my decision on that Martin Luther King weekend. And so I thought, "I will work the year out." So I didn't tell anybody about it until I got... I was doing a wilderness session for the wilderness rangers all gathered at a youth camp that was on special use permit there in Leavenworth right next to the Icicle River coming out of my Alpine Lakes Wilderness. And so I did all of my teaching there. And then we were going to have a closeout at an amphitheater they had overlooking the tumbling Icicle River. And several of the environmental leaders in the area that knew me wanted to come and hear the closeout. And so they had gathered around.

**1:16:42.9 Richard F. Buscher:** And so I did my closing remarks. And I said, "But now I want to tell you that I have decided it's time to hang it up." And I said, "So I'm going to walk away. And it's up to you to take care of the wilderness." And lots of hugs [chuckle] and lots of tears. But that's how I announced my retirement. And that was the end of my career on the last day of 1990.

**1:17:19.4 James Wall:** So, what was your favorite district?

**1:17:21.7 Richard F. Buscher:** Hmm?

**1:17:22.9 James Wall:** Your favorite district?

**1:17:24.4 Richard F. Buscher:** My favorite?

**1:17:24.7 James Wall:** Favorite time, not necessarily the time in your career when you were getting the most done, but when you were having the most fun.

**1:17:31.2 Richard F. Buscher:** Oh, still, it always had to be Zigzag. There's nothing like the District Ranger's job. I mean it...

**1:17:38.9 James Wall:** What is it about Zigzag? If you had never been there, how would you describe it?

**1:17:44.8 Richard F. Buscher:** Well, it's the portal to... It's Mount Hood. All the ski areas,

Timberline Lodge. But it also, at that time, was half of the Portland Watershed and the Bull Run Watershed, which the city thought they owned. But Joe Stockbridge and I were the two rangers that chaired it. And we didn't let them follow that disillusion. But after we left, now the city runs the damn watershed, and it's closed to people, which is ridiculous. But, at any rate, so you have got that, you have got six hundred summer homes, the largest summer home colony on a National Forest anywhere in the nation. And when I decided to take Zigzag, I got a call from some of my ranger friends. They said, "Bush, you're out of your mind! Don't you know you have got all those damn summer homes?" I said, "What are you talking about? What's wrong with it?" So, the very first thing that I did is I called a meeting of the summer homers in a big auditorium in Portland, because most of them lived in Portland. And I said, I want to meet you and I want you to meet the ranger and we are going to discuss some things we want to share with you and then we want to hear what you have to say to us.

**1:19:04.4 Richard F. Buscher:** And so, I had one of my summer home administrators was a straight-talking character, Kirk Kessler. He was also my Head Snow Ranger. But old Kurt, he went around and took pictures, all the roofs that were just loaded with debris and power cords running through it, all kinds of dangerous things. Because of course, there's no fire protection but us. And so he got up there and he was showing them all this and he said, "Folks, this is what you are living with, if you think this is a good idea. But here's what happens." And then he'd show a burned-out building with nothing. He said, "We answered every one of the calls and we've never lost a foundation." And then he showed a child's doll that was part burned. [chuckle] I mean, it was terrific. He made his point. And any rate, and then we had a hydrologist that, because they'd gone through the '64 flood, and I knew the question was going to come up: "What are you going to do to protect us from the next flood?" And the hydrologist talked to them about, "Well, if you think you can armor this bank, then you are going to destroy the bank of the guy that lives just below you."

**1:20:19.8 Richard F. Buscher:** And he talked about the hydraulic things in terms they could understand. And so some guy from the audience when he got on the mic, he said, "Yeah, but ranger," he said, "What's your advice to us then?" And I said, "Well, when you come to live along the banks of a mountain stream, you've got to learn to get along with the stream because it ain't going to learn to get along with you. That's all I can tell you." So it went like that. And then the drunk gets up and he starts saying, "Oh, well, back in the old days, the Forest Service used to always deliver firewood on my porch and they don't do that anymore." And of course, I learned a long time ago, you never get defensive with a crowd. But another small guy walked up to the other, we had a mic on both of the aisles, and he got up and he said, "I just have to butt in here." He said, "George," and of course he knew the guy, and he said, "George you're wrong and you also had too much to drink. Now this ranger came to meet with us and that's the first time that's happened. And you ought to appreciate that and treat him like the gentleman he is." And it turned out he was Vic Atiyah. Vic Atiyah is a rug company here in Oregon for ever.

**1:21:50.2 Richard F. Buscher:** And he ended up the governor of this state. Well, I used to drive on the weekend because that's when most of the summer homers would show up out there and I'd stop and talk to him and so on and drink more damn coffee than I wanted to. But I would stop and see Vic and he and I got to be good friends. So I ended up having a really good voice into the summer home county and we got we got along great. No problem.

**1:22:19.4 Richard F. Buscher:** But there's so many things like that at Zigzag. And of course the highway goes right through there and it's going on into the Deschutes National Forest, which is one

of the most popular, most beautiful recreation areas. The other thing I did is the first day when I had my meeting with my troops I told 'em what I was about.

**1:22:42.0 Richard F. Buscher:** I said, "By the way," I said, "When I was," we always moved ourselves and rented a van. I never got a mover. And so when we moved in that that weekend, I kept seeing people drive up to the ranger station across the highway, go there and they'd read the note and they would drive away and then another car, another car. Of course, the office wasn't open. It gave the hours of the usual week hours. So I told him that day, I said, "By the way," I said, "This ranger station is here to serve the people. And I watched these people driving away. And that's never going to happen again. From this day on, we are going to be open seven days a week." And I had a wonderful business management assistant. And I said, "Juanita, you just figure out how you are going to fund this and who you are going to get for the weekend duty. But we are going to be open." And so then we had this just lovely young gal named Carolyn that she kept a record of the people, what time they came and she had a form that she made for herself, whether they wanted trail information, whether they were summer homers, and so on.

**1:23:54.2 Richard F. Buscher:** And so, pretty soon what we realized is that we needed to be open late on Friday night. And we could leave early on Sunday. All the visitors were going home, summer homers were, and nobody stopped. So the next thing we learned because this was in the good old days when the Forest Service gave away their high quality forest maps. So many of these people asked questions about the Deschutes. And so we started stocking Deschutes maps. And it turned out we gave away more Deschutes maps than the Deschutes supervisor's office did that year. Because nobody goes to supervisors' office to get information anyway. Once again, it's just, you got to know who your customer is. And that's what marketing is all about. And so Zigzag was a tremendous experience. It just really was.

**1:25:00.6 Richard F. Buscher:** And of course, at that time, we ran the mountain rescues. Now, the Forest Service has no snow rangers. I had an engineer that did all of the lift inspections, did all of the civil engineering at Timberline Lodge, and so on. None of that exists today. No wilderness rangers. Volunteers out there don't know what the hell they are doing. So we have given all that up and we should never have. And then my observation of what happened during the pandemic is almost obscene. Because the Forest Service closed their offices.

**1:25:41.2 Richard F. Buscher:** Well, the public went to the woods. That's a safe place. Well, the Forest Service is supposed to be out in the woods in the first place. And there's nobody out there. I went on a trip, three times now, that starts here goes through the National Forest in Central and Eastern Oregon, goes into Idaho, goes into Montana, Wyoming, comes back through Lolo Pass and down. I go through thirteen National Forests. The last time I drove it, and it's a ten day trip, and I drive the forest roads and the last time I drove it I saw three, four service rigs in the field and two of them were law enforcement.

**1:26:31.1 Richard F. Buscher:** And they're not out there. I went back to my district on my birthday last year because I have this lovely friend who just left before you got here, went back to Bend, [Oregon] but she'd been with me these three days and she drove all the way over here and cooked breakfast at a BLM [Bureau of Land Management] park just below my ranger station there at Zigzag in the morning and then wanted to know where all the trailheads were and so we drove all of them over my district and I couldn't believe it. Because when we were there we paved on the roads with the Forest Service paving crew and now potholes everywhere, signs falling apart. We

went into three campgrounds and one half of all of the comfort stations were closed for repair, I mean and then homeless people were allowed to camp and have fire when there were fire closures in the campgrounds and no sign of the Forest Service anywhere and that breaks my heart and to go back to where we had a conversation early about Region Six being the big provider of timber, and therefore the big recipient of money, and that was very true, but what happened is when the spotted owl caused the reduction practically to nothing of a managed forest, this region went into a pout. Region One in Montana is still, I think, a good example of the Forest Service from everybody and everything I know But Region Six is a disgrace, in my opinion.

**1:28:27.8 James Wall:** So, it lost the customer service focus, you think.

**1:28:33.4 Richard F. Buscher:** Yep.

**1:28:35.2 James Wall:** Interesting. So what's the accomplishment you are most proud of? Is it the Alpine Lakes Wilderness?

**1:28:41.6 Richard F. Buscher:** Yeah, I think so, yeah.

**1:28:43.7 James Wall:** And how's that held up? How often do you get back there?

**1:28:50.5 Richard F. Buscher:** Well, I went back for a dedication of... Lloyd Meads died and so they had a rock and a plaque at Snoqualmie Pass in his honor of pioneering the bill through the legislature and they asked me to come and it's the last time I ever wore a Forest Service uniform. So I got into my uniform and I went up and I got there early and several of the Wilderness Rangers from all along the Cascades came down for the dedication and we had kind of an old home week there. But they were telling me that the use patterns in wilderness had changed tremendously. That it had become a day use area from the trailhead as far as they could walk and back. That the interior of the wilderness, he said, "You didn't see a lot of backpackers, you didn't see longtime campers, but you had tremendous numbers of people, just parades of people going in," and he said, "You just kind of lost your sense of wilderness."

**1:30:11.8 Richard F. Buscher:** My knees are shot and so I don't hike anymore, and I haven't for quite a while. But from all the reports I get, and then the total lack of Wilderness Rangers, and I always made the point there's no such thing as Wilderness Management even though they write books on Wilderness Management, it's Wilderness Use Management. You manage the use, you don't manage the wilderness and you manage the use to respect and preserve the wilderness and if that means keeping people out entirely that's what you do that's what the Fish and Wildlife Service does with the Oregon Rocks Wilderness, you can't enter any of them they are all bird sanctuaries, and in California there's a part of the Wilderness in California where they are restoring the condor and it's closed to the public because that's part of the Wilderness ecosystem, so that's what we should be doing but they are not doing any of that.

**1:31:20.2 Richard F. Buscher:** And the Forest Service today has no spine whatsoever to pressure because I'm involved with Wilderness Watch which is headquartered there and with my friend Bernie Smith and I was part of the lawsuit in Glacier Peak when they were rebuilding "a historic look out," that had fallen off a cliff. I'd been there with my children; I wouldn't even let them walk on the walkway because it was too dangerous and it fell and so they had a woman archaeologist there that sought under the historic preservation law that overcame the Wilderness Law. They

moved sixty helicopter trips, did historic reconstruction with metal two by fours. I mean, come on. And I have got the pictures down there but it is so ridiculous and Bernie was a real leader in that and I gave him some encouragement but not a lot of help. But anyway, we won the lawsuit and I have the judge's opinion down there and he said it was the most egregious misuse or abuse of the Wilderness Law that had ever come before this court and they awarded and gave them time to remove the lookout.

**1:32:39.6 Richard F. Buscher:** Forest Service had not done an EIS, any kind of, to build it. But then they made the decision they had to have an EIS on how to remove it and what they were doing was stalling because they were working with a local congresswoman who put a little slip in a bill and made it legal to stay there and then they turned it over to the local club as a clubhouse. So that's what's happened to wilderness management in this region. And I met with the Regional Forester when the retirees that call us the "Old Smokies" outfit, we have a picnic at this BLM campground up by my old district. And big wonderful, nice gathering all day long and you meet your old friends and so on. Well, the new Regional Forester showed up there and they always give a talk about how great the morale is and how many wonderful things are getting on done and so on and I quit going because I couldn't tolerate that bullshit anymore.

**1:33:44.2 Richard F. Buscher:** I went over to meet him and I told him that we had this lawsuit underway and I said that, "You are aware of it." "No. Should I really?" They didn't know about it. I said, "Well, just let me give you a small example where you might be interested." I said "They use sixty helicopter trips to go there. Who paid for that? Maybe you ought to get your fiscal guy down there off his ass and go find out." And so, it wasn't like they didn't know it was coming. Then later than that, Charlie Connaughton was the supervisor that came up and took over this. He was the second Regional Forester in the time I was, because my whole career was in this region. And Charlie Connaughton came up, he was terrific. God, and he was field-oriented, and he practiced management by poking around.

**1:34:53.5 Richard F. Buscher:** And then John Rogers was the same thing. He'd arrive at ranger stations early and just kind of wander around and see the housekeeping, see their junk pile, see what there is... Just management by poking around. Well, Charlie was great. Well then I went to the last of the luncheons that I decided to attend. And his son had taken over Kent Connaughton. And so I went over and he had made his little speechy and it was unbelievable how far off he was from reality.

**1:35:33.4 Richard F. Buscher:** And so I walked over to meet with him and and he was talking to a new supervisor on the Mount Hood who knew me by reputation, had never met me. So anyway, Kent said, "Oh yeah." He said, "Your name's familiar." He said "My dad and my mom, particularly Myrtle, would talk because she used to dance with you up at Timberline, didn't she?" [chuckle]

**1:35:55.3 Richard F. Buscher:** And Charlie and Myrtle would come up and we had a band up there then and they'd love to dance and I'd be dancing with his wife and he'd be dancing with Jane and one time he dances by and in a stage whisper he says to Jane, "You know I got to ask you Jane, how is it to live with a guy that just never shuts up?" And she said, "Charlie, you just have to learn to do what I do, consider the source." [laughter] That's my buddy helping. But any rate, so after Kent said that he said, "Yes." I said, "Your father and I were friends." But I said, "I had great admiration for him, he was an outstanding Regional Forester and a friend." And I said, "I got to tell you Kent, the apple fell one hell of a long way from the tree, and I turned around and walked

away." Because when I have something on my mind I say it. [chuckle]

**1:36:53.8 James Wall:** Well, yeah everybody knows that Charlie Connaughton name. Don't mean a lot of people who knew him that well now, but everybody said he was a real straight shooter, and you didn't want to get a pink slip from him or what was this? What was the color of the slip? That he would get out blue or pink, I don't know. He had a certain write-up that he would give you.

**1:37:14.7 Richard F. Buscher:** Oh, yeah. They call them "CAC [Charles A. Connaughton] notes". And I was on the public television down here to talk about the reason for clearcutting, when it was appropriate and when it wasn't and so on and took them all through this thing. And the next day I got a CAC slip, it was from Charlie and he said, "Bush, you were great. Keep up the good talk." [laughter]

**1:37:45.7 James Wall:** Wow, what a character. Let's see, if you could go back and give yourself a piece of advice when you were just starting out in the Forest Service knowing what you know now, what to do, what not to do, what do you think that would be?

**1:38:00.0 Richard F. Buscher:** Well, learn to ignore what they told you in school and recognize that the only legitimate textbook to manage the people's forest is the forest itself. You learn to read that textbook and you will be successful.

**1:38:22.4 James Wall:** That's good advice. Who was your favorite mentor? When you might have gone one way and they pointed you on the right path.

**1:38:35.5 Richard F. Buscher:** Well, I'll tell you, Jokebook Anderson would come close, the Master Sergeant at Fort Ord I learned so much. I'd go over there and we'd drink a little bit of good whiskey and just sipping. And I'd listen to him and he'd talk about the leadership of people. And both in combat but also just especially in basic how to get these young people ready to possibly face battle. But mostly just how you build a team, and that one comes to mind. As far as Forest Service associates, I never had a mentor. I'm very much my own self. And in fact I sort of don't even like the term mentor. I was strong in supporting the best and the brightest of women to come into the outfit during the '70s, when the environment suddenly became important to people, women started taking courses that would make them good candidates for the Forest Service.

**1:40:03.1 Richard F. Buscher:** And Don Smith, who was the supervisor and the last supervisor on the Wenatchee of the three that I served with, Don and I got the management team together and we said, "We want to think we are the best outfit in government. We want to keep it that way and we are recruiting from fifty percent of the people. And it's time for us to realize there are highly qualified women that are graduating with degrees in forestry and allied earth sciences and we need to go for the best and the brightest." And so that's what we did. And we understood from the very beginning the women didn't want any goddamn special favors, they wanted a chance. In fact they were hostile to being favorites.

**1:40:55.5 Richard F. Buscher:** And so we ended up with some really, really top women in this outfit. And as I started, when I got in the regional office and started to tour in the districts, and I met many more. And of course I did help their careers because I'd get a call, "Hey you know about Elaine?" "Oh yeah, yeah." And so I'd strongly support them. Well I have six of them that I still correspond with at Christmas time and I make all my own Christmas cards because I'm a

photographer and I do my own prints. But I send like sixty Christmas cards and almost all to old Forest Service friends. But I get things back and three of them always thank me for being their mentor and I always correct them and tell them you got there on your own. And I said you didn't need a damn thing from me and I learned a lot from you and I feel that way. I don't like the idea of mentors. I think you get where you are going on your own.

**1:42:00.0 James Wall:** Interesting, well last question's always what does the Forest Service mean to you now that you are on the other side of it? When you look back?

**1:42:08.4 Richard F. Buscher:** Well, I'm sorry it died, [laughter] and it did. All you got to do is tour the National Forests. Here is the greatest clue: the United States Forest Service is now anonymous. Well, I'd give you several examples, but the Paul Harts are gone. Paul Hart was a very skilled outreach person. He put out an annual paper, he would always send me a copy long after I left the forest. And he would have each ranger have a page in this paper of their achievements on that day in that year that they were most proud of. And then they package this all up and they would tell the people how much money they had to manage the forest and how much money the forest took in. And then every year the forest took a profit. The last year I was on the Wenatchee, when you took off from the ski areas, from the summer homes, from the timber, from all of the sources of revenue, I think the last budget was like twenty-eight million dollars to manage a two-and-a-half million-acre forest and we took in thirty-five million. And we gave twenty-five percent to the counties.

**1:43:31.2 Richard F. Buscher:** So, the Forest Service was very well known. The Forest Service was well known politically. It's in like two-thirds of the state, so they had friends in Congress. And they knew their congressman, they knew their county commissioners, and they were on the Ranger District long enough to learn the land and the people and the job. And I told a chief this when I was... After I retired, I was down to be a speaker at a partnership conference in Phoenix. And I was there for four or five days, and the current chief was an old friend of mine. He was from Region Six and he saw me, we were going in for breakfast and he says, "Come on Bush, I want to have breakfast with you." And so he said, "You know, I'm getting reports from regional foresters that you have been..." Because after I retired, I started getting requests for training in wilderness and recreation, university, and all that. I was traveling all over the damn region. He said, "I'm getting reports from the regional foresters that you are still wandering around."

**1:44:48.3 Richard F. Buscher:** He said, "You always had your hand on the on the pulse of what's going on?" He said, "What do I need to know?" I said, "I'll tell you what you need to know. The first thing is you need to quit using the ranger's job for a trainee position." And he got very defensive and I said, "Damn it, I know more about it than you do. I'll start telling you the individuals in the Ranger District and how long they were there." And I started in on him, "A lot of them were women," they said, "and they just brought women in to get the numbers." And then, "Oh we got to get them to a higher job." And they weren't doing their job and the good women were resisting that. And so, he finally gave a little ground. And he said, "Well what's the other one?" I said, "Get yourself a big scissors." He said, "And why do I need to have it?" I said, "Cut the umbilical cord of the computer that's holding your people in the office and let them get their butts out in the field where they belong." And that is what we need and it ain't going to happen. By the way there's no computer in this house and there never will be. The computer ended civilization as I knew it. [chuckle]

**1:46:03.2 James Wall:** Yeah, that's a common refrain.

**1:46:06.5 Richard F. Buscher:** And that's not the computer's fault. It's like all technology. Probably when the industrial age came in, the machine for a while was running the people and that's what's happened with computers. That's what's happened with cell phones. Colleen and I just went to breakfast, really nice place that I have been going to for thirty years and everybody there were my family, and because my wife and my children are all gone. Everybody, they are sitting across from each other and no communication. I mean, come on. I would ban phones from restaurants. I won't carry my cell phone [chuckle] inside a restaurant. I wouldn't think of doing that. It's the ultimate in rudeness. But we have lost our interpersonal communication skills. Hell, today's children can't spell because they got all this goddamn code for their texting.

**1:47:13.7 James Wall:** Yeah, and with the forest, the remote work and the way that it allows you to distance yourself from your constituents. If you think of them as your constituents, then yeah, you don't have a lot of face-to-face. So, a lot of people say that now.

**1:47:29.3 Richard F. Buscher:** But back to the anonymity of the Forest Service now, the example of Paul was how you stay in touch. There has been a longtime proposal for Wilderness down in the very south end of the Siuslaw Forest and what used to be the Smith District and finally it became wilderness here a year ago or so. The Oregonian put a big one-page coverage of this, talked all about the new Wilderness and how wonderful this was and so on and da, da, da, da. There was not one single word of US Forest Service or National Forest land. And I see that constantly, constantly. The Forest Service has just become anonymous. You watch all of the fire coverage and they don't have spokesmen. There's fires on the National Forest and there's no National Forest spokesman, especially in California at CDF [California Department of Forestry]. And I have got a friend who's damn near... I think he is my age, and I will be ninety next June, and he stayed as a volunteer until he was almost eighty years old on the National Incident Command Team because they couldn't replace him. I called the ranger at Zigzag about a year ago and I asked him "How many people had a red card?" And he said, "A red card?" I said, "You know, your qualifications for fire." "Oh, well we contract most of that." See, it's just unbelievable what's happened.

**1:49:14.0 James Wall:** Yeah, people don't get the same training...

**1:49:17.1 Richard F. Buscher:** The Park Service, two years ago I think it was, celebrated their 100th anniversary. They were blowing their horn all over there, and all you had to do is put the statistics out, and the Forest Service gets like five times as many visitors as the National Parks do. One campground on the Umpqua National Forest up at Diamond Lake, which is on the north edge of Crater Lake National Park, the campground and a few summer homes, and it operates summer and winter, and it's the biggest fishery in terms of fish production in the state of Oregon. They have elaborate fish cleaning stations and everything else and a huge campground. That campground gets way more use than all of Crater Lake National Park. Diamond Lake.

**1:50:14.4 James Wall:** Yeah. In my experience, people are just conflating the National Park Service and the National Forest together, from my generation.

**1:50:22.0 Richard F. Buscher:** Well...

**1:50:23.9 James Wall:** That they don't understand that the Forest Service and the National Park

Service are two separate entities.

**1:50:27.9 Richard F. Buscher:** That's exactly right. They also don't understand that there's 130... When I retired, there's probably more now, there are 137 laws that relate to the management of the National Forest. Starting very interestingly on June 4th, my birthday, 1897, that was the Organic Act. By the way, I got married on September 3rd, 1956, and eight years later the Congress nicely passed the Wilderness Act on September 3rd. And we spent our honeymoon in Wilderness, Three Fingered Jack, but it wasn't Wilderness yet, it was the Mount Jefferson Limited Area, and was an instant wilderness eight years later when they passed it. But we had our honeymoon in the wilderness and it was the first time in my wife's life that she ever slept in a sleeping bag. [laughter]

**1:51:26.9 James Wall:** Wow. Really laying out the red carpet at that point. Well, that's about all the questions I had. So I thank you for sharing your career with me. Glad to know what you know.